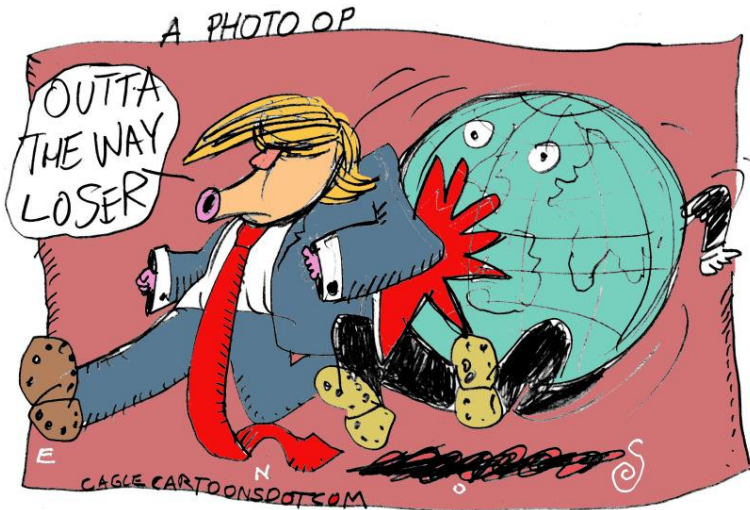


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## France's Special Forces Hunt French Militants Fighting for Islamic State (UNE)

Tamer El-Ghobashy and Maria Abi-Habib in Mosul, Iraq, and Benoît Faucon in London

French special forces have for months enlisted Iraqi soldiers to hunt and kill French nationals who have joined the senior ranks of Islamic State, according to Iraqi officers and current and former French officials.

Iraqi commanders leading the fight for Mosul said French special forces have provided to Iraqi counterterrorism troops the names and photographs of as many as 30 men identified as high-value targets. An undisclosed number of French citizens have been killed by Iraqi artillery and ground forces, the commanders said, using location coordinates and other intelligence supplied by the French.

The motive for the secret operation is to ensure that French nationals with allegiance to Islamic State never return home to threaten France with a terror attack, said a current and a former foreign-affairs adviser to the French government. France has been the target of several deadly attacks either inspired by Islamic State or orchestrated from the militants' Middle East strongholds, including the November 2015 Paris strikes.

A French Ministry of Defense spokeswoman declined to comment on the operation. "French forces work in close cooperation with their Iraqi and international partners," she said, to fight jihadists, "regardless of national origin," referring to the 1,200 French troops assisting Iraqi forces to retake Mosul.

The French special forces maintain their distance from the killings—France has no death penalty—by directing Iraqi fighters to target French Islamic State fighters, according to the current and former French government advisers.

A senior Iraqi police official showed The Wall Street Journal a list of names of 27 suspected Islamic State members sought by France, accompanied by photos of five of the men. French special forces began circulating the document at the start of the Mosul offensive last

year. It is updated as men are killed, the police official said.

One man was identified on the list as "Badush," and the document described him as last seen in July driving a white Kia in northern Mosul, wearing traditional Iraqi clothing. Several of the names included aliases that linked the men to France—Abu Ismael al-Fransi and Abu Souleyman al-Fransi—or to Belgium, where some of the Paris attackers were from. Belgium's Defense Ministry declined to comment.

France doesn't have armed drones, so government officials sent its elite forces into Mosul to locate French militants, a Western security official said.

About 40 French special forces operate state-of-the-art intelligence-gathering tools, such as surveillance drones and radio interception devices, to help locate militants, said senior Iraqi counterterrorism officers and former and current French government officials.

"They are dealing with them here, because they don't want to deal with them at home," said a senior Iraqi counterterrorism officer directly involved in coordinating with the French special forces. "It's their duty. It's common sense. The most lethal attacks overseas were in France."

Iraqi government officials said their military doesn't participate in systematic extrajudicial killing of Islamic State fighters, and any such cases would be investigated for possible prosecution.

A spokesman for Iraq's Justice Ministry declined to say whether the government has any foreign Islamic State fighters in custody. Iraqi commanders have said most militants fight to the death.

"If anyone is alive, in jail, because they surrendered, they will be executed in Iraq for joining Islamic State. And France won't intervene," said a current French official familiar with the matter. "It's a convenient solution."

An estimated 1,700 Frenchmen have joined the militants in Iraq and Syria, according to the Soufan Group, a New York-based organization that researches extremism. French government officials have estimated that hundreds of those men have either died in battle or returned home.

Other Western countries have lists of their nationals in league with Islamic State. But only France is engaged in hunting them in Mosul, Iraqi officers said.

France debated the legality of targeting its citizens when it joined the U.S. bombing campaign in Syria in the fall of 2015. An October airstrike that year apparently killed French militants near Raqqa, and the government sought to tamp down criticism at home by citing a provision in the United Nations charter that allows member states to use any means of "legitimate defense" if under attack.

France's laws and constitution offer little protection to citizens who take up arms with militant groups to fight the government, said Michel Verpeaux, a professor of constitutional law at the Université Panthéon-Sorbonne in Paris.

"The French are fighting not a state but an armed group," Mr. Verpeaux said. "It's a highly uncertain situation with few legal rules."

France has talked about stripping nationals of citizenship for joining terror groups to bar their return home, as the U.K. has, a proposal that met stiff resistance in parliament.

Dozens of French nationals fighting with Islamic State have been killed in the battle for Mosul, two Iraqi officers said. The seven-month offensive by Iraqi forces and international allies is close to driving the remaining Islamic State fighters from the western part of Mosul, the militants' last major holding in Iraq.

French special forces often move through Mosul without Iraqi military partners. They search homes abandoned by foreign militants, as well as command centers in search of physical evidence or documents

that link their citizens to Islamic State, two senior Iraqi counterterrorism officers said.

In April, French special forces swept through a medical clinic near the Mosul University campus, checking the identities of the wounded against their list of French nationals working for Islamic State. The French forces, often wearing Iraqi uniforms and driving vehicles with Iraqi military logos, are particularly concerned about any chemical-weapons specialists working on the campus, according to a senior Iraqi commander who coordinated with French forces.

Mosul University was used by Islamic State as a command center until Iraqi forces recaptured the campus in January, the Iraqi commander said.

The French special forces have a forensics team that collects physical evidence—tissue and bone from the dead and wounded, as well as discarded drinking cups and utensils—to find DNA matches with the men on their wanted list, Iraqi and French officials said.

The team in one instance collected bone samples from a dead fighter and ran the DNA collected through a database to compare with the DNA of French nationals suspected of joining Islamic State, according to the former foreign-affairs adviser to the French government.

A team of four French special forces went door to door in the neighborhood in January. Two of the soldiers checked the identities of residents while the other two men stood guard. "They have their own targets," an Iraqi counterterrorism officer said as he passed the scene.

French special forces have recently focused on Republic Hospital, a large complex in Mosul's Old City, according to two Iraqi Army officers who worked with them. The Old City, a warren of densely populated streets and alleys, is a commercial center and the last district in Mosul controlled by militants.

The French forces suspect that the remaining high-level Islamic State commanders, including some

Frenchmen, are holed up at the hospital.

## Bloomberg Macron's Clean Image Tested as Two Ministers Come Under Fire

Gregory Viscusi

Emmanuel Macron won the French presidency partly by projecting a clean image as several of his rivals were enmeshed in legal woes. Now two of Macron's cabinet members are facing ethical questions of their own.

Junior minister Marielle de Sarnez's name is on a list of 19 European members of parliament subject to a preliminary probe for having employed party operatives as parliamentary aides. Richard Ferrand, who ran Macron's campaign and is now minister for regional development, is facing calls to step down after reports that his partner may have benefited from a real estate transaction with a mutual insurer that Ferrand ran in 2011 before becoming a member of the National Assembly.

While the matters in question may be minor compared with past French political scandals, they come after

an election campaign in which public probity played a major role and a week before Macron's government plans to present a "political morality law" that would limit the ability of lawmakers to work as consultants or hire family members. The revelations come in the midst of campaigning for the June elections for France's parliament, which will determine if Macron has enough of a majority to push through his platform.

For the moment, the government is sticking by Ferrand and Sarnez. "We are talking about practices which are perfectly legal," government spokesman Christophe Castaner said Tuesday on LCI television when asked about Ferrand. "For me, this isn't a scandal." Sarnez has said she didn't break any laws and Castaner said the probe appears to have resulted from a "slandorous" list of deputies compiled by the National Front.

The National Front drew up the list of 19 French lawmakers in the European parliament to show that its presidential candidate Marine Le Pen had been unfairly treated, the party's vice-president Florian Philippot said Tuesday on Europe 1 radio. Le Pen, who lost to Macron in the May 7 presidential vote, has been under investigation since December for using European parliament allowances to pay for party work in France. The European Parliament has demanded that Le Pen repay the allowances, which she's refused to do. Sarnez said in a posting on Twitter that she's suing the National Front for slander.

"We don't think these cases are illegal, just as our case wasn't illegal," Philippot said about the list. "We found many others had the same set-up but the justice system's fire was trained solely on Marine Le Pen. There's a question of equal treatment."

Ferrand's case involves his time as director general of the Mutuelles de Bretagne, which in 2011 rented commercial spaces from a real estate company belonging to Ferrand's partner. Mutuelles de Bretagne said Monday in a statement that the real estate operation was carried out correctly and didn't break any rules, and the local prosecutor has said there's no grounds to open an investigation.

That hasn't stopped leaders of the rival Socialist and Republican parties, as well as the National Front, calling for Ferrand to resign from the cabinet.

The Republicans presidential candidate Francois Fillon had been leading in the polls until he was put under investigation in January over whether family members he employed as parliamentary aides actually did any work.

## The Washington Post French President Macron blasts Russian state-owned media as 'propaganda'

By James McAuley

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron delivered a blunt greeting to Vladimir Putin on Monday, criticizing the use of chemical weapons by Syria's - Russian-backed government and blasting two Russian state-owned media organizations as "organs of influence and propaganda."

Macron had invited the Russian leader to France to reset a relationship that has turned increasingly sour. Putin did more than any other foreign leader to undermine Macron's legitimacy in this country's recent presidential election, meeting with his far-right opponent during the campaign.

His meeting with Putin came just days after Macron made his mark on the world stage, welcoming President Trump with an aggressive handshake that the French leader later said was intended to show that he wouldn't "make small concessions."

*[The Putin-Macron handshake the world was waiting for]*

Macron, 39, who won the May 7 election in a landslide, said he and Putin had "extremely frank" talks Monday. But Macron also emphasized that Russia and France could work together on issues such as terrorism.

President Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron shared an intense handshake at their first meeting on May 25. President Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron shared an intense handshake at their first meeting on May 25. (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

Leading up to the election, Putin had expressly backed Macron's opponent, Marine Le Pen, leader of the staunchly anti-immigrant National Front. On the eve of the vote, Macron's campaign suffered a massive cyberattack that it compared to the hacking of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign last year. U.S. intelligence agencies have blamed that operation on the Russian government.

Cybersecurity analysts quickly detected Russian fingerprints behind the hacking of the Macron campaign's emails and internal communications.

The Kremlin has denied involvement, and Putin on Monday reiterated that Russia never meddled in the French election. He did, however, defend his decision to receive the pro-Russian Le Pen in Moscow in late March, one month before the first vote in the two-round French election.

Putin told reporters that Macron had not broached the subject of the cyberattack in their talks on Monday.

"We are quite capable of trying to move forward together in terms of the so-called Russian interference in the elections," Putin said at a news conference in response to a question. "The issue has not been raised. The French president did not show any interest, and I even less."

But Macron did show more than a little interest in the topic, especially when asked by a Russian journalist why it had been so difficult for certain reporters to get access to his campaign headquarters during the election.

"I have always had an exemplary relationship with foreign journalists, but they have to be journalists. Russia Today and Sputnik were organs of influence and propaganda that spread counterfeit truths about me," he replied, referring to the Russian TV network and news agency.

Both media outlets are owned by the Russian government.

"It is not for me to comment on Madame Le Pen's visit" to Moscow, Macron said, in response to another question about the vote. "Elections are the decisions of sovereign people."

The presidents' meeting at the 17th-century Chateau de Versailles, one of Europe's most opulent palaces, came at a time when relations between Paris and Moscow have reached one of their lowest points in decades, mostly because of the war in Syria.

France has been highly critical of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whom the Kremlin has backed for years. Last fall, Putin abruptly canceled a visit to France after Macron's predecessor, François Hollande, decried Russian bombings in the Syrian city of Aleppo as a "war crime."

Macron said Monday that the use of chemical weapons in Syria constituted a "red line" for France and "would result in reprisals and an immediate response, at least where France is concerned." Syria has been accused of using chemical weapons, including chlorine gas and much-deadlier nerve agents, during the conflict.

Trump last month ordered a missile attack on a Syrian air base in response to a chemical attack in Idlib province that killed nearly 100 people. Russia protested that the U.S. retaliation violated international law and said it would ruin bilateral relations.

President Barack Obama had also pledged strong action against Syria

if it crossed a “red line” by using chemical weapons. But a year later, in 2013, Obama was widely criticized for holding off on military action against Syria when he failed to get congressional approval for a strike in the wake of a chemical-weapons attack. The U.S. government subsequently worked with Russia on a deal that was supposed to rid Syria of such weapons.

**The  
New York  
Times**

Breeden

The visit by Mr. Putin, at Mr. Macron's invitation, was described as a working meeting timed to coincide with the opening of a show at the Grand Trianon, a chateau within the Versailles complex. The exhibition celebrates the ties between Russia and France forged 300 years ago by Peter the Great when he visited France after encouraging diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Mr. Macron made a point of opening the news conference by summarizing the long cultural ties between the two countries in literature, culture and philosophy and by noting that “no essential issue can be handled today without talking with Russia.”

The meeting was Mr. Macron's first with the Russian leader, and he appeared intent on introducing himself as a new factor for Russia to take into consideration on the European stage. It was also a chance for Mr. Macron to show France and the rest of Europe what kinds of issues will matter to him in international relations.

Mr. Macron, who was elected three weeks ago, recently returned from his first meeting with NATO and Group of 7 leaders, but in those meetings he was part of a larger group and the agenda was collective. On Monday, he appeared set on opening discussions on a variety of topics, including Russia's involvement in Ukraine and Syria.

For his part, Mr. Putin appeared to want to re-establish the relatively warm relations the two countries

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France and Russia are also divided over the Putin administration's support for pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine and Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, which led to the imposition of sanctions by Europe and the United States.

have had in the past and to use the meeting as an opportunity to underscore Russia's position in a number of policy areas. Not least of those is its demand for lifting European economic sanctions against Russia that were put in place after the annexation of Crimea and meddling in Ukraine.

Responding to a question about sanctions against Russia over Ukraine, Mr. Putin answered, “These sanctions do not contribute at all to settling the crisis in Ukraine.”

“Only the abolition of all restrictions, a free market and free competition unburdened by political considerations can help develop the world economy,” he said, urging “an end to all limitations on international exchanges.”

Despite the sometimes tough tone of the news conference, Mr. Macron received Mr. Putin with all the usual formalities: When Mr. Putin opened the door of his black limousine in the vast Versailles courtyard, as the formally dressed French Republican guard — in gold-braid decorated uniforms — stood at attention, Mr. Macron came down the red carpet to the car to greet him.

Helicopters hovered overhead, a reminder of the high security around the event.

The two leaders exchanged a businesslike handshake and had serious expressions as they sat down to talk. Much of Mr. Macron's account of their conversation — putting aside their lengthy comments on Peter the Great's visit to Versailles in 1717 — suggested that he had stuck to his stated plan of pushing the Russians in areas

Macron said France and Russia would pursue further dialogue in the “Normandy format” — including France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine.

Standing next to his Russian counterpart, France's new president also pledged to defend “all people, all minorities.” He explicitly mentioned workers employed at Western-backed nonprofit groups in

Russia — who are often tagged “foreign agents” by the Russian government — and the reported abuse of gay people by authorities in Chechnya.

“I will be constantly vigilant on these issues,” Macron said.

## Emmanuel Macron Challenges Putin on Syria and Gay Rights

Alissa J. Rubin  
and Aurelien

where Mr. Putin's policies are at odds with those of European Union countries.

Mr. Macron had plenty of reasons for personal animus toward Russia. Reports by cybersecurity firms found that groups tied to Russia had targeted his campaign in a hacking attack, and rumors about him were disseminated by Russian-allied news outlets.

Mr. Putin quashed the issue even more emphatically. “For what is called Russian interference in the elections of this or that country, it was not a question that we took up: The French president did not manifest any interest, and me, even less,” he said.

However, Mr. Macron minced no words when it came to responding to a question about why his campaign had shut out two Russian-associated news organizations, Russia Today and Sputnik.

Asked about why they did not have access to his campaign headquarters after the first round, Mr. Macron responded: “When press organs sow defamatory untruths, they are no longer journalists. They are organs of influence.”

He added, “Russia Today and Sputnik have been organs of influence during this campaign, which on many occasions produced untruths about me and my campaign, and so I determined that they had no place, I confirm it, in my headquarters.”

Russia Today's editor in chief, Margarita Simonyan, responded by saying, “It is disappointing that what started as a rather productive conversation between the leaders of the two countries turned into another opportunity for President Macron to levy baseless accusations against RT.”

She added, “By labeling any news reporting he disagrees with as fake news, President Macron sets a dangerous precedent that threatens both freedom of speech and journalism at large.”

On human rights, Mr. Macron said he had raised the troubles facing gay and transgender people in Chechnya as well as those of nongovernmental organizations.

Mr. Macron said that he had discussed the reports of collective punishment of gay men in Chechnya with Mr. Putin and that they had agreed on a “very regular monitoring” of the situation.

Mr. Macron said Mr. Putin had told him he had taken measures to “establish the complete truth on the activities of local authorities” in Chechnya, but he did not specify what those measures were. Chechnya is under the control of a pro-Kremlin leader, Ramzan A. Kadyrov.

“As for me, I will be constantly vigilant on these issues, which are in keeping with our values,” Mr. Macron said.

Although he did not dispute Mr. Macron's characterization, Mr. Putin did not mention gay people during the news conference.

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL.**

Horobin

VERSAILLES, France—President Emmanuel Macron and his counterpart Vladimir Putin of Russia strained Monday to turn the page on allegations Moscow interfered in France's elections as well as their

## Macron, Putin Hold Tense First Meeting

Stacy Meichtry  
and William

differences over Syria, with the French leader describing the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime as a “red line.”

The newly elected French leader was hosting Mr. Putin at the Palace of Versailles to mark 300 years of Franco-Russian diplomacy that began under Czar Peter the Great.

Heightened tensions with Moscow loomed over the meeting as Mr. Macron and other European leaders have begun to weigh a geopolitical landscape defined by increasingly fragile trans-Atlantic relations. Last week U.S. President Donald Trump didn't reaffirm the principle of mutual defense at the heart of the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization, to which the U.S. and 27 other nations belong. That prompted German Chancellor Angela Merkel to say this weekend it was time to “take our fate into our own hands.”

“It was an extremely frank, direct conversation,” Mr. Macron said in a

joint news conference with Mr. Putin after their talks.

Any fissures in the NATO alliance provide Mr. Putin with an opening to drive a lasting wedge between the U.S. and its allies on a range of foreign policy fronts. Europe has often strained to show unity on defense and foreign policy, a struggle that risks being exacerbated without full-throated security assurances from the U.S. and with the looming departure of the U.K. from the European Union.

On Monday, Mr. Macron stood firm on the European Union's sanctions on Russia over its annexation of Crimea as well as France's opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whom the West has accused of carrying out chemical attacks against his own people.

"There is a very clear red line on our side," Mr. Macron said. "The use of

chemical weapons by anyone—so any use of chemical weapons—will meet with retaliation and an immediate response."

Mr. Macron also said reopening France's embassy in Damascus was "not my priority."

Mr. Putin said attacks on the Assad regime would only strengthen militant groups like Islamic State.

"It is impossible to combat the terrorist threat by destroying the statehood of countries that already suffer from internal problems," Mr. Putin said.

The Macron-Putin meeting was also closely watched for signs of personal animus between the two leaders. Mr. Putin irked Mr. Macron's presidential campaign by hosting his rival, National Front leader Marine Le Pen, during a visit to Russia.

## **The New York Times** With Italy No Longer in U.S. Focus, Russia Swoops to Fill the Void (UNE)

Jason Horowitz

A deliberate, gray-haired career diplomat, Mr. Razov has been plugging away at building relationships with Italian politicians, organizing concerts for Italy's earthquake survivors and visiting Italian regional officials who lament the "unfair" sanctions on Russia — which Moscow dearly wants lifted.

Next month, Mr. Razov will offer a sumptuous buffet when he hosts the annual Russia Day celebration amid the dripping chandeliers, coffered ceilings and gilded interiors of his Villa Abamelek residence.

Like Mr. Razov's energetic diplomacy, much of Russia's relationship building is being done in plain sight, as when President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia hosted Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni this month in Sochi, and President Sergio Mattarella a few weeks before that in Moscow.

But there is a fear among Italian, European and American officials that Russia is also using the same kind of behind-the-scenes influence and news media obfuscation it has employed in the United States and elsewhere, creating a tilt in Italy toward Moscow.

Former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi complained privately to his counterparts about Russian meddling in his country's politics by supporting anti-establishment parties. And websites controlled by a leader of the Five Star Movement, one of Italy's most popular anti-

establishment parties, have spread reports published on Sputnik Italia, an Italian version of the Russian state-funded news operation.

Russia "has invested a lot in influencing public opinion in this country," said Celia Kuningas-Saagpakk, the Estonian ambassador to Italy. She previously worked in her country's Foreign Ministry, where she covered Russia and monitored its strategies and propaganda tactics in Ukraine and elsewhere.

The effects of Russian attempts to influence Italy can already be seen. Long shaky, Italian politicians across the spectrum, ever mindful of business ties and energy deals, are wobbling more than ever on the hard line the European Union has taken toward Moscow since its land grab in Ukraine in 2014.

The enforcer of that tough-minded approach has been Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, who has acted as Europe's main liaison with Russia. But the erosion of her relationship with Mr. Putin over Russia's meddling in Ukraine has created a breach that many in Italy hope their country will step into.

Italy's many Russia enthusiasts are heartened by the recent visit of Prime Minister Gentiloni. His predecessor, Mr. Renzi, visited Mr. Putin at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum last year and said he opposed the "automatic" renewal of sanctions on Russia.

"If Ms. Le Pen asked to meet, why should we turn her down?" Mr. Putin said as Mr. Macron looked on.

The Russian leader also dismissed allegations by the Macron campaign that Kremlin-backed hackers and media outlets interfered in France's presidential election. Mr. Macron's party En Marche said in February its website was targeted by thousands of hacking attempts and that Kremlin-controlled outlets spread defamatory rumors about the candidate in an attempt to destabilize the campaign. In the final hours of official campaigning, Mr. Macron's party said it was hacked when thousands of emails and documents purportedly from the campaign were leaked on the internet.

"They say Russian hackers may have interfered," Mr. Putin said, referring to the Macron campaign. "Dear colleagues, how can you comment on such things?"

The remarks belied attempts by both leaders to play down the alleged interference.

Mr. Macron said he didn't discuss the issue with Mr. Putin behind closed doors because he wanted to be "pragmatic."

That resolve wavered when a Russian journalist asked Mr. Macron why his campaign banned Russia Today and Sputnik from its headquarters.

"Russia Today and Sputnik did not behave like press organizations or journalists, they behaved like organizations of influence, of propaganda, and false propaganda," he said.

—Nathan Hodge in Moscow contributed to this article.

The reanimated former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who once wore matching furry hats with Mr. Putin, said last month that he hoped sanctions would soon be lifted, too.

But the most consequential warming to Russia has come from the surging Five Star Movement, which now leads in the polls as Italy faces the prospect of elections late this year.

The Five Star Movement has called for a referendum on Italy's inclusion in the eurozone, an end to sanctions on Russia and a de facto geopolitical shift away from the United States and toward Russia.

At a recent unveiling of their foreign policy platform in Parliament, Five Star Movement leaders depicted Russia as a strategic partner that had been unfairly punished, and the United States as an abusive ally whose 70-year relationship with Italy had run its course.

"There's a limit," Manlio Di Stefano, the head of the Five Star Movement's foreign affairs committee, said about Italy's post-World War II alliance with the United States.

Mr. Di Stefano said he had met Ambassador Razov, who declined an interview for this article.

On the Five Star Movement's popular blog, Mr. Di Stefano wrote in a recent post that NATO was secretly preparing a "final assault" on Russia.

In an interview, he argued that his party had opposed the sanctions on Russia to alleviate the suffering of Italian businesses and lamented that the once-promising Mr. Trump had proved to be a disappointing pawn of the military-industrial complex.

"He said he wanted to improve relations with Russia and stabilize the Mediterranean," Mr. Di Stefano said. "Then he started bombing" Syria, which is an ally of Russia.

Soon after Mr. Trump's election, Beppe Grillo, a co-founder and leader of the Five Star Movement, and many members of the party celebrated his victory as a finger in the establishment's eye, and party leaders expressed approval of Mr. Trump's kind words about Mr. Putin.

But as Mr. Trump's position on Russia has become more ambiguous and tense, a latent anti-American sentiment in the Five Star Movement has surfaced.

Many of the movement's leaders attended a conference organized last month by Davide Casaleggio — a major, if quiet, power in the Five Star Movement, whose internet firm spread the Sputnik Italia content. Mr. Grillo sat with the mayor of Rome and other leading party members, applauding speakers who have promoted conspiracy theories about the C.I.A. as they cheered the WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange from the stage.

On the sideline, Alessandro Di Battista, a party leader, said the era of Italian subservience to the United

States was over. His party, he said, would seek to move Italy away from the United States and toward Russia "to a more equidistant point" once it came to power.

In 2014, the Five Star Movement went from criticizing Mr. Putin for his human rights abuses to championing his leadership.

That about-face raised suspicion among government officials in the United States and Europe that the party had received Russian financial assistance ("It's a lie," Mr. Di Battista said) or electoral assistance through fake news and propaganda through Sputnik. ("RAI does a lot more fake

news than Sputnik in this moment," Mr. Di Stefano said, referring to the Italian state broadcaster.)

No evidence of the Five Star Movement's receiving funds from Russia has surfaced.

Still, some American and European officials see Mr. Putin's invisible hand in the shifting allegiances.

"We are aware that Putin is trying to weaken the E.U. and the institutions," Senator Bob Corker, a Republican of Tennessee and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said in an interview. "He's done the same thing in Italy and other places."

The Trump administration, which is considering Lew Eisenberg, a former Republican National Committee finance chairman, for the ambassadorship in Rome, declined to comment about Italy's place in its worldview or the notion that inattention risked giving an edge to Russia.

But the American absence has been noted. During a recent visit to the Vatican, Senator Tim Kaine, a Democrat of Virginia, met with Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the foreign minister of the Holy See, which declined to comment about the meeting.

"Gallagher was very interested in talking about Russia," Mr. Kaine said in an interview. He recalled that he had brought up and discussed with the archbishop doubts that European allies had about relying on assistance from the United States since America had not protected itself from Russian influence.

"If the U.S. is leaving a vacuum," Mr. Kaine recalled Archbishop Gallagher saying generally about Europe and beyond, "that's going to be filled by somebody, and a lot of that somebody these days is Russia."

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Editorial : Angela Merkel's Lament

Angela Merkel's declaration on the weekend that Germany and continental Europe will have to depend more on themselves is being portrayed as the Donald Trump -inspired end of American leadership in Europe. But if that's true, and we have heard this dirge before, the erosion of U.S. leadership hardly began with Mr. Trump. It started under Barack Obama, whose failure to lead was too often reinforced by his main partner in Europe, Mrs. Merkel.

"All I can say is that we Europeans must really take our destiny into our own hands," the German leader told a crowd during a re-election campaign event at a beer tent in Bavaria. "The times in which we can fully count on others are somewhat over, as I have experienced in the past few days."

That was widely perceived as the German Chancellor's reaction to last week's NATO and G-7 summits, when the new U.S. President challenged NATO members to spend more on defense and refused to sign on to the climate-change policies of the other six leaders.

Mrs. Merkel seemed especially miffed about Mr. Trump's decision not to embrace the Paris climate accord that Mr. Obama signed in his final year as President. "The whole

discussion about climate has been difficult, or rather very unsatisfactory," Mrs. Merkel told reporters. "Here we have the situation that six members, or even seven if you want to add the [European Union], stand against one."

But wait. Since when is a difference of opinion on climate policy a signal of U.S. retreat from Europe? And why is Mr. Trump's reluctance to sign on to Paris—he says he'll decide whether to leave the accord this week—a failure of leadership? Mrs. Merkel's comments suggest that she is most upset because Mr. Trump declined to follow *her* lead on climate.

Mr. Trump should decline if he wants to fulfill his campaign promises to lift the U.S. economy. Mrs. Merkel's embrace of green-energy dogmas has done enormous harm to the German economy. She reacted to the Fukushima meltdown by phasing out nuclear power, and her government has force-fed hundreds of billions of dollars into solar and wind power that have raised energy costs. As Der Spiegel once put it, electricity is now a "luxury good" in Germany.

It's not surprising that Mrs. Merkel and the Europeans should want to shackle the U.S. with similarly high energy costs, and Mr. Obama was

happy to oblige. But Mr. Trump was elected on a promise to raise middle-class incomes, and domestic energy production is essential to that effort. Mrs. Merkel doesn't care if Mr. Obama committed the U.S. to Paris without any Congressional approval, but Mr. Trump has to take that into account.

The U.S. natural-gas fracking revolution also has the benefit of reducing fossil-fuel emissions by reducing reliance on coal. To the extent that U.S. energy production can supplant Russian natural-gas supplies to Europe and keep the price of oil low, it also undermines Vladimir Putin's influence at home and abroad.

As for fading U.S. leadership in Europe, we wish the German Chancellor had prodded Mr. Obama to do more after Russia snatched Crimea from Ukraine. We're still waiting for the Germans to support arming Ukraine to impose higher costs on Russia's military incursions. Then there's the failure of the U.S. and Europe to stop the Syrian civil war, which contributed to Brexit by sending millions of refugees into Europe without border controls.

Mr. Trump is undiplomatic, and sometimes rude, as he showed when he shoved aside Montenegro's prime minister at the

NATO summit. This behavior is embarrassing for most Americans, and Mr. Trump's lack of basic knowledge about the economics of trade is dangerous.

But then Mr. Trump has abandoned his campaign bluster that NATO is obsolete, and he signed onto the G-7 communiqué language vowing to resist protectionism. The President's challenge to Europe to spend more on its own defense may be precisely the leadership the alliance needs. That's especially true for Germany, which spends a mere 1.2% of GDP on the military and whose public takes an increasingly pacifist view of global conflict, in contrast to the British and French.

Mrs. Merkel's German opponents claim she is too accommodating to Mr. Trump, and her weekend remarks are in part a bow to that domestic politics. She is generally pro-American and an admirable leader. Mr. Trump shouldn't overreact to her weekend comments any more than Europe should overreact to some of his. The Atlantic alliance might even benefit from more such candid talk on both sides.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Merkel Reaffirms Cross-Atlantic Ties After Seeming to Question Them

Anton Troianovski  
BERLIN—A day after she referred to the U.S. as a not-always-reliable ally, German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday offered an addendum, saying the trans-Atlantic alliance is "of paramount importance."

In doing so, Ms. Merkel modulated her earlier comments, which had sparked talk in the U.S. of a strategic realignment by Germany

but which a person close to her said had been largely targeted at a domestic audience.

Ms. Merkel, speaking Monday at a conference on sustainable development in Berlin, repeated the implicit criticism of President Donald Trump that she delivered at a beer-tent campaign event in Munich on Sunday, but she leavened it with a more emphatic commitment to partnership with the U.S. The world leaders' meetings of recent days,

she said, had shown her that "the times in which we can completely rely on others are partly over."

"We are and will remain convinced trans-Atlanticists," she said, "but we also know that we Europeans must truly take our destiny into our own hands."

The comments Monday shed light on the political waters the European Union's most powerful politician is navigating as she prepares to

undertake her campaign for a fourth term. The election in Germany is in September.

On the one hand, Ms. Merkel needs the votes of a domestic public in which Mr. Trump is unpopular. On the other, people close to her say, she continues to be persuaded that close ties with the U.S. are vital to European interests.

That is why allies of Ms. Merkel insisted Monday that the

chancellor's tough words Sunday weren't signaling a turn from the U.S. alliance, as some international commentators had postulated. Instead, they said, the chancellor is playing a long game, rallying her domestic audience while also seeking to preserve trans-Atlantic institutions for a time after Mr. Trump.

In her Sunday beer-tent speech, Ms. Merkel had urged Europeans to unify in response to uncertainty from across the Atlantic. "The times in which we could rely on others completely—they are partly past," she said. "I experienced this in recent days. So I can only say: we Europeans must truly take our destiny in our own hands."

Some U.S. analysts described her Sunday comments as a paradigm shift in German policy. They were "a watershed" and something that the U.S. "has sought to avoid" since World War II, Council on Foreign Relations President Richard Haass posted on Twitter on Sunday.

The U.S. State Department declined to comment Monday.

## The New York Times Debate

Stephen Castle and Steven Erlanger

Mrs. May was challenged over her change of heart on several issues, including an abrupt shift last week over plans to finance long-term care, and the merits of "Brexit," Britain's withdrawal from the European Union — which she once opposed but now embraces. She was also pressed by members of a studio audience about cuts to financing for the police, health and education.

Mr. Corbyn, while outperforming relatively low expectations, appeared vulnerable when questioned about his willingness to authorize military force, his past opposition to the Falklands war in the early 1980s, and his expressions of regret that Osama bin Laden had been killed, rather than arrested and tried.

Television debates rarely affect the outcome of British elections, according to analysts, but this event gave Mrs. May a chance to reboot her lackluster campaign after the Manchester bombing last week, which prompted the suspension of electioneering for several days.

## The New York Times

Mr. Abedi was barred from Didsbury

Ms. Merkel chose her words Sunday carefully and knew they would attract attention, a person close to Ms. Merkel said. Nevertheless, she was mainly addressing Germans, calling on them to stand together in the face of a new challenge. "The trans-Atlantic alliance and its institutions are not in themselves in question—only Trump is putting them into question," said lawmaker Norbert Röttgen, an ally of Ms. Merkel and chairman of the parliament's foreign affairs committee. "We must do all we can to make sure that they still exist and are in good shape even after the Trump presidency ends."

Mr. Trump's threats to exit from the Paris climate agreement and to punish German exports have rattled the public here, with faith in the U.S. as a reliable partner falling to 29% in April from 59% in early November.

After Mr. Trump failed to commit to the Paris agreement at the Group of Seven meeting in Sicily last weekend, Ms. Merkel referred to the discussion on climate at the summit as "very unsatisfactory." Berlin has also been stung that Mr. Trump, on

The attack itself was barely mentioned on the program, though Mr. Corbyn was challenged over his comments that the war on terrorism was not working, while Mrs. May was called out over cuts in the police ranks, even as she argued that spending on counterterrorism had increased.

Mrs. May's shaky campaign and the tightening polls have undercut assumptions that she will win a resounding victory, but she is still expected to increase her narrow majority in Parliament.

Her campaign stumbled when she was forced to revisit a plan to put a hard cap on the assets that residents who receive long-term care at home may own.

The proposal, widely derided as a "dementia tax," raised sufficient enough protests that Mrs. May beat a hasty retreat, even as she insisted that nothing had changed in her thinking. During Monday night's debate, Mrs. May said there would be an absolute limit on the amount people would have to pay, but did not specify what it would be.

Mosque, where his family worshiped, after he shouted at an imam who had condemned the

his European visit, left unmentioned the U.S. commitment to defending its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies if one of them is attacked.

On Monday, leading German politicians took turns slamming the U.S. president.

Ms. Merkel's conservative parliamentary group issued a statement saying Mr. Trump had "placed into question the U.S.'s claim to leadership, undisputed for decades." Martin Schulz, the center-left challenger to Ms. Merkel in the September elections, in the Tagesspiegel newspaper described Mr. Trump's approach as "political extortion rather than international diplomacy." And German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel described U.S. policy on migration, climate, and arms sales as standing "against the interests of the European Union."

"Those who don't counter this U.S. policy make themselves complicit in it," Mr. Gabriel said.

Still, Germany hopes that Mr. Trump's policies represent "a

The furor over long-term care and her obvious change of heart over Brexit, which she had originally opposed, have dented her claims that only she can provide the "strong and stable" leadership Britain needs as it faces very difficult negotiations over how to extract itself from the European Union.

Mrs. May called the snap election for June 8, expecting to increase her parliamentary majority before the talks with Europe begin.

But Mr. Corbyn's left-wing agenda has proved more popular than some had expected, despite questions about how it would be financed. He has also benefited from rules that, during election campaigns, oblige Britain's broadcasters to balance the airtime given to the different parties, something that normally increases the visibility of the opposition.

Mr. Paxman provoked laughter from the studio audience, and a fierce stare from Mrs. May, when he suggested that during the Brexit negotiations, her European interlocutors would conclude that she was a "blowhard who collapses at the first sign of gunfire."

ideology of the Islamic State militant group in a sermon, according to Akram Ramadan, a member of the

temporary phenomenon" in U.S. foreign policy, said Volker Perthes, head of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

And while Ms. Merkel has been pushing for increased military spending since before Mr. Trump's election, German officials say they recognize that Europe won't upstage the U.S. as a military power anytime soon.

As uncertainty with U.S. policy continues, Ms. Merkel is looking to strengthen cooperation with other countries including Canada and Australia, the person close to her said. If the U.S. walks away from the Paris agreement, China will move into a more influential role on climate policy, German officials have said. The prime ministers of India and of China are making separate visits to Berlin this week.

"The world goes on, the world will continue to cooperate," Mr. Perthes said, summing up Berlin's message to Washington. "If you all don't want to cooperate, then others will cooperate."

She repeated her insistence that no Brexit deal with the European Union would be better than a bad deal. Mr. Corbyn argued that he would reach an accord allowing tariff-free trade with the European Union to continue despite his promise for "managed migration." He said that he expected that immigration "would probably come down" but gave no estimates on numbers.

Despite her recent difficulties, Mrs. May also has some solid reasons to be content. The Liberal Democrats, the most pro-European of the parties, have so far failed to convince the millions of voters who opposed Brexit that they offer a viable alternative.

And the right-wing, populist U.K. Independence Party appears to be in its death throes — with its main policies of quitting the European Union and curbing immigration now appropriated by the Conservatives.

That leaves Mrs. May in a straight fight with Mr. Corbyn, which most analysts still expect her to win.

Libyan community in Manchester who attends the mosque.



At least two congregants from the mosque reported Mr. Abedi to the authorities two years ago, the law enforcement official confirmed.

It is highly unusual for the British authorities to publicly confirm the existence of internal investigations into possible security lapses, but the British home secretary, Amber Rudd, welcomed the MI5 review on Monday, saying it was “the right first step” in learning from the Manchester attack.

“There is a lot of information coming out at the moment — about what happened, how this occurred, what people might or might not have known,” Ms. Rudd said in an interview with Sky News. “And I think it is right that the MI5 takes a look to find out what the facts are.”

She emphasized, however, that while the investigations into possible security failures would be useful, the main focus should be on the

terrorism investigation that is also underway.

Detectives investigating the attack said Friday that they had arrested most of the members of the network believed to have assisted Mr. Abedi on his suicide mission.

The police carried out a series of armed raids across Greater Manchester over the weekend that ended with the arrest of a 25-year-old man in the Old Trafford area of the city. The operation expanded on Monday to Shoreham-by-Sea, on the southeastern coast of England, where counterterrorism police officers arrested a 23-year-old.

That brought the number of arrests in the case to 16, the Greater Manchester Police said in a statement on Monday. Of those, two people have been released without charge.

Detective Chief Superintendent Russ Jackson made an appeal to

the public on Monday, asking whether anyone had seen Mr. Abedi with the suitcase on May 22. He said the authorities were particularly interested in Mr. Abedi’s whereabouts in the four days leading up to the attack as investigators continued to track down his final movements.

“We believe Abedi was in possession of this case in the days before the attack at Manchester Arena on Monday 22 May,” he said in a statement. “I want to stress that this is a different item than the one he used in the attack.”

Investigators suspect that Mr. Abedi received extensive training in Libya before returning to Britain, where he is thought to have received assistance from a local network in the days before the attack. The bombing, at Manchester Arena at the end of an Ariana Grande concert, was Britain’s deadliest since 2005.

“The suspect would have received training abroad, without a shadow of a doubt,” said David Videcette, a former detective for the Metropolitan Police. “To acquire these skills, you can’t sit in your bedroom and watch a YouTube video. It takes practice.”

Initial analysis of the attack pointed to a sophisticated cell that probably supplied logistical, technical and emotional support to the bomber “in order to keep him in a place where he is willing to blow himself up,” Mr. Videcette said.

While the police have said they believe that most of the people in Mr. Abedi’s network have been captured, Ms. Rudd warned on Sunday that some of its members could still be at large. The government has, however, lowered its national threat level to severe — the second-highest level — from critical.

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# U.K. Security Agency to Investigate How It Handled Intelligence on Suicide Bomber

Jenny Gross and Hassan Morajea

MANCHESTER, England—Britain’s MI5 security service has launched an internal investigation into how it handled intelligence about Manchester suicide bomber Salman Abedi, who killed 22 people in an attack outside a pop concert last week, a U.K. security official said Monday.

Abedi, a 22-year-old British-born son of Libyan immigrants, had been reported to the authorities for espousing extremist sentiments, saw combat as a teenager in Libya’s civil war and lived in a neighborhood that has produced recruiters and fighters for Islamic State.

Last week, Abedi, dressed in a puffy Hollister winter jacket, bluejeans and a gray baseball cap, walked into a crowd of concertgoers streaming out of a performance by American pop star Ariana Grande and detonated a shrapnel-filled explosive device in the deadliest terror attack in Britain since 2005.

British officials have said Abedi was “known” to security services. He was one of 20,000 suspected extremists MI5 has tracked in the past, but wasn’t among 3,000 under active investigation by the agency at the

time of the bombing, the official said.

“He was part of an investigation that was closed, when it was decided it was not necessary or proportionate to continue it,” the official said. “We’re reviewing things in the sense that we’re looking back and want to learn lessons.”

Police on Monday were holding 14 people—including Abedi’s older brother and two cousins—as they tried to piece together what authorities have described as a possible “network” of accomplices that helped him prepare for and carry out the attack.

Abedi’s father and younger brother, Hashem, were in the custody of a Libyan militia in Tripoli.

Authorities worried Abedi had manufactured bomb materials that weren’t used in last week’s attack. But after days of searches and arrests around Manchester, the security services believed they had tracked down all of the hydrogen-peroxide-based explosives linked to Abedi, the official said.

Manchester police on Monday published a photograph of Abedi carrying a blue suitcase and appealed to members of the public for any information about the bag.

The police said there was no reason to believe the suitcase or its contents were dangerous, but advised caution.

Friends and acquaintances of Abedi say he had become increasingly religious and expressed interest in extremist groups in recent years.

In 2011, Abedi fought alongside his father as Libyan rebels sought to oust dictator Moammar Gadhafi. Many from Manchester’s Libyan community did the same. Abedi and other teenagers returned from the battlefield hardened, friends and community leaders said.

In the years that followed a number of young people from south Manchester left to fight with Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

Abedi moved in the same circles as Abdalraouf Abdallah, a Libyan who went on to become part of a recruitment network for Islamic State, according to another Libyan man who knew them both.

Like Abedi, Mr. Abdallah was in Libya during the fight to topple Mr. Gadhafi. He was seriously injured there and left unable to walk.

Authorities say that when Mr. Abdallah returned to Manchester, he helped people headed to Syria to

join Islamic State. Last year, he was sentenced to more than five years in prison for terrorism-related offenses.

Others from Manchester became well known as jihadists.

Raphael Hostey, who lived near Abedi, was a twentysomething recruiter and fighter for Islamic State killed in a drone strike in Syria last year. Former Guantanamo detainee Ronald Fiddler, 50, also from Manchester, in February detonated a suicide truck bomb while fighting for Islamic State in Mosul, Iraq.

Concerns in the Libyan community in Manchester had grown about Abedi long before Monday’s attack.

Mohammed Shafiq, chief executive of the Ramadhan Foundation, a Muslim organization here, said Abedi was reported to counterterror authorities three years ago, after he was heard “glorifying suicide bombings” and again two years ago.

A mosque that Abedi frequented also reported him to authorities and banned him, according to Mr. Shafiq. An imam at the mosque declined to comment.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

# Europe, Asia Stocks Muted as Holidays Keep Trade Thin

Erheriene

Manuela Mesco and Ese

European and Asian stocks had a muted start to the week, with holidays slowing activity world-wide Monday, as investors shrugged off

political concerns emerging after a meeting of world leaders over the weekend and another missile launch in North Korea.

After the annual summit of the Group of Seven industrialized countries, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Europe can no

longer completely rely on other countries, underlining her frustration with U.S. President Donald Trump.

At the G-7 summit in Italy over the weekend, Ms. Merkel and five other world leaders sought to convince Mr. Trump to keep the U.S. in the Paris climate agreement. Mr. Trump didn't commit one way or the other.

In Asia, North Korea fired a short-range ballistic missile within about 320 kilometers (200 miles) off Japan's coastline early Monday, the third week in a row that Asian investors have had to include a North Korea missile launch in their decision-making process.

The Euro Stoxx 50 was almost flat all day, a trend seen across the continent. Italy's FTSE MIB posted the strongest loss, ending down 2%.

Due to holidays in the U.K., U.S., China and Taiwan, trading was slow.

"I only see tough negotiations here, nothing else," said Vincent Juvyns, global market strategist at J.P. Morgan Asset Management. He said it was too early to be concerned from a macroeconomic perspective.

Later in the day, European Central Bank President Mario Draghi warned that it is too early to start

winding down the bank's large monetary stimulus, striking a cautious note in his last public comments before the ECB's June policy meeting.

After Mr. Draghi's comments, the euro currency weakened slightly against the dollar.

South Korea, arguably the most at risk sentiment-wise to worries about North Korea, continued to see investor interest early Monday as the Kospi benchmark stock index powered to fresh record highs and was again the region's best performer.

"The market is quite desensitized" at this point to North Korea's launches, said Jingyi Pan, a market strategist at IG Group.

Ahead later this week are manufacturing data from purchasing-managers reports and Friday's U.S. jobs data. The latter is likely to be "elevated in importance," with money managers using it to guide their rate expectations, Ms. Pan said.

—Kosaku Narioka and James Glynn contributed to this article.

## INTERNATIONAL

The  
Washington  
Post

### Bulldozers have become more crucial — and more vulnerable — in the fight against the Islamic State (UNE)

Pvt. Mohammed Ali al-Shwele, 19, uses his armored bulldozer to help move the battle of Mosul forward by clearing obstacles while creating ad hoc defenses. But he and his colleagues often come under heavy fire exposing how vulnerable they are. Watch what happens when an armored Iraqi bulldozer gets hit by a car bomb (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

MOSUL, Iraq — On the front lines, the jagged teeth of a young soldier's bulldozer mark the beginning of Iraq's territory and the end of the Islamic State's.

Pvt. Mohammed Ali al-Shwele is 19, weathered and lean. He has been shot at, rocketed and mortared while trying to protect the troops behind him. Using his cellphone, he captured one particularly harrowing moment, when a car bomb engulfed his armored behemoth in flames and shrapnel. The video went viral.

His minor celebrity status aside, Shwele and the cadre of bulldozer drivers like him are responsible for moving the war forward one block at a time. Iraqi officers won't start an offensive without them, and if a bulldozer is knocked out with no replacement, the day's operation is over.

"There can be no liberation without the bulldozer," Shwele said.

Bulldozers were essential to Iraqi forces as they pushed through Ramadi, Fallujah and eastern Mosul. Unlike other breaching equipment, such as specialized explosives or specifically outfitted

tanks, the bulldozers can clear obstacles while creating ad hoc defenses.

In western Mosul, with its crowded neighborhoods and increasingly complex ring of Islamic State defensive positions, the machines have become more crucial — and more of a target — than ever.

Soldiers such as Shwele, and the construction equipment they pilot, provide insight into what the fighting in the city has turned into after eight months of near-continuous combat. The battle is a daily grind, and despite the presence of drones, GPS-guided artillery and U.S. jets, the best way forward is still behind a mobile wall of steel.

Only a handful of neighborhoods in Mosul remain in the militant group's hands — including the Old City, where tens of thousands of people live. The Islamic State has fortified these areas, digging trenches and clogging streets with earthen berms in an attempt to delay Iraq's final push.

*[Away from Iraq's front lines, the Islamic State is creeping back in]*

Once the main logistics hub for the Islamic State's operations in Iraq and the birthplace of its self-declared caliphate, Mosul is critical for both sides. While Iraqi and U.S. officers have suggested that the fighting will end soon, some also have cautioned that the last stages of the battle will likely be the bloodiest.

As the final offensive begins, Shwele will be alone in the cab of

his bulldozer, elevated 10 feet off the ground.

His job will be twofold: to break through the Islamic State's defenses and to provide a barrier for whatever comes at the advancing troops behind him. Aside from screening for car bombs and acting as a mobile barricade with a top speed of just over 6 mph, his machine's 12-foot-wide blade will also act as a de facto minesweeper.

Schwele's dozer is a Caterpillar D7R, built in the United States. It is one of 132 sent to Iraq by the Pentagon since March 2015, according to data provided by the Defense Logistics Agency. It has additional armor but carries no weapons and weighs more than 32 tons. Websites price the civilian variant of the bulldozer at upwards of \$200,000.

Around the time the United States was sending the first bulldozers to Iraq, Schwele joined the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service, the U.S.-trained contingent of soldiers that has led nearly every offensive since the Islamic State swept across parts of Iraq three years ago. He wanted to see combat and instead was placed in a logistics battalion.

"I joined to fight, but then I realized that my job is more important than the job of the fighter on the ground," he said.

*[Smoke-filled pool halls are back in Mosul. After ISIS, 'we seek joy.']*

Shwele fought in Anbar province as a bulldozer driver before being sent to Mosul. He described breaking through a berm in Fallujah under so

much fire that the noise in his cab was deafening. Sometimes, Schwele said, he can still hear those bullets ricocheting off his machine even when he is far from the front.

Shwele's two best friends — both bulldozer drivers — were killed in Mosul. One died in the eastern part of the city when a car bomb hit him, and the other a few months later after a recoilless rifle round tore through his cab.

Massive and slow, the vehicles are a favorite target of the Islamic State. When they appear at the end of a street, the militants target their engine with rockets and car bombs.

The car bomb that knocked out Shwele's bulldozer earlier this month in the Ar Rafa'l neighborhood of Mosul sent steel into his left arm. He walked away but found his way back to the front 24 hours later.

As the counterterrorism forces moved to encircle some of the final neighborhoods of the city in May, three drivers were wounded in one day of fighting. With only one driver left, Maj. Ehab Jalil, a battalion commander for the unit, stopped the offensive.

The counterterrorism troops have lost eight bulldozers in eastern and western Mosul, according to their head logistics officer, Brig. Gen. Ali Jamal. Their burned-out hulks are scattered among the ruins of the city.

*[I thought, this is it: One man's escape from an Islamic State mass execution]*

Last month, the Iraqi Federal Police put out a call for volunteers following the deaths of dozens of their bulldozer drivers in a battle. Mohammed Kareem Ahmed, 27, and Muhsin Harir, 40, both infantrymen, raised their hands

Today's WorldView



Monday hit the northern Syrian city of Raqqa, the de facto capital of the Islamic State, as U.S.-backed fighters pushed closer to the extremist group's stronghold, activists said.

The developments come ahead of what is expected to be a major battle for Raqqa in the coming weeks.

Airstrikes have intensified in recent days as U.S.-backed fighters have advanced toward the city, getting closer to it from all sides. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have captured dozens of towns and villages under the cover of airstrikes by the U.S.-led coalition since November, when the group began an operation, titled Euphrates Wrath, aiming to

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

The men were given a 10-day training course on the tarmac of the Mosul airport before being sent to the front. They share a wheeled loader, nicknamed The Cutter, that does the same work as its tracked counterparts.

There are roughly 10 bulldozer drivers for Harir and Ahmed's Federal Police division, and both say they need more people and at least three more bulldozers before they have what they need to go into the Old City.

Among one another, the bulldozer drivers within the Federal Police call

themselves "The Suiciders," a name bandied about with a grinning pride.

"The infantry, they can hide behind a Humvee or a berm," Ahmed said. "I hide behind nothing."

## In Syria, more airstrikes hit IS de facto capital of Raqqa

More airstrikes and artillery shelling on

eventually surround and capture Raqqa.

SDF fighters have surrounded Raqqa from the north, west and east. The extremists still have an exit from the south, even though the coalition destroyed two bridges on the Euphrates River south of Raqqa.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the city had been pounded by warplanes and artillery since early morning. The activist group had no word on casualties from the new airstrikes, adding that about 38 people have been killed in Raqqa and its suburbs over the past three days.

The activist-operated Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently said that since Sunday, the coalition has carried out more than 30 airstrikes on the city, killing 35 people and

destroying a school on Raqqa's northern outskirts.

Today's Headlines newsletter

The day's most important stories.

On Sunday, opposition activists said the coalition dropped leaflets in Arabic on Raqqa, urging residents to leave the city. Some leaflets provided instructions on how to leave Raqqa, calling on people to keep their plans secret from the Islamic State and to leave without any weapons and waving a white banner.

"This is your last chance. Failing to leave could lead to death. Raqqa will fall. Don't be there when it happens," read one of the leaflets.

The Islamic State has been preventing people from leaving Raqqa, and many fear that residents will be used as human shields when

the SDF, the most effective force fighting the extremists in Syria, begin marching in the city, held by the Islamic State since January 2014.

In the capital, Damascus, the governor said the evacuation of the last group of opposition fighters and their families from the northeastern neighborhood of Barzeh was completed, after a group of more than 1,000 people left.

The evacuation of Barzeh leaves only one neighborhood on the edge of Damascus, Jobar, in the hands of opposition fighters. Evacuation deals in the area in recent months have left the government of President Bashar al-Assad firmly in control of the capital, once encircled by rebels.



## R. Kaplan : Trump's Budget Is American Caesarism

During his visit to Israel this week,

U.S. President Donald Trump made the strongest public link thus far between two important initiatives: reviving Israeli-Palestinian peace and creating an Israeli-Arab alliance to confront Iran. At his main event with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump ad-libbed about Saudi King Salman's potential role in brokering a peace agreement, saying the monarch "would love to see peace with Israel and the Palestinians."

At the heart of this agenda is the "outside-in" strategy for resuscitating Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The talks would be linked to the development of a broader Middle Eastern coalition to oppose Iran's ongoing expansion of influence in the Middle East and prepare for the day of reckoning when the nuclear agreement expires.

The Trump administration's big idea is reportedly that Sunni-majority Arab countries could form a NATO-like alliance. This grouping could then have a less formal but still highly cooperative relationship with Turkey. And, most importantly, it could engage in meaningful coordination and cooperation with Israel to form a united regional bloc

against additional Iranian mischief and pursuit of hegemony.

A new strategic affiliation between the Arabs and Israel — one that offered the latter new regional legitimacy, recognition, and a key role in a united front against its mortal enemy, Iran — would be meant to provide Israel new incentive to come to terms with an independent Palestinian state. The Palestinians, in turn, would be provided by Israel and Arab nations with political cover, diplomatic support, and economic aid to help make the necessary compromises for a final peace deal.

In theory, this is a great idea. It's the only approach that anyone has posited in many years that might break the deadlock, potentially offering a win-win-win scenario for Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab states. And there is evidence that Israel, some key Arab countries, and the Palestinians might be open to such a dynamic — if it can ever get off the ground.

But would-be peacemakers should not be preparing for their photo on the White House lawn just yet. The diplomatic and political obstacles in the region remain at least as daunting as the gains are enticing.

The key challenge is who will go — or perhaps blink — first. Israel already has peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, so the crucial players on the Arab side are Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and any other Arab countries they can bring along. The most promising development is a draft "discussion paper" being circulated by Saudi Arabia and the UAE that describes a range of confidence-building measures between Israel and the Arab countries. These would involve gestures such as telecommunications and commercial and overflight relations with Israel in exchange for Israeli moves toward the Palestinians, such as restricting settlement activities or easing the blockade on Gaza.

The mainstream Arab position is still characterized by the "Arab Peace Initiative," introduced by Saudi Arabia and unanimously adopted by the Arab League in 2002 and reconfirmed twice since then. It essentially promises Israel fully normalized diplomatic and trade relations with the Arab countries once they reach an agreement with the Palestinians. Israel has dismissed the proposal from its outset. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are now signaling they are prepared

to improve relations with Israel beyond the terms set by the initiative. Israel would be wise to recognize that the price for strategic cooperation with Arab countries and regional recognition of its de facto legitimacy have never been lower.

Israeli leaders might be tempted to believe that if they wait longer, the concessions required of them will drop still further still. That would be a mistake. The cost of normalized diplomatic ties is never going to be zero. These countries are constrained by both their long-standing diplomatic and political positions, genuine values, and honest assessment of the destabilizing political impact of the ongoing occupation that began in 1967 (and hence entering its 50th year with no end in sight).

In the past, major movement between Israel and Arab countries would have required a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. For a number of reasons, particularly mutual alarm about Iran, that's no longer the case. What's required is progress that can breathe new life into the long-term prospects for a two-state solution. The more steps Israel takes, the more the Arab countries can do in return. Under current circumstances,

the best-case scenario is probably some sort of interim accord that maintains Israel's overall security control, while also limiting Israeli settlement activity and other aspects of the occupation and expanding Palestinian prerogatives and areas of authority.

Trump seems to realize that this sort of partial agreement is the most that can be secured, which is probably why he doesn't bring up the two-state solution or Palestinian independence. If he's really shooting for an interim agreement — which would actually be the first major progress since 1993 and hence no mean feat — calling it “peace” would be consistent with his “truthful hyperbole” style of branding by exaggeration.

For the Arab countries, such an agreement is hardly ideal, but it would surely be enough to allow for greater cooperation with Israel. Even the revival of the process itself, short of an interim agreement, might allow for some significant steps. For Palestinians, the prospect is more painful — but the choice is also starker.

None of this is what Palestinians want, which is an independent state in place of the occupation. Moreover, the prospect of an interim agreement presents them with a dreadful but familiar choice. This is completely understandable: 50 years of occupation and 24 years of Oslo, both of which were supposed to be temporary, feel extremely permanent. Yet as so often in the past, Palestinians may be presented

with a very small and highly unsatisfactory set of limited gains, all of which come with a concomitant price. Or they can reject whatever is presented to them, and enjoy what they essentially have now, which amounts to nothing.

This is an infuriating conundrum. But it only has one rational answer, which is a grudging and resentful yes. Palestinians will be forced to compare the prospect of a deal with the situation they were in a few months ago. In recent years, they found themselves isolated, ignored, and deeply concerned that their issue had been discarded, not only by the international community but even by the Arab world. Now, suddenly, with Trump, they are back in the limelight, on the agenda and in the game.

For Abbas and his secular nationalist allies, this is all a political godsend. It not only revives their hopes that their diplomatic strategy can achieve tangible results, it also reaffirms their role on the international and regional stage. All that adds to the incentive to say yes — despite all the obvious reservations.

Shifting Israel might be more difficult. Netanyahu has expressed enthusiasm for stronger ties to Arab countries — but he's notoriously skeptical about a broader agreement with Palestinians. Left on his own, the prospect of stronger ties with Saudi Arabia and the UAE might entice him to make concessions. But some of his coalition partners, particularly Naftali

Bennett of the ultra-right-wing Jewish Home Party, are waiting to pounce on any moves he makes toward the Palestinians. Bennett's long-term prospects depend on challenging Netanyahu from his right, largely by denouncing him as compromising Israel's ambitions and security in the occupied territories. Netanyahu's strategy for preventing this has been to keep Bennett close within the cabinet — but if he wants to move in the direction in which Trump is nudging him, he would have to allow Bennett to leave the coalition in favor of center and center-left groups. The profoundly risk-averse Netanyahu might soon find himself with the unenviable choice of defying an American president who he hoped would be his strongest ally, or risk being outflanked on the right by powerful rivals.

This Israeli conundrum goes to the heart of why there is such an impasse in the peace process — and why the “outside-in” approach could work. Under current circumstances, most Israelis feel little pain from the status quo, and Palestinians lack any form of leverage to get them to consider compromising. It therefore seems a no-brainer for most Jewish Israelis and their politicians to take no risks politically or in terms of national security. Bringing in the Arab and regional component reminds Israelis of the broader context — including the threat from Iran and the myriad benefits that would come from greater cooperation with and recognition from the Arab world.

Perhaps the biggest challenge, though, amounts to a chicken-and-egg question: Which shall come first? Is Israel going to move into a serious process with the Palestinians, in hopes of stronger ties with the Arabs? Or will Arab countries start building more open and robust cooperation with Israel in hopes that the Israelis will be more cooperative on peace? Neither side is likely to move on spec.

Here's where the Trump factor becomes potentially decisive. Washington could push both sides together, but it would involve some very heavy lifting. It would probably require both carrots and sticks for the Israelis, which could come at a political price at home, especially among Republicans. And to move the Arab states, the United States would probably have to demonstrate some real progress in rolling back Iran's influence in countries like Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon. It's highly questionable if this is consistent with either Trump's “America First” agenda, or the widespread aversion among Americans to getting sucked into additional Middle Eastern imbroglions.

To produce this blockbuster, Trump, the reality TV veteran, will need to craft a script for Israelis, Palestinians, and Arabs that somehow combines *Let's Make a Deal* with *The Price is Right*. Even if he pulls it off, it still wouldn't really be “the ultimate deal,” as he keeps calling it. But it's close enough.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

### Prosor : There's Still Time to Avert War in Lebanon

Ron Prosor

Donald Trump called out Hezbollah at both stops on his Middle East trip last week. In Saudi Arabia he praised the Gulf Cooperation Council for designating the Iranian-backed Lebanese Shiite militia a terrorist organization and noted that Riyadh had placed sanctions on a senior Hezbollah figure. In Jerusalem Mr. Trump scored Hezbollah for launching rockets “into Israeli communities where schoolchildren have to be trained to hear the sirens and run to the bomb shelters—with fear, but with speed.”

The president and his national-security team must have taken a good look across Israel's northern border. Lebanon is at a crossroads. Decisions the president makes now could help prevent a devastating war between Israel and Hezbollah. Such a war would severely damage Lebanon and could drag the U.S. into another complex and costly entanglement in the Middle East.

Engagement today can prevent risks to American lives tomorrow.

Hezbollah is sponsored by Iran and has become increasingly brazen in the last decade. It is now more militarily powerful than most North Atlantic Treaty Organization members. It has 150,000 missiles and could launch 1,500 of them a day. From the ground, air or sea, it can strike anywhere in Israel. Lebanon's president, Michel Aoun, hasn't distanced the Lebanese army from Iran's proxy. Rather, he has embraced it. “Hezbollah's weapons do not contradict the national project,” he said in February, but are “a principal element of Lebanon's defense.”

Yet when Hezbollah acts, it does so with Iran's interests in mind—not Lebanon's. Iran would have no qualms spilling Lebanese blood in a war with Israel. Just look at Syria, where under Iranian direction, the Assad regime has unleashed genocide against the Sunni Arab

population using Hezbollah as its storm troops.

War between Israel and Lebanon is avoidable, but only if the world acts now—with American leadership. Hezbollah's ability to destabilize the region stems from the abject failure of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 and the peacekeeping force tasked with enforcing it, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, or Unifil.

Resolution 1701 was adopted unanimously after Israel was forced to fight a defensive war against Hezbollah in 2006. It mandated that Unifil keep southern Lebanon “free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons” and prevent the area from being used “for hostile activities of any kind.”

Like many U.N. resolutions, 1701 has been thoroughly ineffective. Hezbollah is 10 times as strong now as it was in 2006, and its military infrastructure permeates Lebanon. Yet Unifil claims ignorance of the

terror organization's arms buildup. Unifil's March 2017 report reaches new heights of absurdity, even for a U.N. organization: “To date, Unifil has neither been provided with, nor found, evidence of an unauthorized transfer of arms into its area of operations.”

Hezbollah must not be allowed to impose war on the region and tragedy on Lebanon while the Iranian regime rubs its hands. What can Mr. Trump do?

The U.S. should seek a U.N. Security Council resolution amending 1701 and providing Unifil with explicit powers to disarm Hezbollah and demilitarize South Lebanon under Chapter 7 of the U.N. charter, the section that deals with peace enforcement. Currently Unifil derives its legal mandate from Chapter 6, which deals with peacekeeping. Peacekeeping helps local restaurants stay in business but does little to enforce peace.

As usual, the tab for U.N. failure in Lebanon is being paid by American taxpayers. The U.S. picks up 43% of Unifil's \$488 million annual budget. Congress should make that funding conditional on performance.

Now is the time to update Resolution 1701. War between Lebanon and Israel would be detrimental to Russian interests in Syria, so Vladimir Putin could be

convinced to help rein in Hezbollah. For the Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, containing Hezbollah and Iran is a priority. Western Europe should be eager to avoid a war that would worsen its refugee crisis. Meanwhile, finding common ground over Lebanon and Syria could strengthen cooperation between Israel and the Sunni Arab states searching for a lasting

solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem.

President Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have a historic opportunity to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right place: to show that U.S. diplomatic intervention today can prevent the need to make terrible decisions about U.S. military intervention tomorrow.

*Mr. Prossor, a former Israeli ambassador to the U.N., is chairman of the Interdisciplinary Center's International Diplomacy Institute and an executive-in-residence at Liontree.*

## The New York Times Egypt's President Enacts Law Placing Severe Restrictions on Aid Groups

Declan Walsh

"Egypt and other regimes like Bahrain definitely feel they have a green light from Trump to undertake repressive actions in the name of counterterrorism and to anticipate that the Trump administration will not issue a word of criticism," said Amy Hawthorne, an Egypt expert at the Project on Middle East Democracy in Washington.

Mr. Sisi argues that harsh measures are needed to counter the threat from violent extremists like the Islamic State, which since December has killed more than 100 Christians in a campaign of sectarian violence. In the latest attack, on Friday, gunmen killed 30 people as they traveled to a monastery in southern Minya governorate.

Critics counter that Mr. Sisi's counterterrorism strategy is in fact foundering badly, yet the president seems intent on scapegoating progressives and political rivals.

The law approved on Monday by Mr. Sisi places harsh restrictions on

Egypt's 47,000 local nongovernmental organizations as well as about 100 foreign-financed ones. It makes their work subject to approval by a new regulatory body that aid workers say is likely to be little more than a vehicle for interference by the country's security agencies.

Aid groups will need permission from the new body, which has not yet been established, to conduct fieldwork or publish surveys, and more broadly must ensure their work "fits the state's plans, development needs and priorities," according to the law.

"This is a complete disaster," said Mohamed Zaree, a prominent Egyptian human rights defender. "They have taken away everything. It's over. It's not just human rights organizations — they are also going after charities and any organized group they do not already control."

Mr. Zaree himself is currently facing trial on charges of endangering national security, and has been banned from leaving Egypt.

Last week, Mr. Sisi's government blocked 21 websites in Egypt, including Al Jazeera; the Arabic language version of The Huffington Post; and Mada Masr, an independent news organization that has published several investigations into the workings of the security agencies. After an outcry on social media, Mada Masr appeared to be working again on Monday.

On May 23, the police arrested Khaled Ali, a prominent human rights lawyer who led opposition to Mr. Sisi's decision early last year to hand over possession of two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia. That agreement angered the Egyptian public, and it is one of the few issues where Mr. Sisi is considered politically vulnerable.

Some saw the arrest as part of an effort by Mr. Sisi to clear the field of rivals before next year's presidential election. If Mr. Ali, one of those rivals, is convicted on charges of "violating public morals," he faces a potential two-year prison sentence and will be disqualified from running for office.

In Washington, Mr. Sisi's warm relationship with Mr. Trump has been offset by stiff criticism from Mr. McCain and Mr. Graham. In a joint statement in December, they slammed the new aid law as "draconian" and vowed to push for restrictions on American aid to Egypt, currently at about \$1.3 billion a year, if it is enacted. Their offices could not be reached for comment on Monday.

"This is a very bad day for Egypt," said Ms. Hawthorne, the analyst, who predicted that the new law would weaken Egypt by effectively criminalizing the work of many aid groups.

"We have a terrible experience of seeing what happens when authoritarian regimes crush the space between citizens and the state," she said. "It's what happened under Qaddafi in Libya, and it's what happened under Saddam Hussein in Iraq. And it never leads to stability."

## Bloomberg Bershidsky : U.S.-Russia Relations After Putin and Trump

What if the U.S. accepted that Russia, long-term, is part of the West?

European Council President Donald Tusk said after meeting with Donald Trump on Thursday that the two had diverging views on Russia. Though no details of the differences have been divulged, one can safely assume Trump was more dovish on Russia than Tusk -- despite all his troubles with the Russia-related scandal at home. To some, it may suggest that Russia has some leverage on him; to me, it means Trump still holds on to the notion that he can build a pragmatic relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

QuickTake Cool War

The shape of such a relationship, however, is not obvious. It's more complicated than the simplistic

ideological dilemma between the appeasement of a rogue regime and a cynical understanding of American military and economic interests. The fundamental issue is whether the U.S. wants a long-term relationship with Russia that goes beyond the tenures of Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The answer to that question may be "no." Some of Putin's fiercest enemies, especially in Ukraine, hope his corrupt, oil-fed regime is leading Russia toward a Soviet-style collapse and disintegration. If that's your prediction, a long-term relationship isn't necessary and all that's needed is enough strategic patience to bring about that outcome. Harsh economic sanctions and pressure on the oil price should eventually do the trick, perhaps even with benign consequences. After all, Western leaders who feared the Soviet Union's collapse

as a threat to global stability turned out to be overcautious: The mafia didn't get a hold of Russian nuclear weapons and no Yugoslavia-style war broke out in the post-Soviet space.

Waiting for Russia to implode sounds like the tactic employed by the Komodo dragon, whose bite injects a blood-thinning poison into a prey's blood. The giant lizard then follows the prey as it bleeds to death. The problem with this approach is that while the Komodo's hunt ends when the victim dies, Russia's not going to die even if it ever falls apart, which is not likely anyway because it's far more resilient economically than the Soviet Union was. The U.S. will need to build relations with multiple rather large, resource-rich territories with unpredictable political leanings and military impulses. Only a minority of post-Soviet states ended

up choosing a pro-Western orientation, even after 25 years of U.S. effort. Betting that a disintegrating Russia will be easier to handle is a mistake. For example, the Caucasus, if it ever splits off, is more likely to lean toward Islamic fundamentalism than toward the West.

So a long-term relationship with Russia based on recognition that the country is going to be around for a while is probably a good idea. Russia is big, easy to find on the map. In a pinch, it's capable of near-autarky. And it's been a military power to reckon with for centuries. Putin will give up power, die, or both at the same time -- but the country that's become hard for many people to detach from his personality is going to endure.

The U.S. could choose to treat Russia as a long-term geopolitical

rival, a dangerous counterweight to Western values, a global corrupting influence in other nations' elections and more. After all, the Byzantine tradition that spawned Putin has been one of the most potent strains of Russian life for centuries, and it won't go away when he's gone. Deciding that this strain is the essence of Russia, and fighting against it even when its representatives aren't ostensibly in power, is a clear, principled stand. It's essentially what George Kennan advocated in his "Long Telegram," and much of Kennan's description of the Soviet Union in 1946 fits Putin's Russia, so that's an argument in favor of the approach Kennan described quite succinctly. Russia, he wrote, is

impervious to logic of reason, and it is highly sensitive to logic of force. For this reason it can easily withdraw -- and usually does when strong resistance is encountered at any point. Thus, if the adversary has sufficient force and makes clear his readiness to use it, he rarely has to do so. If situations are properly handled there need be no prestige-engaging showdowns.

All the U.S. needs to do, then, is demonstrate convincingly but carefully that it can use force, and Russia -- with or without Putin at the helm -- will retreat. It's not clear, though, whether the U.S. can afford to project strength every time Russia provokes it. Would a U.S. administration enhance or reduce its popularity by going all-in in Syria to remove President Bashar al-Assad? How many U.S. voters would agree to a military adventure in Ukraine? Clearly, less resolute U.S. action is not seen in Moscow as a credible show of strength. Putin is always willing to go an extra step because he's not held back by any democratic baggage, and the likelihood that Russia will have other rulers like him on a long-term horizon is quite high. That undermines the neo-Kennanist narrative.

There is an alternative to the Komodo dragon tactic and the Kennan deterrence doctrine. It's to ignore Putin's self-serving vision of Russia as a conservative, Orthodox bulwark against Western rot and Islamism as a flimsy propaganda construct, and to see the country, ultimately, as part of the Western civilization. It's not much harder than viewing today's Hungary or Poland through that lens despite the setbacks democracy and Western values have suffered in these countries.

Such a perspective would dictate a clear strategy: Cooperate with Russia where it's acting fundamentally like a Western country and confront it where it isn't. For example, Russia's support of the secular Assad regime against Islamic fundamentalist groups is in the Western tradition. Despite all the crimes Assad has committed, his fall would have made non-Sunni communities in Syria all but impossible to protect. Letting Russia prop up Assad and allying with it in the fight against ISIS wouldn't break with the long U.S. practice of backing pre-Arab Spring regimes throughout the Middle East and making alliances with repressive Gulf states. The U.S. isn't morally or ideologically bound to back the anti-Assad opposition: If it ever has the run of the country, it will not turn Syria toward the West.

On the other hand, Russia's territorial grab in Ukraine was decidedly un-Western. The U.S. was right to try to strengthen Ukraine economically and institutionally in its wake, though perhaps wrong in its choice of political forces to back, since the corruption of Ukraine's current leadership risks discrediting Western values in that country. The U.S. decision to withhold lethal weapons from the Kiev regime, however, was correct because arming it could have led to an escalation that could potentially harm the Western world.

Russia harbors an essentially Western desire for free trade and open borders. It's evident from its attempts to build a customs union with former Soviet states, its benign attitude toward emigration and immigration, and its persistence in seeking to join the World Trade Organization despite political obstacles. That desire deserves support. Sectoral economic sanctions that prompt the Putin government to retaliate are a mistake: They push the country in the opposite, non-Western direction.

Personal sanctions against officials who push anti-Western, Byzantine policies, those who have taken part in aggression against Ukraine, those who violate human rights and persecute minorities or dissidents are perfectly justified. The West, and the U.S. in particular, would also be justified in banning Russian state-owned "media outlets": The propaganda machine is an affront to the Western idea of a free press. The West has every right to withhold its welcome from certain representatives of the Russian regime and demonstrate its hostility toward what they stand for. But sanctions directed against Russia as a country and Russians as a group are counterproductive. The West should relax visa policies, perhaps even offer visa-free travel to Russians and create more opportunities for them in universities and Western companies. The real reason the European Union is doing it for Ukrainians isn't to reward the government in Kiev for being good boys and girls. It's to give Ukrainians an opportunity to taste Western life, study it and build it at home. Russians should also have that opportunity; otherwise alternatives to their current government will not naturally occur to them.

Putin and his men enjoy Russia's current toxicity in Washington and Brussels. It's a bit counterproductive but it means recognition for their prowess as trolls and hybrid warriors, and it shows Russians they're hated, feared, not wanted in

the West. That sense is the root of domestic support for Putin's policies. That's the opposite of what the U.S. would want if it saw Russia, long-term, as part of the West.

Making a deal in Syria, expanding trade and easing travel for Russians while backing Ukraine's pro-Western course, maintaining personal sanctions against Russian officials, and fighting Russian state propaganda looks to many Westerners like a self-contradictory policy. It's not. It's about dealing with the current Russian leadership only to the extent necessary to maintain the long-term view that Russia is part of the West. Russia's seen regime change more often than most Western nations. The pendulum will swing back and forth, regimes will come and go, but the country and its people remain, and keeping the door open for Russia and Russians -- not just promising to open it if certain conditions are met -- is a powerful long-term enticement.

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

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The Trump administration doesn't appear to be into long-term thinking. Instinctively, however, Trump and his allies appear to embrace some seemingly contradictory policies that would support the kind of long game I have described. Tusk, for example, found that Trump shared his anti-Kremlin views on Ukraine, though the U.S. president clearly leans toward working with Russia in Syria. That's a good place to start; it won't be the first time that intellectual arguments need to catch up with instincts.

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



## Editorial : The Trans-Pacific Partnership Can Succeed Without the U.S.

The U.S. signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal last year, then decided not to implement it. The 11 other signatories have given themselves until November to decide whether to go ahead anyway. They shouldn't need half that long. The deal as it stands is far better than none.

Contrary to warnings from some quarters, America's absence needn't kill the agreement. Negotiators mainly have to change the clause that says it must be ratified by countries accounting for 85 percent of the 12 members' gross domestic

product (the U.S. is 60 percent). Other provisions dealing specifically with the U.S. will need to be adjusted or ignored, but if the 11 want to proceed, they can.

QuickTake Free Trade and Its Foes

Some are hesitating. Malaysia and Vietnam, whose prime minister visits the White House this week, say they made concessions only in return for better access to the massive U.S. market. Yet apart from a few areas such as textiles, footwear, agriculture and some auto products, the U.S. market was

already pretty open. Without the U.S., expanded intra-regional trade will deliver smaller benefits, but the deal is still a net plus.

The fact is, many of the so-called concessions granted during the talks don't require reciprocal sacrifices to make sense -- they're valuable in their own right. The TPP requires structural reforms in Japanese agriculture, for instance, and Vietnam's state-owned industries. The respective governments understand that those changes are necessary to raise productivity and living standards, but they're

politically challenging. The TPP is a way to carry them forward.

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

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In other ways, too, there's more to the deal than lower tariffs. The TPP offers a standard-setting rulebook for doing business globally in the 21st century, covering intellectual property, digital trade and environmental protection. If it goes ahead, membership is likely to grow.

Before long, South Korea and Indonesia will feel inclined to sign up. Nations far from the Pacific Rim will look to TPP rules for guidance on how to stay competitive.

The only party to lose in this scenario is the U.S. It will forgo the gains in trade it would have enjoyed,

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Robert D. Kaplan

Thucydides, who chronicled the Peloponnesian War that shook the classical world, believed that behind the specific events that lead to war lie deeper, structural stresses. It is fear, honor and self-interest, mixed with domestic hysteria and years of building tensions, that can overwhelm sound analysis during a crisis. In "Destined for War," a brief but far-reaching book in which potted history is incisively deployed, Graham Allison explores how America and China may be on a collision course because of what he calls "Thucydides's trap." As he reminds us, the ancient Greek historian wrote: "It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this instilled in Sparta that made war inevitable." As we revisit this passage, Mr. Allison says, "alarm bells should sound," because of the rise of China and the fear it has instilled in the United States.

Mr. Allison, a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School, has found 16 cases in the past 500 years "in which a major nation's rise has disrupted the position of a dominant state," most notably a rapidly industrializing Germany threatening Britain's domination in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The result of that rivalry, he writes, was a "new category of violent conflict: world war." In 12 of the 16 cases he surveys, the result was war of some kind.

In the case of Japan in the late 1930s and early 1940s, war was driven, in significant measure, by a trade conflict. In other cases, domestic politics played a role, prompting leaders to appease local factions by undertaking aggression for the sake of a perceived sense of

and it will have less leverage in future trade talks with Japan, Canada and Mexico. Some U.S. companies may shift operations to other TPP members to take advantage of concessions originally won by U.S. negotiators. If that is how things unfold, the U.S. might ask to be let back in.

honor. In many instances, a rising state's actual intentions were less crucial than its growing military capabilities and how they were interpreted abroad. That's why in 1907 Britain demanded that Germany stop its naval expansion—it thought standing up to a "bully" was the best strategy. The German response was to build warships faster.

Descending into war is lamentably easy, Mr. Allison suggests. He quotes the historian Paul Kennedy saying that both Britain and Germany considered their clash in 1914 as "but a continuation of what had been going on for at least fifteen or twenty years." Miscalculations and small incidents intensify existing strains between nations.

The America-China rivalry fits many of these scenarios, Mr. Allison believes. In both countries populist upheavals have roiled domestic politics and challenged the "historic mission" of the rival state, leading to a kind of doubling down among members of the establishment in Beijing and Washington regarding issues like trade and the South China Sea. Chinese President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption drive and intensifying nationalism, as well as President Donald Trump's America First dogmatism, fits this historical pattern. As Mr. Allison notes bluntly: "The United States and China are alike in at least one respect: both have extreme superiority complexes." America thinks its accumulation of world power is benign. Well, so did ancient Athens, and it led only to a cataclysmic war with Sparta.

One of the many strengths of "Destined for War" is the restoration of the late Samuel Huntington's

Malaysia has proposed a different way forward -- a more exhaustive renegotiation of the pact. This seems ill-advised. It would make things difficult for countries such as Japan and New Zealand that have already ratified the TPP, and would delay implementation far past the end of this year.

"Clash of Civilizations" theory, disparaged in the mid-1990s but subliminally gaining force by the day. Mr. Allison approvingly paraphrases Huntington's notion that "the Western myth of universal values" is "not just naive but inimical to other civilizations, particularly the Confucian one with China at its center." The march toward war builds with such seemingly lofty but in fact self-centered concepts.

To the Chinese, the mere presence of American warships in the South and East China seas, coming from half a world away, is blatantly hegemonic, while the presence of their own warships in those seas is altogether natural, little different from our Navy and Coast Guard in the greater Caribbean. For America's leaders, far-flung U.S. power is, in general, a check on regional bullies whose actions would threaten the interests and autonomy of American allies. Faced with such differences in perspective, a descent into war by way of some instigating incident—at sea, in the air, amid a North Korean crisis—would be judged by history as perfectly normal.

Aggravating the possible march toward war, according to Mr. Allison, is China's economic growth. In 1980 America's share of the global economic market was 22%, while China's was 2%. Now America's share is 16%, and China's is 18%. Mr. Allison concedes that growth in China has come down by a third since the recession of 2008 but notes that global economic growth during this period has been cut in half. Indeed, the U.S. economy has been averaging just 2.1% annual growth, several points behind China. Meanwhile, China's "One Belt, One

Better to bank what's already been achieved, then build on that. No question, this would be a smaller success than the TPP's architects had hoped, but a notable achievement nonetheless.

Road" initiative—aimed at joining an array of nations in a transportation infrastructure network—amounts to nothing less than several Marshall Plans for Asia.

Mr. Xi is remaking China's sense of itself with an appeal to national greatness, and he is playing the U.S. perfectly in the South China Sea. Chinese strategists see war as mainly psychological and political. The military steps are limited to the incremental at the moment, to avoid a decisive battle with the U.S. Navy, which China would lose. China is already at war, in other words, even if we don't notice it.

Perhaps we can avoid war, Mr. Allison says, by negotiating a long peace with China, even accommodating some of its ambitions while trying to undermine the moral basis of Chinese Communist rule. China's rulers face a problem of legitimacy greater than that of our own leaders. The richer and more complex Chinese society becomes, the more freedom its people will demand. And then the internal crisis will come. Whether the result will be external aggression—making war a likely destination—or a partial political breakdown that makes China less able to wage war is unknown. One thing is clear: The next few decades in China will be far harder for us to interpret than the past few.

*Mr. Kaplan, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security and a senior adviser at Eurasia Group, is the author of "Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific."*

## The New York Times

### China Charges Activist From Taiwan With 'Subverting State Power'

Chris Horton and Chris Buckley

Beijing broke off official communications with Taiwan after Ms. Tsai, in her inauguration speech, declined to yield to Chinese demands that she endorse a political formula that holds that Taiwan is part of "One China" that includes both mainland China and Taiwan.

Mr. Lee was detained on March 19 after crossing into mainland China from Macau, a former Portuguese colony that has limited autonomy from Beijing. Since then he has been held incommunicado, denied family visits and access to lawyers.

In the announcement of Mr. Lee's arrest, An Fengshan, a spokesman for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said Mr. Lee visited China frequently over the past five years and

"colluded with relevant individuals in the mainland, laying down an operational program, establishing an illegal organization and planning and implementing activities to subvert state power." Mr. An offered no evidence to support these claims.

The Chinese government has in recent years increasingly used the crimes of "subversion" or "inciting subversion" to imprison political dissidents and human rights

advocates. Chinese courts come under Communist Party control and rarely reject the prosecution's case, especially in politically charged trials. Defendants found guilty of subversion can face up to life in prison, although shorter sentences are more common.

Last year, Peter Dahlin, a Swedish man living in Beijing who helped train Chinese legal advocates to challenge government decisions,

was detained in secrecy and then expelled after he was made to confess on television.

Mr. An said that Mr. Lee and his Chinese associates had “candidly confessed” to the allegations. He did not give any details.

People close to Mr. Lee said that he sympathized with China’s beleaguered democracy movement and, before his detention, spoke weekly with Chinese contacts via the social media app WeChat about Taiwan’s experiences with democratization. They also said he had donated money and books to relatives of Chinese rights lawyers who had been imprisoned on the same charges he now faced.

Mr. Lee worked as a manager at a community college in Taipei and was a volunteer for Covenants

Watch, an alliance of human rights organizations in Taiwan. Previously, he also worked in the Democratic Progressive Party.

The Democratic Progressive Party issued a statement on Saturday criticizing China for not making public any evidence of Mr. Lee’s purported crimes and for not formally notifying the Taiwan government of his detention. China’s opaque handling of Mr. Lee’s case was “certain to produce a chilling effect on the Taiwanese people” and had already “hurt the international image of the Chinese mainland,” the party said.

China’s handling of Mr. Lee has added to the frosty relations across the Taiwan Strait. Beijing did not acknowledge his detention until 10 days after his disappearance. Last

month, China barred Mr. Lee’s wife, Lee Ching-yu, from flying to Beijing to inquire about him.

In addition to trying to fly to China, Ms. Lee has publicly campaigned to free her husband, holding numerous news conferences and, last week, testifying before a United States House of Representatives committee about her husband’s plight.

Eeling Chiu, secretary general of the Taiwan Association for Human Rights, said that China’s treatment of Mr. Lee was likely to lead nonprofit workers from Taiwan — many of whom were engaged in less politically sensitive areas such as environmental protection — to question whether it was safe for them to operate in the mainland.

“I’m afraid that this is going to result in serious concerns for a lot of people who go over to China,” Ms. Chiu said in an interview.

Chinese state news outlets have marshaled mainland Chinese academics to reject the criticisms from Taiwan, endorse the government’s handling of Mr. Lee and argue that other people visiting the mainland from Taiwan need not fear arrest — so long as they obey the laws.

“The evidence of Lee Ming-cheh’s suspected crimes is abundant,” Xinhua, the Chinese state news agency, said on Saturday, citing Chinese scholars. “The mainland’s handling of this shows laws must be followed, laws rigorously enforced and lawbreaking punished.”

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

# North Korea Claims Breakthrough in Missile Technology

Jonathan Cheng

SEOUL—North Korea’s latest missile launch is its third apparent breakthrough in missile technology in less than three weeks.

Pyongyang claimed Tuesday that the short-range ballistic missile fired Monday had a speeded-up launch process and a precision-control guidance system that can zero in within 23 feet of a target.

If true, the North’s new capability would mark the third major milestone that North Korea has claimed in less than three weeks. Tuesday’s claim follows the launch of what analysts believe is North Korea’s longest-range functioning missile and the test-firing last week of a solid-fueled missile that requires virtually no preparation time before launch.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attended Monday’s test-launch, the state-run North Korean Central News Agency said Tuesday. It said the missile was fired from the back of a “newly designed” launch vehicle.

The missile employed a preparatory launch process that was more highly automated “for markedly reducing the launching time” of its traditional liquid-fueled missiles, Mr. Kim was quoted as saying.

Almost all of North Korea’s missiles use liquid fuel and must be filled at the launch site before firing, a laborious process that makes the missile vulnerable to a pre-emptive strike. North Korea has recently turned to developing solid-fueled missiles that contain the fuel inside and don’t need to be filled beforehand.

But according to North Korea’s latest boast, the liquid-fueled missile tested Monday, which analysts believe to be a variant of a short-range liquid-fueled Scud missile, can now be launched with less lead time.

Also notable were the North’s new claims of precision guidance. The missile featured stabilization systems to regulate speed and altitude, and a warhead with “control wings” that “correctly hit a planned target point with deviation of seven meters,” or 23 feet, the state news agency said.

The missile was first displayed at North Korea’s mid-April military parade in central Pyongyang, the report said, where independent analysts noted the apparently new missile and have provisionally labeled it the KN-17.

The missile, launched at 5:10 a.m. local time Monday from near the east-coast city of Wonsan, reached a maximum altitude of about 75 miles before splashing down six minutes and 280 miles later in the waters between Korea and Japan, according to the U.S. and South Korean militaries.

Monday’s test showed Mr. Kim isn’t throttling back in his drive to perfect his growing arsenal, particularly to develop a long-range missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead.

The launches are also likely to be a headache for South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who has been riding a wave of popularity since he was sworn in on May 10, ending a political crisis capped by the impeachment and then arrest of his predecessor, Park Geun-hye.

As North Korea continues its missile push, Mr. Moon’s pledge to seek more dialogue and economic cooperation with Pyongyang—Ms. Park was a hard-liner—is likely to run into growing concerns both within South Korea and internationally about a softer policy.

Monday’s test-launch “is an embarrassment for Moon Jae-in, and sets a very high barrier to change on the policy toward North Korea,” said Jung Kim, professor of political science at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. “Without at least a behavioral change by North Korea, it’s very hard to justify any kind of departure from the status quo right now.”

U.S. Sen. Cory Gardner (R., Colo.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s subpanel on East Asia, said Monday evening in Seoul that the missile launches underscored North Korea’s indifference to the new Moon administration’s attempts to pursue engagement with Pyongyang.

“If this administration is willing to take a different path than the previous administration, it apparently doesn’t mean anything to North Korea because we’ve now seen a third missile launch since this president has been inaugurated,” Mr. Gardner said. “It just shows what kind of a regime you’re dealing with.”

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Twitter Monday that “North Korea has shown great disrespect for their neighbor, China, by shooting off yet another ballistic missile.” But he added that “China is trying hard!”—an apparent reference to Beijing’s efforts to tighten sanctions enforcement on North Korea.

Earlier this year, China said it would suspend imports of coal from North Korea, in a move that would deprive the isolated country of a major source of income.

The attempts to squeeze North Korea come as the country has touted new capabilities with its recent launches.

Two weeks ago, Pyongyang test-fired a missile that it later called the Hwasong-12, which analysts said could fly 2,800 miles—considerably farther than its previous missiles, and far enough to reach the U.S. military base on Guam. About a week later came the Polaris-2 missile, fueled by a solid rather than a liquid fuel—meaning it requires much less time to prepare for launch, giving Pyongyang more flexibility and stealth.

Mr. Kim, the North Korean leader, last week declared the Polaris-2—unveiled about three months earlier—“very accurate,” and ordered its mass production, according to North Korea’s state media.

After Monday’s launch, Mr. Kim called for more missile research, which he said would allow the North “to send bigger ‘gift package’ to the Yankees.”

“Whenever news of our valuable victory is broadcast recently, the Yankees would be very much worried about it and the gangsters of the South Korean puppet army would be dispirited more and more,” Mr. Kim was quoted as saying.

In Japan, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said the projectile had landed within 200 miles of the nation’s coastline, meaning it had fallen within its exclusive economic



zone. "We condemn these actions in the strongest manner," he said.

"This cannot be tolerated," said Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who told reporters he would

work with the U.S. and South Korea to monitor North Korea's actions.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Forrest : The 'Business Case' for Paris Is Bunk

Cliff Forrest

As President Trump weighs whether to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change, some have tried to present a "business case" for why the U.S. should stay in. An economic windfall would come with the early and aggressive investment in alternative energy that the accord mandates, or so the argument goes. The Paris Agreement's backers have told a very incomplete story and reached the wrong conclusion.

The economic merits of the Paris Agreement take on a different air when more fully considered. Climate-change advocates' bizarre premise is that economic gains will come from restricting access to the most abundant, reliable and affordable fuel sources. Never mind that this defies the experience of many European nations that have invested heavily in renewable energy. After "Germany's aggressive and reckless expansion

of wind and solar," for example, the magazine Der Spiegel declared in 2013 that electricity had become "a luxury good." Apparently this time will be different.

There are a few interesting hypocrisies to consider as well. The commercial interests that strongly support the Paris Agreement typically have created programs to exploit, game or merely pass through the costs of the climate-change agenda. Many also maintain a green pose for marketing purposes. The classic example of this rent-seeking behavior was Enron, which in 1996 purchased Zond Energy Systems (now GE Wind) to complement its gas pipeline. Enron then set about lobbying its way to green-energy riches. It seems that Paris backers hope for a sudden public amnesia about the many businesses that use government to push out smaller competitors.

Green companies also argue that, beyond economic benefits, their ability to slow climate change helps contribute to the public good. To my knowledge, none declare a measurable impact on climate from their businesses or their desired policies.

Mr. Trump should keep in mind that the people calling for him to stick with the Paris Agreement largely did not support him during the campaign. Few would like to see him succeed now. As for his strongest supporters, they're the ones who will take the hit if he breaks his promise to withdraw.

Some countries have threatened to punish the U.S. if it pulls out of the accord. Rodolfo Lacy Tamayo, Mexico's undersecretary for environmental policy and planning, said in an interview with the New York Times: "A carbon tariff against the United States is an option for us." Countries imposing costs on their own industries through the

Paris Agreement complain that they are at a disadvantage if the U.S. doesn't do the same. Apparently they didn't receive the talking points describing green energy as an economic boon for everyone involved.

So which is it? Does the Paris Agreement spur a U.S. economy otherwise unprepared to succeed in the 21st century? Or is the U.S. maintaining economic advantage by not subjecting itself to the accord's arduous requirements?

Mr. Trump's obligation is to do what is in America's best interest. Rejecting a confused and costly international agreement, with questionable benefits to climate, should be a slam dunk. Don't take my word for it: Just study the other side's arguments.

*Mr. Forrest is CEO of Rosebud Mining.*



### Ted Cruz: Trump should withdraw from Paris climate pact

(CNN)Following a successful international tour and the G-7 Summit in Italy, President Trump has an opportunity to relieve our nation of the unfair and economically devastating requirements of the Paris Agreement, the United Nations climate treaty he pledged to rip up during the campaign.

And as soon as possible, President Trump should act on -- and keep -- his campaign promise.

The agreement, signed by the Obama administration last year, would commit the United States to drastically reducing its carbon emissions while allowing some countries to increase theirs. This, all while doing nothing to meaningfully decrease global temperatures.

According to a recent National Economic Research Associates Economic Consulting study, the Paris Agreement could obliterate \$3 trillion of GDP, 6.5 million industrial sector jobs and \$7,000 in per capita household income from the American economy by 2040. Meeting the 2025 emissions reduction target alone could subtract \$250 billion from our GDP and eliminate 2.7 million jobs. The cement, iron and steel, and petroleum refining industries could see their production cut by 21% 19%, and 11% respectively.

Not only would these unfair standards reduce American job growth and wages and increase monthly utility costs for hardworking families, they would fundamentally disadvantage the United States in the global economy. The result: our economic output would lag while other countries continued to expand their GDPs.

The agreement's proponents market it as a panacea for addressing the impacts of climate change, but at its core, it is about increasing government control -- over the economy, the energy sector and nearly every aspect of our daily lives. It represents the exact misguided, top-down, government-knows-best approach that American voters resoundingly rejected in 2016.

We cannot pursue a path that puts American workers first if we cripple a fossil fuel energy sector that generates 82% of the energy consumed in the United States. The coal industry alone supplies almost one-third of America's electric power -- with an increasing amount of clean coal-burning technology becoming available.

America is poised to become a net energy exporter over the next decade. We should not abandon that progress at the cost of weakening our energy renaissance and crippling economic growth.

And let's not forget the massive utility cost increases the agreement would entail. The Clean Power Plan, a major component of fulfilling the agreement, would spike energy costs for working and middle-class Texans by 16% by 2030, according to the Economic Reliability Council of Texas, the entity that operates the electric grid for much of our state.

We simply cannot afford an agreement that puts thousands of Americans out of work, increases their energy costs and devastates our core industries.

In return for crippling our economy, the Paris Agreement would do next to nothing to impact global temperatures. Under the EPA's own models, if all carbon emissions in America were basically eliminated, global temperatures would only decrease by less than two-tenths of a degree Celsius.

While the agreement would have a negligible impact on temperatures, America would be putting itself at a competitive disadvantage. That's because while the Obama administration irresponsibly committed America to immediate, real cuts in emissions, our global economic competitors would have no such handicap. In fact, Russia is permitted to increase its emissions approximately 50% and China and India have no meaningful cap on emissions until 2030.

This disparity among the countries' pledges inflicts real losses on our economy now while our rivals continue to grow, industrialize and diversify at their own pace with no implementation costs. In the meantime, the agreement would force American taxpayers to subsidize alternative energy at the expense of clean coal, nuclear power and natural gas -- energy resources that actually work for our economy and our environment.

The Paris Agreement would also handicap America in the global race for new sources of energy. Russia has committed financial and military assets to the Arctic to stake its claim to the region's vast deepwater mineral, oil and gas deposits. China is also exploring and trading for Arctic oil and gas. Meanwhile, American liquefied natural gas struggles with logistical costs that weaken its competitiveness.

By allowing our rivals to increase their cooperation and strategic leverage around the world -- pressuring our allies and partners, harming domestic job creators and materially reducing our prestige and influence in the process -- the agreement would damage America's national security as much as our economic security. The emission cuts that the US would have to make today, and the resultant costs for our own energy firms, would weaken our ability to battle our rivals

on an equal footing in the drive for untapped energy sources.

Efforts to unwind some of the deal's more onerous regulations are welcomed, but that is not enough. Unless the US completely withdraws, the

Paris Agreement will continue to cause sustained harm to our security and economy, and it keeps the door open for future administrations to use it as means to impose more costly and ineffective energy regulations.

We should not let a deal subject to the whims of future administrations or Congresses hang like a wet blanket over our economy -- driving up energy prices, devastating our industrial base and bolstering our rivals.

I hope President Trump will take the opportunity before him to fulfill the commitment he made and withdraw America from the Paris Agreement.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Ignatius : Zbigniew Brzezinski was an intrepid advocate of the 'liberal international order'

When thinking about the abstract foreign policy framework known as the "liberal international order," it helps to personalize it by remembering the career of one of its strongest exponents, former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Brzezinski, who died Friday, devoted most of his career to explaining and enhancing this idea of a robust, supple, U.S.-led architecture for global security and prosperity. He wanted this American order to be open and flexible, ready to engage the forces of what he liked to call a "global political awakening" of rising nations and cultures. But he also insisted it must be strong militarily at its core.

Brzezinski was deeply troubled in his final months by the evidence that this order — the work of his generation — had been undermined almost capriciously by the rise of the inexperienced President Trump. When Brzezinski received the Pentagon's highest civilian award at a ceremony Nov. 10, two days after Trump's election, he warned in his brief remarks of coming turmoil in the nation and the world.

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He would have been appalled, but not surprised, by the results of

Trump's Group of Seven meeting last week, after which German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that the era when Europe could rely on American leadership was "over to a certain extent."

I first encountered Brzezinski in the late 1970s when he was national security adviser for President Jimmy Carter. We talked many times over the next four decades, and in 2008, I engaged him and Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser for the Ford and Bush 41 administrations, in a series of conversations about foreign policy that was published as "America and the World." It was a manifesto of bipartisan consensus about how to maintain a forward-leaning U.S. role in global affairs.

As Brzezinski's health weakened this month, I sent him a note suggesting that with the disorder in the world that had accompanied Trump's presidency, perhaps we should resume those conversations. The response was classic "Zbig" — enthusiastic, oblivious of difficulty and precisely phrased. "Please advise me of earliest and most convenient schedule for our group to return," he wrote back. He died four days later.

What made Brzezinski so unusual was that he never rested on his laurels. He was a brilliant analyst who spoke in perfectly punctuated sentences and paragraphs — never in canned sound bites. He

considered each question as if for the first time, and he was restless, unsatisfied, willing to consider other arguments.

Brzezinski was a hawk for most of his career. But he became increasingly skeptical that military solutions would produce good results. He was outspoken, for example, in his warnings that the Iraq invasion in 2003 was a mistake. This wasn't after-the-fact massaging of a position, a la Trump. Brzezinski paid a cost in the insular, self-reinforcing world of Washington foreign policy opinion, until it became clear to nearly everyone that he (joined in this Iraq War opposition by Scowcroft) had been right.

Brzezinski's concept of the liberal international order was that it rested on a framework of alliances and global institutions that could adapt as the world evolved. As a Polish refugee, he believed passionately in the freedom and economic interdependence that the United States defended in World War II and preserved in postwar institutions such as NATO, the World Bank and the United Nations. He was convinced that Soviet power wasn't a permanent fact of life in Eastern Europe, even back in the 1970s, when such rollback talk was near heresy among Democrats. He urged that a revived Japan join the Western partnership, and

championed the "Trilateral Commission" to embody this idea.

Brzezinski tilted between hawkish and dovish positions, but he usually got it right. When the Russians invaded Afghanistan, he championed covert opposition. When Islamic revolutionaries hijacked Iran, Brzezinski urged the shah to fight back. Later, when a shattered Russia felt cornered, Brzezinski cautioned against the over-isolation of Moscow. And as Iran rushed toward nuclear-weapons capability, Brzezinski supported negotiations to cap the program. And he was a consistent, fearless advocate of peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Brzezinski's worries about Trump grew out of his belief in the interdependent world that the United States had made. Having seen Western values and freedoms crushed in Poland, he was protective of them. Having seen allies regain dignity and prosperity under an American umbrella, he wanted to maintain it.

Trump's populism was abhorrent to this son of Polish aristocracy, but it wasn't just that. Brzezinski didn't think Trump understood what a precious creation he was jeopardizing by so recklessly challenging the institutions of the West.

## ETATS-UNIS

**THE WALL  
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### GOP's Proposed Tax Changes Are No Match for Status Quo (UNE)

Richard Rubin

WASHINGTON—The boldest ideas for changing the nation's tax code are either dead or on political life support, as the Republican effort in Congress to reshape the tax system moves much more slowly than lawmakers and their allies in business had hoped.

The clear winner, so far, is the status quo.

Republicans, who control both chambers, are scouring the tax code, searching for ways to offset the deep rate cuts they desire. But their proposals for border adjustment—which would tax imports—and for ending the business interest deduction and making major changes to individual tax breaks for health and retirement have all hit resistance within the party. The only big revenue-raising provision with anything close to

Republican consensus is repealing the deduction for state and local taxes, and that idea faces objections from blue-state lawmakers in the party.

The GOP's dreams have collided with interest-group lobbying and the tax system's reality. Politicians all profess to hate the tax code, but they don't agree on exactly what they hate. Voters gripe about complexity but are wary of losing

cherished breaks that are woven into the economy.

"Eventually you run out of ways to pay for your promises," said Alan Cole, an economist at the Tax Foundation, which favors a simpler code with lower rates. "There aren't any free, obvious sources of money where you can just do the thing and nobody gets mad."

Republicans are still hunting for ideas to soften the revenue loss

from their proposed tax-rate cuts, and party leaders say they will finish a historic tax-code revision by year's end. President Donald Trump said on Twitter late Sunday that the process was ahead of schedule and "moving along...very well."

But a fruitless revenue quest may lead the GOP to second-tier options. And they won't be able to rely on generating lots of revenue from economic growth, because congressional scorekeepers are likely to make conservative estimates.

One possibility is a temporary tax cut that would expire to comply with rules preventing long-run deficits.

"Permanent is better than temporary, and temporary is better than nothing," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told the House Ways and Means Committee last week.

Another path is settling for a 25% corporate rate instead of the 20% backed by House Republicans or the 15% proposed by Mr. Trump.

"I hope we don't have to," said Rep. Kevin Brady (R., Texas), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Republicans started 2017 with high tax-policy ambitions, seeing an opportunity to use unified control of government to achieve a long-running party goal. They hoped for a quick repeal of the 2010 Affordable Care Act and a fast pivot to taxes.

Instead, the health bill moved slowly, and during that debate, Republicans talked briefly about limiting the favored status for employer-sponsored health insurance, the

largest tax break for individuals. That idea collapsed. Now, the tax bill isn't written and must wait for the health bill and budget.

Republicans are working off the blueprint Mr. Brady released in June 2016. They saw what it took the former chairman, Dave Camp (R., Mich.), in 2014, to get to a 25% corporate tax rate. And they saw how his proposed bank tax and stretched-out depreciation cycles made his plan flop on arrival.

Their plan relies on big changes, each raising about \$1 trillion over a decade. Each percentage-point reduction in the 35% corporate tax rate cuts federal revenue by about \$100 billion over a decade, and independent analyses show economic growth can't cover all the costs of rate cuts.

One proposed change that has met wide resistance is border adjustment, or taxing imports and exempting exports.

Big retailers such as Target Corp. and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. launched a lobbying campaign to portray border adjustment as an existential threat to their businesses and a price increase for consumers.

Senate Republicans, parts of the Trump administration and some House Republicans now say they agree, imperiling the idea and leaving the House GOP plan \$1 trillion in the hole. Without an alternative there is no clear way to prevent companies from seeking out lower tax rates abroad.

Jason Pye, director of public policy at FreedomWorks, which supports conservative activists, said Republicans need to make a yes-or-no call soon on border adjustment.

"Early on, nobody knew what the hell it was. Now, everybody has a general concept and they don't like it," he said.

Mr. Brady hasn't given up on border adjustment, in part because of the lack of a Plan B. Senate Republicans haven't coalesced around a plan, and the Trump administration has released only one page of goals.

"If someone's got a better solution," he said, "bring it."

Next up is the interest deduction for businesses. Republicans would deny the deduction while letting companies write off capital costs immediately.

Mr. Mnuchin told lawmakers he prefers to leave the interest deduction alone. He cited concerns of firms that rely on debt financing, including small businesses and the real-estate industry. Keeping the deduction also would leave a \$1 trillion hole over 10 years. A cap instead of repeal is possible, which would soften the impact but yield less money.

The Trump administration has taken more items off the table. The president promised to protect the tax breaks for mortgage interest and charity, though his proposed expansion of the standard deduction would limit such benefits for many middle-income households.

The administration also ruled out a carbon tax and a value-added tax and said it wouldn't touch 401(k) retirement plans. Under questioning from Sens. Sherrod Brown (D., Ohio) and Bob Casey (D., Pa.) last week, Mr. Mnuchin seemingly took more tax breaks off the table.

He said the administration wasn't considering changing last-in, first-out accounting, the New Markets Tax Credit that provides assistance in struggling areas and the low-income housing tax credit. He said he would prefer to retain the tax exemption for municipal bonds.

People's assets—from their homes to their retirement plans—are closely tied to tax preferences, and that makes voters and industries resistant to change, said Lily Kahng, a tax-law professor at Seattle University.

"Once you extend some kind of tax preference to people, it becomes almost like an entitlement and people are really protective of it," she said.

The tax system is part intentional and part path-dependent. The existing rules were created—by previous Congresses—for a reason, and choices made decades ago are hard to unwind.

"It's not like the current tax code was designed by cruel, mean, evil people who wanted to make things as unfair and complex as possible," Mr. Cole said. "They were actually doing their best."

Rewriting the tax code is a process, Mr. Brady said. "If you expect that process to be smooth, and beautiful," he said, "it's not."

#### Corrections & Amplifications

President Donald Trump said on Twitter late Sunday that the tax-reform process was ahead of schedule. An earlier version of this article misspelled his name as Donal Trump. (May 29, 2017)



## Moffit : Republican health care bill: Be skeptical of CBO

Robert E. Moffit

Obamacare is wrecking individual and small group markets. This year, premium cost increases in the individual markets are averaging 25%, and the thousands of dollars in deductibles are breathtaking. Many middle-class folks in these markets are stuck paying the equivalent of a second mortgage.

Washington's inflexible regulations are also helping to jack up health care costs, pricing younger and healthier persons out of the market, and thus driving costs even higher. This costly experiment in government central planning has resulted in

shrinking enrollment, sharply declining competition and narrow medical networks.

There's nothing new here. In the 39 states with federal exchanges, HHS reports, average monthly premiums rose from \$232 to \$476 from 2013 to 2017.

Congressional Republicans promised to fix this mess, and the Congressional Budget Office has given their bill a mixed review. The fiscal news is positive, with CBO estimating the legislation would cut the deficit by \$119 billion over 10 years. But the insurance coverage news is negative, with CBO estimating that 23 million fewer

persons would have health insurance in 2026.

The GOP should be skeptical of CBO's coverage estimates. It has been an abysmal performance. For example, CBO projected initially that 21 million persons would enroll in exchange plans in 2016. The actual enrollment: 11.5 million.

#### OUR VIEW:

To be fair, the CBO admits the uncertainty of its own estimates: "Such estimates are inherently uncertain because of the ways in which federal agencies, states, insurers, employers, individuals, doctors, hospitals and other affected parties would respond to

the changes made by the legislation are all difficult to predict."

Congressional Republicans should take a deep breath. While they should take CBO's report seriously, they must not treat CBO projections as Holy Writ. They should use the Senate version of their bill to fashion good policy that will further reduce costs and protect the vulnerable. They need to fulfill their promises and press ahead.

*Robert E. Moffit is a senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation.*



## Congressional Republicans Face Ideological Rifts Over Spending Bills

Kristina Peterson

WASHINGTON—When President Donald Trump's proposed budget was released with fanfare last week, lawmakers were already engaged in a debate over actual spending levels for the next fiscal year.

Republicans agree that the president's budget—while indicative of the White House's priorities—can't realistically be translated into the spending bills that keep the government running until current funding expires at the end of September.

But they disagree internally over how to craft those spending bills, which will need support from Democrats to avoid a partial government shutdown on Oct. 1. The looming fiscal uncertainty adds to the challenges Republican leaders already face trying to steer sweeping health-care and tax legislation through Congress.

The spending debate is a recurring dilemma for lawmakers, but they haven't had to fully wrestle with where to set overall government spending since the fall of 2015, when former House Speaker John Boehner (R., Ohio), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) and former President Barack Obama reached a two-year budget deal to boost federal spending above limits established in a 2011 deal.

That 2015 deal ends this September, leaving lawmakers grappling with whether to leave federal spending at the limits established in 2011 or raise them, potentially adding to the federal deficit. There is no consensus over what to do now, even among Republicans.

"We've got defense hawks, we've got deficit hawks,

we've got moderates concerned about draconian cuts," said Rep. Steve Womack (R., Ark.) "We've got all comers weighing in on the budget process and—kind of like health care—there's no real simple solution."

Some lawmakers say that with Republicans now in control of both chambers of Congress and the White House, there is less reason to look at easing the spending limits, as lawmakers did under previous deals because of a more divided political environment.

"My concerns with the past years is that, in a bipartisan fashion, we're kicking the can down the road and adding to the debt," said Rep. Dave Brat (R., Va.) "When you win the House and the Senate and the White House and you're the small-government party...if we do more status quo, the same old thing after winning, we're going to lose our brand in rapid order."

Still, Democrats do retain some leverage in the complex process. A budget resolution can pass both chambers with just a simple majority, as well as certain legislation tied to it. That is the process Republicans hope to use to pass partisan overhauls of the health-care system and tax code. But the spending bills that actually fund the government require 60 votes in the Senate and the Republicans hold only 52 of the chamber's 100 seats.

And then there is Mr. Trump, who ultimately needs to sign any spending bill for it to become law and who has proven to be an unpredictable force in legislative affairs in the first few months of his administration.

Mr. McConnell, the Senate leader, acknowledged that Democrats will play a part in determining where overall spending levels will be set for the next fiscal year.

"We'll have to negotiate the top-line with Senate Democrats, we know that," Mr. McConnell told reporters last week. "They will not be irrelevant in the process and, at some point here in the near future, those discussions will begin."

Democrats used their leverage earlier this month to block Mr. Trump from getting funding to build a wall along the southern border with Mexico in an interim spending bill and will try later this summer to prevent deep spending cuts to government programs, including student-loan programs and food stamps.

Republicans "ought to take an honest look at where we are in some areas," said Sen. Dick Durbin (D., Ill.). Under the current limits, some government programs "are likely to be cut to unacceptable levels," he said.

Some Republicans, especially those focused on the military, have been among the most vocal champions of raising spending above the current limits, which they say have impinged on the country's military readiness.

"Keeping caps in place disproportionately hurts defense," said House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry (R., Texas). Like many Republicans, he would like to see spending trimmed on the big federal safety-net programs, but Mr. Trump has been unwilling to touch Social Security or Medicare for retirees.

At a closed-door meeting of House Republicans on Thursday, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) gave his rank and file an assessment of the fiscal issues looming over the next few months, according to GOP lawmakers and aides.

In addition to funding the government for the 2018 fiscal year by October, Congress will also have to raise the federal government's borrowing limit, known as the debt ceiling, sooner than many had expected, because tax revenue has come in slower than anticipated.

The government officially hit its borrowing limit in mid-March, but the Treasury Department has been employing cash-conservation measures to keep funding itself.

Analysts had expected the measures would allow the Treasury to keep paying its bills until the fall, but Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin suggested last week that lawmakers should act before the end of July.

Negotiations over spending bills and the debt limit have frequently been intertwined before, since taking steps to rein in spending can make it easier for Republicans to vote for raising the debt ceiling. But Republicans haven't yet coalesced around what changes they want to make.

Mr. Ryan told reporters the House GOP was beginning its discussions over how to approach the tricky issue as it popped up earlier in the legislative calendar.

"We're looking at that new timetable," he said. "The debt ceiling issue will get resolved."

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## **Trump administration plans to minimize civil rights efforts in agencies (UNE)**

The Trump administration is planning to disband the Labor Department division that has policed discrimination among federal contractors for four decades, according to the White House's newly proposed budget, part of wider efforts to rein in government programs that promote civil rights.

As outlined in Labor's fiscal 2018 plan, the move would fold the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, now home to 600 employees, into another government agency in the name of cost-cutting.

The proposal to dismantle the compliance office comes at a time when the Trump administration is

reducing the role of the federal government in fighting discrimination and protecting minorities by cutting budgets, dissolving programs and appointing officials unsympathetic to previous practices.

The new leadership at the Environmental Protection Agency, for instance, has proposed eliminating its environmental justice program, which addresses pollution that poses health threats specifically concentrated in minority communities. The program, in part, offers money and technical help to residents who are confronted with local hazards such as leaking oil tanks or emissions from chemical plants.

Under President Trump's proposed budget, the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights — which has investigated thousands of complaints of discrimination in school districts across the country and set new standards for how colleges should respond to allegations of sexual assault and harassment — would also see significant staffing cuts. Administration officials acknowledge in budget documents that the civil rights office will have to scale back the number of investigations it conducts and limit travel to school districts to carry out its work.

How Trump is rolling back Obama's legacy

*[Obama, Biden rewrite the rulebook on handling sexual assault on campus]*

And the administration has reversed several steps taken under President Barack Obama to address LGBT concerns. The Department of Housing and Urban Development, for example, has revoked a rule ensuring that transgender people can stay at sex-segregated shelters of their choice, and the Department of Health and Human Services has removed a question about sexual orientation from two surveys of elderly Americans about services offered or funded by the government.

The efforts to reduce the federal profile on civil rights reflects the

consensus view within the Trump administration that Obama officials exceeded their authority in policing discrimination on the state and local level, sometimes pressuring targets of government scrutiny to adopt policies that were not warranted.

Administration officials made clear in the initial weeks of Trump's presidency that they would break with the civil rights policies of his predecessor. Attorney General Jeff Sessions ordered a review of agreements to reform police departments, signaling his skepticism of efforts to curb civil rights abuses by law enforcement officers. His Justice Department, meantime, stopped challenging a controversial Texas voter identification law and joined with the Education Department in withdrawing federal guidance allowing transgender students to use school bathrooms corresponding to their gender identity.

While these decisions have been roundly criticized by liberal activists, administration officials said that civil rights remain a priority for the Trump White House.

"The Trump administration has an unwavering commitment to the civil rights of all Americans," White House spokeswoman Kelly Love said in an emailed statement.

But Vanita Gupta, who was the head of Justice's civil rights division from October 2014 to January 2017, said that the administration's actions have already begun to adversely affect Americans across the country.

Since the civil rights movement, the Labor Department's compliance office has had the big job of auditing government contractors to ensure they're taking steps to promote diversity and not discriminate. Now

the Trump administration is proposing to disband it. Since the 1960s, the Labor Department's compliance office has ensured that contractors promote diversity. Now Trump's administration wants to disband it. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

"They can call it a course correction, but there's little question that it's a rollback of civil rights across the board," said Gupta, who is now president of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

Labor's budget proposal says that folding its compliance office into the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission "will reduce operational redundancies, promote efficiencies, improve services to citizens, and strengthen civil rights enforcement."

Historically, the two entities have played very different roles. Unlike the EEOC, which investigates complaints it receives, the compliance office audits contractors in a more systematic fashion and verifies that they "take affirmative action" to promote equal opportunity among their employees.

Patricia A. Shiu, who led the compliance office from 2009 to 2016, said the audits are crucial because most workers don't know they have grounds to file a complaint. "Most people do not know why they don't get hired. Most people do not know why they do not get paid the same as somebody else," she said.

Under Obama, officials in the compliance office often conducted full-scale audits of companies, examining their practices in multiple locations, rather than carrying out shorter, more limited reviews as previous administrations had done.

Some companies have questioned the more aggressive approach, noting the office has consistently found since 2004 that 98 percent of federal contractors comply with the law.

But the compliance office also scored some major recent legal victories, including a \$1.7 million settlement with Palantir Technologies over allegations that the data-mining company's hiring practices discriminated against Asians. In a case involving Gordon Food Service, which serves the Agriculture Department, the Pentagon and the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the office found the company had "systematically eliminated qualified women from the hiring process." The firm agreed to pay \$1.85 million in wages to 926 women who had applied for jobs and hire 37 of them. Gordon Food was also forced to no longer require women to take a strength test.

*[See which Post reporters are responsible for covering federal agencies]*

In Education Department budget documents, the administration acknowledges that proposed funding levels would hamper the work of that department's civil rights office. The budget would reduce staffing by more than 40 employees.

"To address steady increases in the number of complaints received and decreased staffing levels, OCR must make difficult choices," the budget documents say. "OCR's enforcement staff will be limited in conducting onsite investigations and monitoring, and OCR's ability to achieve greater coordination and communication regarding core activities will be greatly diminished."

Some critics of the civil rights office said school districts often felt they

were presumed guilty in the eyes of the federal government.

"There was sort of this sense that ... if there was a complaint filed, there must have been done something wrong," said Thomas J. Gentzel, executive director of the National School Boards Association. "But there's usually two sides to a story."

#### Local Politics Alerts

Breaking news about local government in D.C., Md., Va.

Education Department spokeswoman Liz Hill said that Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Candice E. Jackson, who has been named as the acting head of the civil rights office, are committed to protecting all students from discrimination.

"Each civil rights complaint received by OCR is given due care and attention, with OCR serving as a fair and impartial investigative office," Hill said.

Jackson's nomination has added to the anxiety of civil rights activists. Jackson, a lawyer from Vancouver, Wash., and author of a book about women who had accused President Bill Clinton of sexual assault, has written that programs aimed at fostering a diverse student body dismiss "the very real prices paid by individual people who end up injured by affirmative action."

Similar concerns have been raised about Trump's likely selection of Eric S. Dreiband to head the Justice Department's civil rights division. A former Bush administration official and veteran conservative Washington lawyer, Dreiband has represented several companies that were sued for discrimination.

Lisa Rein contributed to this report.



## Borger : Trump, home all alone

Gloria Borger

(CNN)It's not that President Trump was excited about his first foreign trip. He complained to friends beforehand it was going to be too long; he just wasn't looking forward to it. Besides, he was "in a pretty glum mood" when he left, according to one source who speaks with the President.

His homecoming, it appears, did nothing to cheer him up.

Instead of celebrating a victory lap after touring the Middle East and meeting with the Pope and European leaders, Trump returned to the continuing controversy over Russia. He was preoccupied with

legal issues and staff problems as the controversy placed his son-in-law, and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, as part of a counterintelligence investigation. Sessions with lawyers are nothing new for this litigious ex-businessman; but with infinitely higher stakes, this was different.

One source says Trump has complained privately about his White House counsel Don McGahn, well known as a specialist in campaign finance law. But his inside counsel has nothing to do with his personal defense, anyway - and so he was expected to meet with his go-to attorney, Marc Kasowitz. His longtime lawyer, two

sources say, is going to become what one called the "supervisor" of Trump's outside legal team. He'll be the Trump whisperer, adds another, "not the guy interacting with [special counsel Robert] Mueller."

"Allowing a special counsel to happen was idiocy," says one ally, who may be channeling the President's thinking. "Special counsels never end well." Never mind that Trump's own firing of FBI Director James Comey -- and his repeated attempts to get administration appointees to end the matter -- began the chain of events that led to the Mueller appointment. If anyone wanted to stop the President, it didn't happen.

Maybe they agreed with Trump that the Democrats would support the move?

"These guys don't play chess," sighs a friend. "They play checkers."

After the President moved to fire the FBI director, one outside adviser says he told Trump flat-out that the timing was crazy. "If you had fired him on Day One, it would be a whole different atmosphere," he told the President. "Doing it five months in made no sense."

#### Presidency is not a natural fit

So Trump returns to the White House this week just as he left -- lonely, angry and not happy with

much of anyone. The presidency, Donald Trump is discovering, is not an easy or natural fit.

"He now lives within himself, which is a dangerous place for Donald Trump to be," says someone who speaks with the President. "I see him emotionally withdrawing. He's gained weight. He doesn't have anybody whom he trusts."

The question, he adds, is whether Trump will understand the enormity of what he faces or will instead "be back to being arrogant and stubborn." He will have to realize that "all this trip really did was hit the pause button."

And only for a moment. Trump comes home not only to an escalating Russian mess and an uphill fight over health care, but also to an important decision about the next FBI director. The President had warmed to the idea of former Sen. Joe Lieberman for the post, but Congress didn't. So as he was leaving for his first foreign trip he told friends Lieberman was out.

In the wake of the Lieberman debacle, one source with knowledge says that the President even made New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, with whom he still chats,

an offhand, polite, non-offer for the top FBI job, saying something like so-you-don't-want-it-right? Christie reportedly demurred, listing the reasons why it wouldn't work -- among them that neither person needed the hassle it would cause. In a way, it was pure Trump -- the President flattering the man, whom he once fired but still consults.

#### Is he listening to bad advice?

There is some hope, says one ally, that the President will now be forced to settle down. "He only really listens when he's down in the dumps."

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White House defends Kushner's Russia contact 02:31

And what do his friends say? Some complain he's getting bad advice -- legal and political. "No one is giving him the landscape -- this is how it works, this is what you should do or not do. And no one has enough control -- or security -- o do that," says one. But that begs the question, of course, of whether a sitting president should actually need to be told that he ought not try to interfere with a federal counterintelligence investigation.

Trouble is, even if President Trump is listening, he's getting conflicting advice: The outsiders with whom he speaks after-hours aren't, by and large, big fans of his staff. No wonder, according to one source, that Chief of Staff Reince Priebus checked in with him after he spoke with the President -- no doubt to keep an eye on what Trump is thinking, or saying.

There are those telling the President to move on from the insularity of his original cast of characters. "Step up and forget the Forever Trumpers," one ally says he told the President. "Now you need the best professionals."

But that misses one key point: Trumpworld is run by Trump. Mistakes are made by Trump. And all of this is powered by this singular view on the Russia crisis, says one ally: that Trump believes he has no responsibility for any of this political trauma, that it is created by the mainstream media concocting conspiracies where none exist:

"He's sitting there saying, like he does with everything, 'You guys work for me. Fix this.'"

Which is exactly what he brazenly asked his ex-FBI director, his

director of national intelligence and the head of the National Security Agency to do. It's what he would have done at the Trump Organization. And if they refused, he would have fired them. As he did Jim Comey.

There is this storyline about Donald Trump, one longtime Trump watcher says, that he's a loyal guy. That he sticks with his old friends and defends them and supports them. "You have it all wrong," he says. "Trump is not loyal, except to his family. He can be solicitous and ingratiating. But if there's a moment you are not useful, forget it, you're done. No matter what you have done for him." Consider: Rudy Giuliani, Paul Manafort, Chris Christie.

And one more thing to keep in mind about the President, adds an ally. He's a disciple of Roy Cohn, the take-no-prisoners New York attorney. "When you're in trouble, you double down, triple down and quadruple down. At the end of the day," he says of Trump, "it's the only way to fight he knows."

## POLITICO Trump's communications director is out as larger shakeup looms

By Sen. Mike Lee

Mike Dubke, who was on the job a little over three months, resigned on May 18.

Mike Dubke, President Donald Trump's communications director, has resigned as Trump considers a larger personnel shakeup to confront the growing scandals weighing down his administration.

The veteran GOP strategist resigned in a private meeting with the president on May 18, and Trump accepted immediately, Dubke said in an interview, adding that he offered to stay through the president's first foreign trip to ensure there was a smooth transition as he exited.

Story Continued Below

Dubke, who spoke with POLITICO as he drove into the White House early Tuesday morning, said he expects to go back to Black Rock Group, his communications and public affairs firm. The White House has not announced a successor for Dubke, and it's unclear when exactly his last day will be. Axios first reported the news of his departure.

"The reasons for my departure are personal, but it has been my great honor to serve President Trump and this administration," Dubke emailed

friends this morning. "It has also been my distinct pleasure to work side-by-side, day-by-day with the staff of the communications and press departments. This White House is filled with some of the finest and hardest working men and women in the American Government."

Dubke's exit comes as Trump weighs larger staff changes as he tries to contain the deepening scandals related to ties between Russia and his campaign.

Trump, fresh off his foreign trip, returned to Washington this weekend facing not only congressional probes but the investigation of special prosecutor Robert Mueller into possible collusion between Trump's associates and Russia as the Kremlin allegedly tried to tip the election Trump's way.

Beyond Dubke, White House press secretary Sean Spicer is expected to take on a reduced public role, though he is conducting the briefing later on Tuesday. Dubke, who was only on the job for a little over three months, had been a Spicer ally in the White House.

Trump has also been in talks with former campaign aides Corey Lewandowski and David Bossie about taking on more formal roles,

possibly in a crisis management function. Trump met with Lewandowski and Bossie in the White House on Monday, and the discussion centered on what role they could play, said one person briefed on the matter.

Trump is also said to have become more frustrated with his son-in-law and top adviser Jared Kushner, who has become the subject of damaging reports alleging that he tried to set up secret communications with the Russians during the transition and failed to disclose multiple meetings with Russian officials.

However, it's not clear that Trump would remove a family member, and Kushner's lawyer said he is willing to cooperate with the various investigations into the matter.

White House counselor Kellyanne Conway told "Fox & Friends" on Tuesday tried to downplay the idea of a staff shake-up and said Dubke has been professional about his departure.

"He has expressed his desire to leave the White House and made very clear that he would see through the president's international trip and come to work every day and work hard even through that trip," Conway said.

In a notoriously leak-prone White House, Dubke told POLITICO he was surprised that the news of his planned departure took 12 days to leak out.

A longtime Republican operative and establishment stalwart, Dubke never fit into a White House consumed by chaos. Some questioned why he and not a Trump loyalist was tapped for the communications director job. After being selected for the post, he began telling people in the administration that he never produced TV ads targeting Trump during the 2016 campaign — a move that was designed to reassure loyalists in the White House, but one that left some rankled.

Trump told friends in recent weeks that he was unhappy with Dubke — and that he wondered why he never seemed to get positive press anymore.

As the president dwells on the scandals, the embattled communications wing has emerged as the center of possible change in the White House. It is seen as increasingly likely that Lewandowski and Bossie will take on some functions, though it remains unclear whether they will join the White House or work for Trump as outside advocates. Both have complex business dealings that would need

to be untangled should they enter the administration in an official capacity.

The two fit the mold of what Trump is looking for. Both have reputations as cutthroat, hard-charging operatives, and both worked on

Trump's presidential campaign in senior roles. Lewandowski, however, was pushed out as campaign manager after a power struggle with campaign chairman Paul Manafort.

In recent days, the president has told aides he misses being around some of those who worked for him during the campaign and has talked about bringing the crew back together.

Other changes could also be in the works: While Spicer is likely to remain in the White House, Conway, a frequent Trump on-air surrogate, could take on a broader role.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## How President Trump consumes — or does not consume — top-secret intelligence (UNE)

President Trump consumes classified intelligence like he does most everything else in life: ravenously and impatiently, eager to ingest glinting nuggets but often indifferent to subtleties.

Most mornings, often at 10:30, sometimes earlier, Trump sits behind the historic Resolute desk and, with a fresh Diet Coke fizzing and papers piled high, receives top-secret updates on the world's hot spots. The president interrupts his briefers with questions but also with random asides. He asks that the top brass of the intelligence community be present, and he demands brevity.

As they huddle around the desk, Trump likes to pore over visuals — maps, charts, pictures and videos, as well as “killer graphics,” as CIA Director Mike Pompeo phrased it.

“That’s our task, right? To deliver the material in a way that he can best understand the information we’re trying to communicate,” said Pompeo, adding that he, too, prefers to “get to the core of the issue quickly.”

Yet there are signs that the president may not be retaining all the intelligence he is presented, fully absorbing its nuance, or respecting the sensitivities of the information and how it was gathered.

Earlier this month, for instance, Trump bragged to top Russian diplomats about the quality of the intelligence and revealed highly classified information, related to the fight against the Islamic State, that had been shared by a U.S. partner.

*[Trump revealed highly classified information to Russian foreign minister and ambassador]*

“I get great intel. I have people brief me on great intel every day,” Trump told Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador Sergey Kislyak during their May 10 meeting in the Oval Office, according to a U.S. official with knowledge of the exchange.

He recently — despite all evidence to the contrary — said that perhaps China, not Russia, had tried to meddle in the 2016 presidential

election. And during a meeting in Jerusalem with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last week, the president seemed to effectively confirm that the private information he divulged to the Russian diplomats came from Israel.

“Just so you understand, I never mentioned the word or the name Israel,” Trump told reporters, responding to a question no one had asked. “Never mentioned it during that conversation.”

In March, the president also pressured two of the nation’s top intelligence officials to help him publicly push back against the FBI investigation into possible collusion between the Russian government and his campaign, a request both men felt was inappropriate.

This portrait of Trump as a consumer of the nation’s secrets is based on interviews with several senior administration officials who regularly attend his briefings. Some of the interviews were conducted in early May, before the president’s meeting with the Russians.

Trump’s posture toward the intelligence community and its work product has evolved in the months since he was sworn in as president.

Before his inauguration, Trump spoke of U.S. spy agencies with contempt. He sent demeaning tweets accusing intelligence officials of behaving as though they were in “Nazi Germany,” and he assailed them for what he said were “disgraceful” leaks to the media regarding Russia’s interference in the 2016 election.

Intelligence officials were prepared to deliver daily briefings to Trump throughout the transition period, but the president-elect often turned them away, usually agreeing to sit for briefings only once or twice per week.

“You know, I’m, like, a smart person. I don’t have to be told the same thing in the same words every single day for the next eight years,” Trump told Fox News last December.

President Barack Obama offered a retort when he later appeared on “The Daily Show.”

“It doesn’t matter how smart you are,” Obama said. “... If you’re not getting their perspective, their detailed perspective, then you are flying blind.”

*[The many times Trump undermined, questioned, shocked and upset his own intelligence agencies]*

As president, Trump now takes briefings nearly every day. In a White House with few steadying mechanisms — and one led by a Washington neophyte who bristles at structure and protocol — the daily intelligence briefing is the rare constant.

The sessions often run past their scheduled time, stretching for 30 or 45 minutes, prompting Trump’s chief of staff, Reince Priebus, to pop into the Oval Office to cut off the discussion: “Mr. President, we’ve got people backing up outside.”

“A president who I think came into the office thinking he would focus on domestic issues — ‘make America great again’ — has learned that you inherit the world and its problems when you’re president of the United States,” said Daniel Coats, director of national intelligence and a frequent participant in Trump’s briefings.

“One time he came in and said, ‘All right, what’s the bad news this morning?’” Coats added. “You can see the weight of the burden on the shoulders of the president.”

Yet while Pompeo and Coats praise the intelligence-consuming habits of the president who appointed them, Trump’s standing among career intelligence officers remains strained. He has continued to disparage their motives and work — most notably by refusing to accept the consensus of the CIA, the FBI and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence that Russia waged an unprecedented effort to disrupt the 2016 election. In a recent television interview, Trump said that it “could have been China, could have been a lot of different groups.”

And Trump’s reaction to the disclosure that he shared highly classified information with Russian officials was to declare it his “absolute right” to do so and lash out at leakers — making clear that he still sees his own intelligence services as adversaries.

Shortly after taking the oath of office, Trump visited CIA headquarters and delivered a freewheeling speech in which he boasted that “probably almost everybody in this room voted for me,” while standing in front of the agency’s sacred memorial wall that honors employees killed in the line of duty.

Mark Lowenthal, a former assistant director of the CIA and the president of the Intelligence and Security Academy, said Trump’s biggest challenge is his “lack of previous exposure” to sensitive intelligence.

“Pompeo and Coats are doing their best to give him the most accurate daily briefing, but my sense is in the rank-and-file, they are very worried about how do you deal with him and about sharing with him sensitive material,” Lowenthal said. “This is the result of his behavior, both during the campaign and that visit to the CIA, which was a disaster, and now the whole Russia briefing.”

Still, Trump tells advisers that he values his daily briefings. Though career intelligence analysts often take the lead in delivering them, Trump likes his political appointees — Pompeo and Coats — to attend, along with national security adviser H.R. McMaster. Pompeo and Coats, whose offices are in McLean, Va., have had to redesign their daily routines so that they spend many mornings at the White House.

Vice President Pence usually attends, while other administration principals join depending on the topic of the day, including Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly. Senior members of the West Wing staff sometimes float in and out of the Oval Office during the briefings.

Jared Kushner, the president’s son-in-law and senior adviser, often

observes quietly; he receives his own intelligence briefing earlier in the morning, according to two White House officials. Some Democrats are now calling for Kushner's security clearance to be reviewed after The Washington Post reported Friday that he attempted to set up back-channel communications with the Russian government during the presidential transition.

The briefings are tailored around events on the president's schedule. For example, if a foreign leader is visiting, Trump will receive information pertinent to that country, often delivered by a subject-area expert.

Intelligence officials said they use the briefings in part to impress upon a president who has viewed their community with skepticism the breadth and depth of the government's espionage capabilities.

Trump prefers free-flowing conversations over listening to his briefers teach lessons. "It's a very oral, interactive discussion, as

opposed to sitting there and reading from a text or a script," Pompeo said.

Pompeo added: "He always asks hard questions, which I think is the sign of a good intelligence consumer. He'll challenge analytic lines that we'll present, which is again completely appropriate. . . . It is frequently the case that we'll find that we need to go back and do more work to develop something, to round something out."

*[Trump will have to navigate diplomatic land mines abroad. Here's how he's preparing.]*

Trump will task his briefers with returning the next day with more information about a particular subject, or will turn to McMaster and say, "General, give me more information," according to Coats.

Presidents have received daily intelligence updates for more than 50 years, usually in written form as the President's Daily Brief, as the classified document is known. The "briefing book" is designed to

provide a summary from all 17 U.S. intelligence agencies of key security developments and insights, in the United States and abroad.

The ways in which presidents have processed the material have varied greatly, based on their preferences. For instance, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush favored daily in-person oral briefings, according to David Priess, a former intelligence officer and CIA briefer. Some presidents read materials in narrative form, while others preferred shorter updates known as "snowflakes," he said.

"The President's Daily Brief is adapted to the personality and the style of each president," said Priess, author of "The President's Book of Secrets." "It can be longer; it can be shorter. It can have greater sourcing information; it can have thinner sourcing information. It can have in-depth assessments; it can have virtual tweets."

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

When he took office, Trump signaled to his national security team that he favors concise points boiled down to a single page.

"I like bullets or I like as little as possible," he said in a pre-inaugural interview with Axios. "I don't need, you know, 200-page reports on something that can be handled on a page."

Trump also has encouraged his briefers to include as many visual elements as possible. This is a reflection, aides said, of Trump's career as a real estate developer who evaluated blueprints and renderings to visualize what a property eventually would look like.

"Sometimes," Coats said, "pictures do say a thousand words."

Greg Miller contributed to this report.



## Editorial : 'Some have classified it as treason,' but these opposing-party lawmakers are collaborating

REP. TOM REED (R-N.Y.) was an early Donald Trump supporter and applauds the president's performance to date. Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.) is a Trump opponent who feels "very strongly that we have to get to the bottom of" the Russia hacking story. Yet the two members of Congress are doing something very strange for Washington these days: working together, on a bipartisan basis, to try to get things done.

The two are leaders of the Problem Solvers Caucus, which to date boasts 20 Republican representatives and 20 Democratic representatives. The caucus, an outgrowth of the No Labels organization (Motto: "Stop fighting. Start fixing"), isn't new, but this year it has adopted rules that could give it more clout in Congress. If three-quarters of its members, including at least half the delegations of each party, vote for a

position, the entire caucus will vote that way on the floor. Armed with this potential for influence, the caucus met with House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) last week, and a meeting with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is in the works.

No one would argue that this is going to end polarization in the United States. It remains to be seen what the 40 can agree on among themselves, let alone whether they can drag the rest of the House along with them. But at a time when party members are tempted to view the other side as enemies rather than well-intentioned opponents, their commitment to governing should be applauded. They helped push adoption of the continuing resolution on this year's budget, which avoided a government shutdown, and they said they are hoping to play a similarly constructive role when the debt

ceiling needs to be raised and budget caps are set for next year.

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"The folks who sent me here don't want me to take a pure obstructionist approach," Mr. Gottheimer told us. "They want me to sit at the table and try to get things done." Added Mr. Reed: "Some have classified it as treason — the people on the extremes, who just want to play shirts versus skins. But the appetite for this is strong."

The Problem Solvers Caucus isn't alone in trying to restore some bipartisanship to governing. Issue One, a nonprofit dedicated to campaign finance reform, has recruited 180 former members of Congress, 45 percent of whom are Republican, according to executive director Nick Penniman. Advocacy

on the issue "has shifted to the left in the past two decades, to the detriment of the cause," Mr. Penniman said. The organization is convinced that many members of both parties would, for example, welcome reforms that allowed them to spend less time fundraising.

The Trump presidency has sharpened divisions and heightened the challenge for people wanting to work across the aisle, Mr. Reed and Mr. Gottheimer both said. But they also said it hasn't lessened the urgency of trying. "I believe at the end of the day, people want us to govern, and that's what they'll judge us on," Mr. Reed said. Agreed his Democratic co-chair: "I believe in accountability — but I also believe in progress."



## The Politics of Clan: The Adventures of Jared Kushner

David Brooks Jared's brother was very young while all this happened and has since gone on to a fantastically successful independent career. But Jared interrupted his studies to take over the family business. He lived out his family-first devotion, his loyalty to kith and kin.

He may have lacked wisdom but not audacity. In a Trumpian move, he

sold the family's New Jersey apartment complexes and bought 666 Fifth Avenue for \$1.8 billion, then the most ever paid for a Manhattan office building. He seems to have vastly overpaid. The Met-Life building sold at roughly the same time for \$600 a square foot, according to reporting in The Times, but Kushner bought his building for \$1,200 a square foot. Kushner worked feverishly to save the deal,

and has built his company despite it, but it's been a financial albatross ever since, one reason Kushner has spent so much time looking for Chinese investors, and possibly Russian ones.

We tell young people to serve something beyond self, and Kushner seems to have been fiercely, almost selflessly, loyal to family. But the clannish mentality

has often ill served him during his stay in government.

Working in government is about teamwork, majority-building and addition — adding more and more people to your coalition. It is about working within legal frameworks and bureaucratic institutions. It's about having a short memory and not taking things personally.



Clannishness, by contrast is about tight and exclusive blood bonds. It's a moral approach based on loyalty and vengeance against those who attack a member of the clan. It's an intensely personal and feud-ridden way of being.

Working in government is about trusting the system, and trusting those who have been around and understand the craft. But the essence of clannishness is to build a barrier between family — inside the zone of trust — and others, outside that zone. Consequently, Kushner has made some boneheaded blunders in the White

House. He reportedly pushed for the firing of F.B.I. Director James Comey even though anybody with a blip of experience could have told you this move would backfire horribly. He's allowed his feud with Steve Bannon to turn into a public soap opera.

We don't know everything about his meetings with the Russians, but we know that they, like so much other clan-like behavior, went against the formal system. We also know that they betray rookie naïveté on several levels — apparently trusting the Russians not to betray him, apparently not understanding that

these conversations would be surveyed by the American intelligence services, possibly not understanding how alarming they would look to outsiders.

We seem to now be entering the paranoia phase of the Trump presidency, as insiders perceive that everybody else is out to get them. As The Times's Glenn Thrush, Maggie Haberman and Sharon LaFraniere detailed in some amazing reporting, Kushner's role in this White House may be in peril. This turmoil, for both Trump and Kushner, was inevitable.

Our forebears have spent centuries trying to build a government of laws, and not of hereditary bloodlines. It's possible to thrive in this system as a member of a clan — the Roosevelts, the Kennedys and the Bushes — but it's not possible to survive in this system if your mentality is entirely clannish. That mode, whether in the Donald Trump or Jared Kushner version, simply self destructs in the formal system and within the standards of behavior that now surround us.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Robinson : Keeping Kushner would make Trump's Russia nightmare permanent

It's hard to write about Jared Kushner without going straight to the Icarus cliché — hubris, flying too close to the sun, falling into the sea. I once wrote that he was the only one of President Trump's close advisers who couldn't be fired, but Kushner's father-in-law would be smart to prove me wrong.

It is possible, of course, that Kushner was acting on Trump's orders when he allegedly suggested setting up a secret communications channel with Moscow using Russia's secure equipment. In that case, Trump's reluctance to cut him loose would be understandable — and the Russia scandal would lead directly to the president himself. If not, are family ties keeping Kushner employed at the White House? Or is it Trump's mounting sense of persecution and his reluctance to let an aggressive media push him around?

Whatever his motivation, Trump is allowing the Russia scandal to become not an extended nightmare but a permanent one. And all the Twitter tantrums in the world won't make it go away.

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It is, of course, ironic that Kushner was originally seen as the benign, socially acceptable face of Trumpism. He and his allies were supposed to constitute the reasonable and responsible faction in the West Wing, as opposed to the

alt-right barbarians clustered around Stephen K. Bannon. But while Bannon's name has not come up publicly in the Russia investigation, at least thus far, Kushner is now reportedly a focus of the FBI probe.

And with good reason. At a December meeting with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, Kushner reportedly suggested using secure equipment at the Russian Embassy or one of the Russian consulates to open a secret communications channel with the government of strongman Vladimir Putin. This is wrong on so many levels.

Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly and Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.) on May 28 commented on reports that Jared Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, sought a back channel to communicate with Russia during the transition of power. Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly and Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.) comment on Jared Kushner's discussion with Russia's ambassador to the U.S. (Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

First, Barack Obama was still president at the time; while it is normal for an incoming administration to have informal meet-and-greets with foreign officials, Kushner's proposal was so inappropriate that Kislyak was said to be stunned. Second, the idea of

using only Russian communications equipment for the proposed dialogue suggests the Trump administration had something to hide from U.S. intelligence agencies. Third, there is the obvious question of what Kushner wanted to talk about that couldn't be discussed through existing channels.

With someone so close to Trump in the crosshairs, special counsel Robert S. Mueller III has every reason to examine any relationships between the Trump campaign and Russian officials or oligarchs in minute detail — and also to look closely at any Russia connections the Trump and Kushner family business empires might have.

The White House should thus be settling in for a long siege. The good news, from Trump's point of view, is that his senior aides are discussing how to set up a "war room" to handle communications about the scandal, theoretically letting the rest of the administration get on with governing. The bad news is that Kushner has been involved in those discussions — when instead he should have been cleaning out his office.

Even setting the scandal aside, it is clear that Kushner gradually emerged as the most powerful of Trump's senior advisers — and is not doing a very good job. His fingerprints were not on the health-care disaster; and while he hasn't made relations between Israelis and Palestinians any better, he hasn't

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Investigation Turns to Kushner's Motives in Meeting With a Putin Ally (UNE)

Matthew Rosenberg, Mark Mazzetti and Maggie Haberman

The meeting came as Mr. Trump was openly feuding with American

intelligence agencies and their conclusion that Russia had tried to disrupt the presidential election and turn it in his favor.

The Senate Intelligence Committee notified the White House in March that it planned to question Mr. Kushner about the meeting.

On Friday, citing American officials briefed on intelligence reports, The Washington Post reported that Mr. Kislyak told his superiors in Moscow that Mr. Kushner had proposed a

secret channel and had suggested using Russian diplomatic facilities in the United States for the communications. The White House has not denied the Post report, which specified that Russian communication centers at an embassy or consulate in the United States were discussed as hosts for the secure channel.

It is not clear whether Mr. Kushner saw the Russian banker as someone who could be repeatedly used as a go-between or whether the meeting with Mr. Gorkov was designed to establish a direct, secure communications line to Mr. Putin.

The reasons the parties wanted a communications channel, and for how long they sought it, are also unclear. Several people with knowledge of the meeting with Mr. Kislyak, and who defended it, have said it was primarily to discuss how the United States and Russia could cooperate to end the civil war in Syria and on other policy issues. They also said the secure channel, in part, sought to connect Michael T. Flynn, a campaign adviser who became Mr. Trump's first national security adviser, and military officials in Moscow.

Mr. Flynn attended the meeting at Trump Tower with Mr. Kislyak.

Yet one current and one former American official with knowledge of the continuing congressional and F.B.I. investigations said they were examining whether the channel was meant to remain open, and if there were other items on the meeting's agenda, including lifting sanctions that the Obama administration had imposed on Russia in response to Moscow's annexation of Crimea and its aggression in Ukraine.

During the Trump administration's first week, administration officials

said they were considering an executive order to unilaterally lift the sanctions, which bar Americans from providing financing to and could limit borrowing from Mr. Gorkov's bank, Vnesheconombank. Removing the sanctions would have greatly expanded the bank's ability to do business in the United States.

In a statement on Monday, Ms. Hicks said that "Mr. Kushner was acting in his capacity as a transition official" in meeting with the Russians. Mr. Kushner has agreed to be interviewed by congressional investigators about the meetings, she said.

In March, Mr. Gorkov said in a statement that his December meeting with Mr. Kushner was part of the bank's strategy to discuss promising trends and sectors with influential financial institutions in Europe, Asia and the United States. That statement said he met with representatives of "business circles of the U.S., including with the head of Kushner Companies, Jared Kushner." At the time, Mr. Kushner was still running the company, which is his family's real estate business.

Vnesheconombank has not responded to questions about which other financial institutions and business leaders Mr. Gorkov met with while in the United States.

Trying to set up secret communications with Mr. Putin in the weeks after the election would not be illegal. Still, it is highly unusual to try to establish channels with a foreign leader that did not rely on the government's own communications, which are secure and allow for a record of contacts to be created.

But the Trump transition was unique in its unwillingness to use the government's communications lines

and briefing material for its dealings with many foreign governments, partly because of concern that Obama administration officials might be monitoring the calls.

In addition, Mr. Kushner disclosed none of his contacts with Russians or any other foreign officials when he applied for his security clearance in January. He later amended the form to include several meetings, including those with Mr. Kislyak and Mr. Gorkov, but it is unclear whether he told the investigators who conducted his background check about the attempts to set up a back channel. His aides have said his omissions from the clearance form were accidental.

The meeting with Mr. Gorkov is now being scrutinized by the F.B.I. as part of its investigation into alleged Russian attempts to disrupt last year's presidential campaign, and whether any of Mr. Trump's advisers assisted in such efforts.

His bank is controlled by members of Mr. Putin's government, including Prime Minister Dmitri A. Medvedev. It also has long been intertwined with Mr. Putin's inner circle: It has been used by the Russian government to bail out oligarchs close to Mr. Putin, and has helped fund the Russian president's pet projects, such as the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014.

Vnesheconombank has also been used by Russian intelligence to plant spies in the United States. In March 2016, an agent of Russia's foreign intelligence service, known as the S.V.R., who was caught posing as an employee of the bank in New York, pleaded guilty to spying against the United States.

The spy, said Preet Bharara, then the United States attorney in Manhattan, was under "the guise of being a legitimate banker, gathered

intelligence as an agent of the Russian Federation in New York."

Mr. Gorkov is a graduate of the academy of the Federal Security Service of Russia, a training ground for Russian spies. Though current and former Americans said it was unlikely that Mr. Gorkov is an active member of Russian intelligence, they said his past ties to the security services in Moscow were a reason he was put in charge of the bank.

In March, both CNN and the Post columnist David Ignatius reported that Mr. Kushner had met with Mr. Gorkov because he wanted the most direct possible contact with Mr. Putin.

But days earlier, responding to questions from The Times about the meetings with Mr. Kislyak and Mr. Gorkov, Ms. Hicks said the meetings were part of an effort by Mr. Kushner to improve relations between the United States and Russia, and to identify areas of possible cooperation.

After the first meeting with Mr. Kislyak, she said at the time, the Russian ambassador asked for a follow-up discussion to "deliver a message." Mr. Kushner sent Avraham Berkowitz, a longtime associate and now a White House aide. At that session, Mr. Kislyak told Mr. Berkowitz that he wanted Mr. Kushner to meet Mr. Gorkov, Ms. Hicks said.

Ms. Hicks did not say at the time why Mr. Kislyak had wanted to arrange a meeting between Mr. Kushner and Mr. Gorkov. But she said then that during Mr. Kushner's meeting with Mr. Gorkov, there was no discussion about the Kushner company's business or about American sanctions against Russian entities like Vnesheconombank.



## Jared Kushner's Growing Stench of Treason

First things first: Donald Trump didn't reveal the location of U.S. nuclear-powered attack submarines in his phone call with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. Trump comes off as a braggart and bully in the transcript, but what he said about submarines is far less interesting than our reaction to it.

It's clear that whatever signal Trump was trying to send got fouled up. But that shouldn't make us angry about the Trump administration's clumsiness. It should make us wary about the overconfidence of all policymakers who think they can use the deployment of military forces to signal resolve to

adversaries and allies without getting the rest of us killed.

Trump did say a fair number of awful and stupid things to Duterte. He told him that his campaign of extrajudicial executions was working (it isn't) and that North Korea's missiles are crashing (they aren't). But on the subject of submarines, Trump is blameless. Here is what he said in reference to North Korea:

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

It is entirely unclear where Trump thinks "over there" is, but in recent days U.S. Pacific Command had announced two port calls for nuclear-powered submarines, one in South Korea and another in Japan.

But then someone in the Defense Department freaked out. Three someones, actually. "We never talk about subs!" three anonymous officials told Nancy Youssef of *BuzzFeed News*. Oh, you don't? Then maybe someone should tell the Navy — because it blabbers on and on about submarines.

Contrary to the exclamations of the three anonymous officials, the Navy releases this kind of information all

the time. Submarine Force Pacific even has a webpage on which it publicizes submarine port calls, including the two Trump referenced, as a matter of routine. I counted 20 announced port calls in Japan and South Korea alone in 2016 — plus additional calls in Singapore and Australia, among other locales. Last I checked, 20 a year is more than "never."

This is not surprising. Forward-deployed military forces, like a doomsday device, don't provide much deterrence if you keep them secret. And, frankly, how secret is a 6,000-ton nuclear-powered submarine sidling up dockside and unleashing more than a hundred

sailors on port call? (Like how I kept that G-rated?)

Some of the reaction to Trump's alleged indiscretion is a product of partisanship run amok — a kind of lefty version of the asinine "Hillary revealed nuclear launch procedures!" nonsense that sent Republicans into spasms of stupidity. But it's important to remember that some of the reaction is probably also by design. Even before anyone knew about Trump's phone call, U.S. Pacific Command was tweeting pictures and giving interviews about the submarines, explicitly stating that such port visits "demonstrate [the Navy's] commitment to our regional allies." Trump may have been showing off or hoping Duterte would pass the message along to Kim Jong Un. Either way, Trump wanted a reaction. Just not quite the one he got.

Still, the reaction to Trump's comments reveals a broader gullibility about how we collectively respond to the government's public messaging about military deployments. As someone who studies nuclear weapons — and is deeply skeptical about using military forces to send messages to adversaries — the reaction to this nuclear submarine story is a cautionary tale.

After all, ship deployments are planned long in advance, and these two submarines are probably no exception. The Navy keeps a schedule for deployments that takes into account crew rotations, needs for maintenance, and so on. While there is flexibility within that schedule, port calls at places like Busan and

Sasebo aren't usually a spur of the moment event.

The U.S. military is conducting an enormous number of military exercises and operations around the world at any given moment. Instead of dramatically changing carefully planned schedules to chase one crisis or another, someone (more often than not, the Joint Information Operations Warfare Center in San Antonio) looks at the list of exercises, ponders the global situation, and decides how to "frame" existing deployments and exercises in terms of current events to send the right signal to adversaries and allies. And reporters eat it up.

This year, the United States conducted a long-planned Minuteman III launch out of Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. The headlines — "U.S. Test Fires Boeing's \$40M Missile in Message to North Korea" — predictably framed the test as a message to Kim Jong Un. Every reporter with whom I spoke about that event started by asking that same question. I responded by pointing out that Minuteman launches are scheduled 3-5 years in advance — long before the current crisis began — and the planning for a launch can take a year.

But this time, they overdid it. The United States conducted a second Minuteman test a few days later, and, for whatever reason, the Air Force didn't like the idea that two intercontinental ballistic missiles had been tested in a single week as a warning to North Korea. Officials dutifully explained to reporters that it was a coincidence that the two tests were so close to each other — the

first test had long planned, while the other had been delayed from the fall due to a wildfire. None of which changed the headlines spurred by the initial "framing" of the initial launch.

But that raises the question of why the public hasn't learned its lesson. Why do we consistently fall for spin? The answer is that human beings have a bad habit of inferring causation from correlation. And so a missile test planned months ago can be sold as a response to events from last week, even though that is patently absurd. Similarly, the regular series of port calls by U.S. submarines in South Korea and Japan can be explained as an extraordinary response to a crisis.

The funny thing is, there just isn't much reason to think that these signals make much of a strategic difference beyond winning mostly friendly headlines. Defense experts, policymakers, and military officials are all confident that they can message like this effectively to deter adversaries and reassure allies. But I think the misreading of Trump's remarks suggests that they aren't nearly as good at messaging as they think. This is the second time that the Trump administration has clumsily tried to use naval forces to send a message to Kim Jong Un. And, like the public messaging about a change to the deployment of the USS *Carl Vinson* aircraft carrier, it was a fiasco.

The Barack Obama administration wasn't much better. It fell in love with bomber overflights. In 2013, the Pentagon flew two B-2 bombers to South Korea. It was so pleased with this signal that it did a B-52 flight in January 2016. And then a

B-1 in September. The Defense Department was doing so many bomber flights that South Korea proposed a permanent rotation of bombers and other assets. There was another bomber overflight in May — not that anyone noticed.

It's not surprising that these signals have little effect. The academic literature on signaling is too complicated to fairly represent in a few paragraphs, but a basic point is that fundamental capabilities and interests tend to matter more to crisis outcomes than bluffing. To the extent that signals matter, they need to be costly to the one sending them. And my own observation is that the best stories told by practitioners about great moments in the history of nuclear signaling usually turn out to be based on fairly tendentious interpretations of historical events. It would be nice to subject policymakers to the same data-driven scrutiny that has suggested that other traditional by-the-gut actors, like baseball managers or campaign gurus, tend to overstate their own impact on events.

There is no reason to think the Trump administration is any more adroit at using military deployments to send signals than more competent White Houses. Which raises a thought — how about we stop trying to signal with forces and use words instead? We have diplomats, led by a secretary of state who I have been assured is still alive. So rather than pointing to a submarine, missile, or bomber, how about we simply say what we mean?

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Post**

## Editorial : 'Some have classified it as treason,' but these opposing-party lawmakers are collaborating

REP. TOM REED (R-N.Y.) was an early Donald Trump supporter and applauds the president's performance to date. Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.) is a Trump opponent who feels "very strongly that we have to get to the bottom of" the Russia hacking story. Yet the two members of Congress are doing something very strange for Washington these days: working together, on a bipartisan basis, to try to get things done.

The two are leaders of the Problem Solvers Caucus, which to date boasts 20 Republican representatives and 20 Democratic representatives. The caucus, an outgrowth of the No Labels organization (Motto: "Stop fighting. Start fixing"), isn't new, but this year it has adopted rules that could give it more clout in Congress. If three-

quarters of its members, including at least half the delegations of each party, vote for a position, the entire caucus will vote that way on the floor. Armed with this potential for influence, the caucus met with House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) last week, and a meeting with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is in the works.

No one would argue that this is going to end polarization in the United States. It remains to be seen what the 40 can agree on among themselves, let alone whether they can drag the rest of the House along with them. But at a time when party members are tempted to view the other side as enemies rather than well-intentioned opponents, their commitment to governing should be applauded. They helped push adoption of the continuing

resolution on this year's budget, which avoided a government shutdown, and they said they are hoping to play a similarly constructive role when the debt ceiling needs to be raised and budget caps are set for next year.

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"The folks who sent me here don't want me to take a pure obstructionist approach," Mr. Gottheimer told us. "They want me to sit at the table and try to get things done." Added Mr. Reed: "Some have classified it as treason — the people on the extremes, who just want to play shirts versus skins. But the appetite for this is strong."

The Problem Solvers Caucus isn't alone in trying to restore some bipartisanship to governing. Issue One, a nonprofit dedicated to campaign finance reform, has recruited 180 former members of Congress, 45 percent of whom are Republican, according to executive director Nick Penniman. Advocacy on the issue "has shifted to the left in the past two decades, to the detriment of the cause," Mr. Penniman said. The organization is convinced that many members of both parties would, for example, welcome reforms that allowed them to spend less time fundraising.

The Trump presidency has sharpened divisions and heightened the challenge for people wanting to work across the aisle, Mr. Reed and Mr. Gottheimer both said. But they

also said it hasn't lessened the urgency of trying. "I believe at the end of the day, people want us to govern, and that's what they'll judge us on," Mr. Reed said. Agreed his Democratic co-chair: "I believe in accountability — but I also believe in progress."