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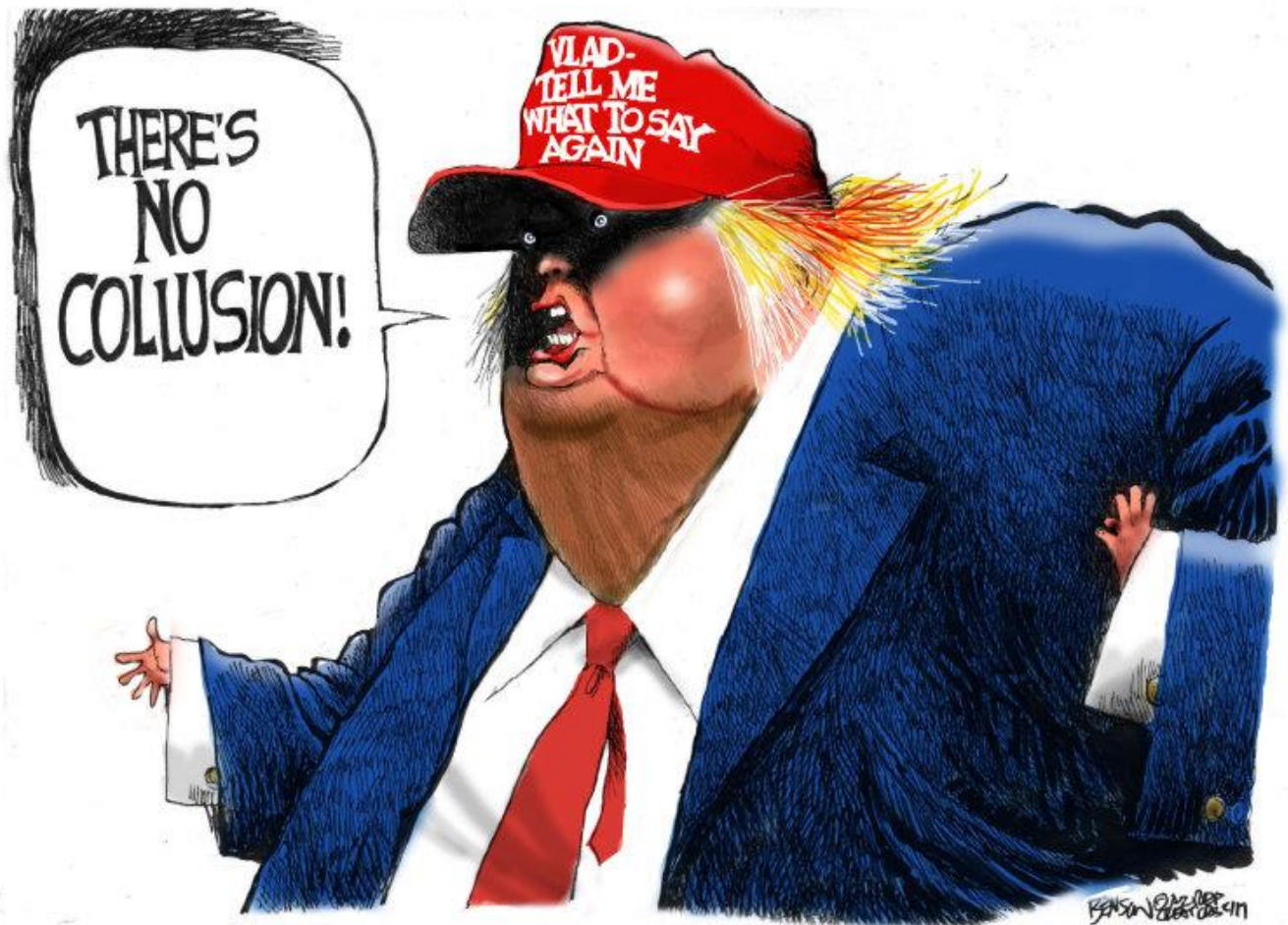
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FRANCE – EUROPE

The
Washington
Post

White House signals that the U.S. is likely to exit Paris climate deal (UNE)

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

10-12 minutes

President Trump is still undecided but leaning toward withdrawing the United States from the landmark Paris climate agreement, White House officials said Wednesday, a move that would honor a campaign vow but risk rupturing global alliances and disappointing both environmentalists and corporate titans.

Although officials warned that Trump's thinking could shift before he announces his decision Thursday, a U.S. exit from the climate pact could have severe ramifications internationally. It could raise doubts about the commitment of the world's largest economy to curbing global warming and make it more difficult to hold other nations to their environmental commitments.

All but two countries — Nicaragua and Syria — signed onto the 2015 accord, which was a signature diplomatic achievement for President Barack Obama.

The Paris agreement has long divided the Trump administration, with the president taking much of the spring to make up his mind amid an intense campaign by both sides to influence his decision.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and adviser, are among those who have urged him to stay in the deal. White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt have pushed for a withdrawal, which wouldn't actually be finalized until near the end of Trump's term.

All but two countries are in the Paris climate agreement. The U.S. could be the third.

[Whatever Trump decides on Paris, he has already taken the U.S. out of the climate game]

Although the White House signaled that Trump was likely to announce an exit from the Paris accord, it made no public announcement Wednesday. Trump tweeted that he would announce his decision Thursday at 3 p.m. in the White House Rose Garden. The president has a history of changing his mind at the last minute, as he did in deciding

not to pull out of the North American Free Trade Agreement after aides had suggested he would.

All day, senior administration officials cautioned that Trump had not yet made a final decision on the climate pact — and the president himself seemed eager to maintain the suspense.

"You're going to find out very soon," Trump told reporters Wednesday, in response to questions during a brief Oval Office appearance with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

Asked whether he had been hearing from CEOs trying to persuade him, Trump said, "I'm hearing from a lot of people, both ways."

More than 190 nations agreed to the accord in December 2015 in Paris, and 147 have since formally ratified or otherwise joined it, including the United States — representing more than 80 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

The United States is the world's second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Under the Paris agreement, the United States promised to reduce its emissions 26 percent to 28 percent below their 2005 levels by 2025. As of 2015, emissions were 12 percent lower, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

[These experts say it may actually be best if the U.S. left the Paris climate agreement]

Hard-line conservatives have sought to convince Trump that meeting this target would be harmful to the bottom lines of U.S. businesses and would jeopardize manufacturing jobs, especially in the Midwest and other regions where Trump found deep support in last year's election.

They also have argued that staying in the Paris agreement could be used as a legal tool by environmental groups seeking to fight Trump's environmental policies.

In addition, a group of 22 Republican senators — including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) — wrote to Trump urging "a clean break" from the Paris agreement.

But Tillerson and other internationalists have argued that it would be beneficial to the United States to remain part of negotiations and meetings surrounding the

agreement as a matter of leverage and influence.

A broad range of outsiders have lobbied Trump to remain part of the global pact, from former vice president Al Gore to Pope Francis. The administration's debate has triggered an outpouring of lobbying from corporate America as well, as Apple, ExxonMobil and other major companies have strongly supported the accord.

[Just don't call it 'climate change': How the government is rebranding in the age of Trump]

During Trump's maiden foreign trip last week, a number of European leaders sought to persuade Trump of the magnitude of the climate change crisis and the importance of American leadership to address it.

Gary Cohn, the National Economic Council director, told reporters last week that Trump "wants to do the right thing for the environment. He cares about the environment. But he also cares very much about creating jobs for American workers." He added, "If those things collide, growing our economy is going to win. The president ran on growing our economy."

As a candidate, Trump railed against the Paris accord and pledged to scrap it, as part of his "America First" agenda to promote economic nationalism and disentangle the United States from international agreements that he considers harmful.

Trump also said he thought climate change was a "hoax." Asked by a reporter Wednesday whether he still believes so, the president said only, "Thank you, everybody."

News reports Wednesday that Trump was expected to withdraw from the Paris accord sparked swift and strong reactions.

Elon Musk, the chief executive of Tesla and a member of a White House manufacturing jobs advisory board, tweeted that if Trump does exit, he would have "no choice" but to end his affiliations with the administration.

Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican presidential nominee and one of Trump's finalists for secretary of state, tweeted, "Affirmation of the #ParisAgreement is not only about the climate: It is also about America remaining the global leader."

Sen. Michael F. Bennet (D-Colo.) said leaving the Paris agreement would amount to an "abdication" of American values.

"This would be yet another example of President Trump's 'Putting America Last' agenda — last in innovation, last in science, and last in international leadership," Bennet said in a statement.

Others cheered the notion that Trump might soon kill the climate agreement that had been an Obama legacy item.

"President Trump's decision sends a strong message to the environmentalist movement: no longer will the United States be strong armed by their scare tactics intended to harm our economy and inhibit economic growth," David McIntosh, president of the Club for Growth, a conservative political action group, said in a statement.

[Financial firms lead shareholder rebellion against ExxonMobil climate change policies]

A party that has fully joined the accord, as the United States has, cannot formally withdraw for three years after the agreement was entered into force in 2016 — and that is capped by an extra year-long waiting period. Under those rules, Trump could not complete a U.S. exit from the agreement until Nov. 4, 2020 — the day after the next presidential election.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said he tried to explain to Trump during their climate discussions last week that withdrawing from the pact was no simple task.

"Not everything in international agreements is 'fake news,'" Juncker said Wednesday. He added, "This notion, 'I am Trump, I am American, 'America First' and I'm going to get out of it' — that won't happen. We tried to explain that to Mr. Trump in Taormina in clear German sentences. It seems our attempt failed." Taormina is the Sicilian resort town where the Group of Seven leaders met last week.

Trump also could opt to withdraw from the more foundational U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, which laid the groundwork for the Paris deal and was signed by President George H.W. Bush and ratified by the Senate in the early 1990s.

But that is a more radical move, which would further withdraw the United States from all international climate change negotiations.

The Trump administration already has rolled back key Obama administration initiatives through executive action, including the EPA's Clean Power Plan, which was a key part of the U.S. promise through the Paris agreement. These policies have made it highly unlikely that the United States could honor its Paris pledge to sharply cut carbon dioxide emissions.

That leaves Trump with two clear choices: withdraw from the Paris

agreement or revise the U.S. emissions targets downward to a more achievable level while remaining in the pact.

A downward revision would certainly prompt criticism from the international community, but not nearly so much as an abandonment. The Paris agreement is, after all, the first global accord on climate change action that has managed to unify both developed and developing nations behind a single framework to cut emissions.

Local Politics Alerts

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

Moreover, the accord is flexible in the sense that it does not mandate that any nation achieve any particular level of emissions cuts. Rather, every nation under the agreement pledges to do the best it can, and to participate in a process in which nations will regularly increase their ambitions over time.

The ultimate goal of the Paris agreement is to hold the warming of the planet to "well below" two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming above the temperatures found in the

preindustrial times of the late 1800s. The Earth is already about one degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than it was at that time, scientists have determined, and current and near future emissions seem quite likely to take the planet past 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) in the coming decades.

Recent research has highlighted that above 2 degrees, major threats could ensue for Earth systems ranging from coral reefs to the planet's vast ice sheets.

Michael Birnbaum in Brussels contributed to this report.



If Trump Dumps the Paris Accord, China Will Rule the Energy Future

Paul McLeary | 57 mins ago

6-8 minutes

The South China Sea. Human rights. Trade. Currency manipulation.

When U.S.-China relations are discussed we often ascribe these issues some level of tension. However, our countries' cooperation has historically been more cordial and productive in one area: environmental protection.

The reason for this fertile diplomatic ground is simple. All nations and peoples have an interest in lowering pollution, which harms our health, stifles economic growth, creates instability, and knows no boundaries.

A powerful instance of environmental diplomacy revolved around an air-quality monitor on the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing in 2008. Its purpose was to inform the American diplomatic corps of how safe it was to be outside on any given day. However, the public availability of this solid air-quality data led to growing demands from Chinese citizens for cleaner air, eventually pushing the Chinese government to respond by better connecting the dots among clean air, climate change, and economic growth.

International relationships have always been influenced by the availability (or constraints) of natural resources essential to public health, well-being, and economic growth. Unfortunately, the "America First" mantra touted by the Trump administration seems blind to the fundamental need for clean water, air, and land. There are vast economic opportunities and diplomatic leverage the United States can either seize on or cede to China through climate leadership.

The proven economic benefits of domestic action to advance clean energy, such as tax incentives for wind and solar energy, have supercharged our fast-growing clean-energy industry, added hundreds of thousands of middle-class jobs, and promoted significant economic growth. Clean energy helped pave the way for the Obama administration to lower greenhouse gas emissions to 1994 levels, while managing to create 11.3 million jobs with 75 straight months of employment growth.

In short, the current administration doesn't seem to get it. It argues that the Environmental Protection Agency needs to return to its "core mission," as if carbon pollution doesn't threaten public health and safety — never mind its impact on clean air and water.

If the Trump administration fails to show leadership on domestic climate actions and support the Paris Agreement on climate change, it will cede a competitive economic edge to nations like China. It would place the health and safety of our families, communities, and country at risk and waste our international expertise and leverage, which are essential to ensuring that each country is accountable to its commitments and achieves lower emission levels that science may demand over time. It's misleading of this administration to point to China's 2030 reduction goal under the Paris Agreement, as if it gives the nation a free pass until then. China must act now to meet its commitment, and it is already making substantial investments in renewable energy and disinvestments in coal-fired power plants. In fact, during the next five years, China is expected to remain the largest player in wind-energy growth.

Combating environmental health risks is an exercise in addressing

the "tragedy of the commons." Pollution, like carbon, is diffuse and blind to borders. Addressing global environmental health risks always requires multilateral cooperation, which will always demand a strong, global leader. Without a path paved by nations bold and considerate enough to set terms, craft solutions, and sell them to the rest of us, we will all suffer the consequences of inaction.

In the past, the United States has been that leader.

As a country, we became stronger and more competitive because of our unflinching action, not in spite of it. When the thinning of the stratospheric ozone layer threatened the well-being of all people, the United States seized an opportunity to lead. In 1988, the Reagan administration led a historic charge to institute a global agreement to attack the pollution causing the problem. To this day, the global regime to combat ozone-depleting substances is hailed as one of the most successful multilateral agreements ever.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration is bowing to the old special-interest line that the United States must choose economic competitiveness over environmental protection even though history says otherwise.

During the EPA's 46 years, the United States experienced record growth while curtailing pollution. For every dollar spent on lifesaving regulations, we've seen up to \$9 in health benefits — a boon for economic welfare. Conventional air pollutants have been reduced by 70 percent, while our economy grew by about 250 percent. By 2008, the environmental technologies and services industry supported 1.7 million jobs and generated \$300 billion in revenue. That year, the industry exported goods and services worth \$44 billion, topping

U.S. sectors like plastics and rubber products. During the Obama administration, we set a course with the auto industry to double fuel efficiency and prevent millions of tons of carbon pollution. Today, the industry is thriving.

Bullish environmental leadership and climate action are not costs; they're investments.

Bullish environmental leadership and climate action are not costs; they're investments. By weakening or withdrawing our nationally determined contribution to the Paris Agreement, we would be sending the wrong signal to clean-energy investment dollars and the rest of the world, which historically looks to us to set the pace and tone of the global economy.

Under President Barack Obama's leadership, we tactfully secured China's support for a joint climate agreement before striking the Paris climate deal. In sharp contrast, climate change was not a topic of discussion during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to the United States in April. And the Trump administration refuses to name a special envoy for climate change, a key U.S. position in international climate negotiations.

Although the EPA and American climate diplomacy may be less relevant under this administration's regressive brand of scorched-earth leadership, no one person — not even the president of the United States — can reverse global economic forces moving toward a lower carbon economy. The train to our clean-energy future has left the station.

If we want to lead the world and reap the benefits, the United States must lean into climate action, not away from it. We've been that nation before, and we can be that nation again.

Illustration by Matthew Hollister

Trump Likely to End Climate Deal

Eli Stokols and Bradley Olson

6-8 minutes

Updated May 31, 2017 11:26 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump said he would make an announcement Thursday on the Paris climate treaty, with three White House officials saying he is expected to withdraw from the accord, although they cautioned that the situation may yet change.

The president said on Twitter late Wednesday that he will announce his decision Thursday afternoon at the White House Rose Garden.

Under the accord, 190 countries committed to cutting greenhouse-gas emissions, in an effort to combat climate change. The agreement aims to keep average global temperatures from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius, or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit, above preindustrial levels.

Under the agreement, each participating country determines its own set of emissions targets and a plan to reach them.

The U.S. had pledged to cut greenhouse-gas emissions by 26% to 28% from 2005 levels by 2025. The U.S. is the world's second-largest emitter of carbon, behind China, which has reaffirmed its own commitment to meeting its targets under the Paris accord.

According to several administration officials and other people with direct knowledge of the deliberations, Mr. Trump had been weighing how far to go in fulfilling a campaign promise that he would pull the U.S. from the accord.

Mr. Trump has also heard from business leaders and senior aides who are urging him not to completely withdraw.

Because the Paris agreement is nonbinding, Mr. Trump has the option of lowering the emissions targets for the U.S. without withdrawing completely, which could take three years under the original agreement.

The president met Wednesday with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who has advocated remaining in the deal. A day earlier, Mr. Trump met with a leading voice for complete withdrawal, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt.

Messrs. Pruitt and Trump have both expressed skepticism about the role of human activity as a leading factor in climate change.

Dozens of Fortune 500 companies have lobbied the administration to remain in the agreement, expressing their collective support in a public advertising campaign and privately in smaller meetings and phone calls with the president.

Large companies say the accord provides a predictable and practical framework for reducing emissions and can serve to boost competitiveness and job creation while minimizing business risks from climate change. One of Mr. Trump's closest business allies, Dow Chemical Co. Chief Executive Andrew Liveris, has been seeking an Oval Office meeting this week to make his case, a person familiar with the matter said.

Following reports Wednesday morning that a withdrawal might be imminent, Apple Inc. CEO Tim Cook and Tesla Inc. CEO Elon Musk were among the business leaders placing phone calls to the White House in a last-minute effort to persuade the president to reconsider, say people familiar with the calls.

Mr. Musk tweeted Wednesday afternoon that he had "done all [he] could" to urge the president and his aides to stay in the Paris agreement, and that he would leave his role as a

member of an advisory business council should Mr. Trump withdraw.

While larger energy companies such as Exxon Mobil Corp. and Royal Dutch Shell PLC support the U.S.'s commitment to the Paris accord, other fossil-fuel companies, especially those with fewer investments in clean-energy technologies, have been pushing hard for complete withdrawal.

Separately on Wednesday, Exxon's shareholders voted to demand more transparency from the company about the impact of climate change on its operations. The vote was the strongest signal yet of investor interest and concern about climate risks.

BlackRock Inc. and Vanguard Group, Exxon's two largest shareholders, voted for the measure, people familiar with the matter said.

At last week's summit of the Group of Seven leading nations in Sicily, European leaders also focused their conversations with Mr. Trump on convincing him of the importance of U.S. leadership when it comes to combating climate change, and the economic opportunities that can be derived from the advancement of new energy technologies.

U.S. carbon emissions are likely to continue falling regardless of any political change, mainly for market reasons that have made it cheaper to use natural gas to generate electricity instead of coal.

Because of this switch, as well as greater efficiency throughout the U.S. economy, energy-related carbon-dioxide emissions fell last year to the lowest level since 1992, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

If the U.S. withdraws and eschews any further emissions-reductions policies, a number of states will continue with regulations that are likely to be influential. California, for

example, has a cap-and-trade law that seeks to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. It took effect in 2012. It is also implementing a number of laws targeting vehicle efficiency and crude-extraction methods that emit high amounts of carbon.

Environmentalists warn that an unraveling of the Paris accord, intended to slow the rise of the average atmospheric temperature before it passes a dangerous threshold considered by scientists to mark an irreversible point of climate change, is likely to have a permanent and profound impact on human life on Earth.

Foreign leaders have pointed to the buy-in from close to 200 countries as evidence of the shift in global thinking on the issue.

"The importance of climate change has really risen above where it was 20-25 years and is now seen by many countries as an issue as important as international trade," said Andrew Light, a former senior climate-change official in the Obama administration. "They're wrong if they think this is a decision of low consequence with regard to diplomatic blowback."

The president has shown a tendency to reverse course on other decisions. Last month, the administration said it was no longer considering pulling out of the North American Free Trade Agreement after Mr. Trump's aides said he would withdraw. Last week, he failed to explicitly state his support for a core tenet of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization after his aides said he would.

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POLITICO How Bannon and Pruitt boxed in Trump on climate pact

Andrew Restuccia

11-14 minutes

Donald Trump's chief strategist and EPA administrator maneuvered for months to get the president to exit the Paris climate accord, shrewdly playing to his populist instincts and publicly pressing the narrative that

the nearly 200-nation deal was effectively dead — boxing in the president on one of his highest-profile decisions to date.

Steve Bannon and Scott Pruitt have sought to outsmart the administration's pro-Paris group of advisers, including Trump's daughter Ivanka, who were hoping the president could be swayed by a global swell of support for the deal from major corporations, U.S. allies,

Al Gore and even the pope. But some of that pro-Paris sentiment wound up being surprisingly tepid, according to White House aides who had expected that European leaders would make a stronger case during Trump's trip abroad earlier this month.

Story Continued Below

Those who want Trump to remain also faced an insurmountable

hurdle: The president has long believed, rightly or wrongly, that the U.S. is getting a raw deal under the accord, and it proved nearly impossible to change his mind.

The internal reality show will culminate Thursday when Trump finally announces his decision, after a rush of leaks Wednesday from administration officials saying he was on the verge of pulling the plug on U.S. participation in history's

most comprehensive global climate agreement.

"I will be announcing my decision on Paris Accord, Thursday at 3:00 P.M.," Trump tweeted Wednesday night, without revealing the outcome. "The White House Rose Garden. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!"

Some White House aides held out the prospect that the president still might take the middle course that Ivanka Trump and others had advocated — staying in the deal while drastically scaling back the Obama administration's non-binding carbon cleanup promises. But three White House officials said Wednesday that they expect Trump to make a clean break by withdrawing from the agreement, though they noted it's possible the president changes his mind at the last minute.

In recent months, Pruitt and Bannon made sure Trump heard from a parade of conservative leaders and Republican lawmakers who raised concerns that the deal would hobble his pro-fossil-fuel energy agenda.

"We made very much the economic message argument," said Club for Growth President David McIntosh, whose group wrote letters to the White House and spoke to senior staff. "It was bad for the U.S. economy. It would stifle economic growth and the United States should withdraw."

As the news of the impending decision spread Wednesday, White House chief of staff Reince Priebus began calling and fielding calls from lawmakers, indicating that the U.S. was unlikely to stay in the agreement, one person familiar with the conversations said.

If he withdraws, Paris' foes will have Pruitt and Bannon to thank.

One Republican close to the White House called it the "classic split" and said conservative activists had flooded the White House in recent weeks, after seeing increasing chatter that Trump may stay in. This person said Bannon and Pruitt worked quietly to make sure Trump was hearing their side and touched base occasionally on political strategy to woo him.

"You had the New Yorkers against it, and all the campaign loyalists for it," this person said, referring to the push to withdraw. "When the New Yorkers get involved, it gets complicated for Trump and everyone else around him."

Pruitt and Bannon have told others repeatedly for months that Trump will pull out of the agreement, as they aggressively pushed a narrative that they hoped would

prove to be true, even as White House aides continued to debate the issue.

"Some of the debate was for show to help the moderates feel like they had their say," said one person who has spoken to Pruitt. "Pruitt has believed all along that this was never in doubt."

Pruitt, who frequently attacked the EPA's regulations in court when he was Oklahoma's attorney general, used his new post as EPA administrator to orchestrate an aggressive campaign to marshal conservative opposition to the Paris agreement.

He bashed the deal during a closed-door April meeting of the National Mining Association's executive committee, telling the group that the agreement would hurt the economy. Pruitt's staff also urged lawmakers and conservative groups to publicly criticize the agreement, sources familiar with the issue told POLITICO, which had the effect of increasing public pressure on Trump.

Bannon similarly argued in meetings with Trump and his team that the president would be breaking his campaign promise to "cancel" the agreement if he decided to remain. And he argued that the accord is a bad deal for the United States because other countries aren't doing enough to curb their emissions.

Pruitt and Bannon's anti-Paris campaign was meant to counter a separate offensive by members of the administration who supported staying in the pact, including Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner.

In recent months, Ivanka Trump set up a process in which the president would regularly hear from people who supported remaining in the agreement, according to administration officials.

The remain camp believed, perhaps naively, that Trump could be influenced by the support the Paris deal has received from major corporations, including Exxon Mobil, which Secretary of State Rex Tillerson led for more than a decade.

"Ivanka is doing what she can to get him to stay," one official said. "But that doesn't mean he's going to do it."

White House aides outlined a plan to remain in the agreement while weakening former President Barack Obama's pledge to cut domestic greenhouse gas emissions. They made the case that Trump could use the good will generated from remaining to negotiate better economic incentives for fossil fuels,

and they even won the buy-in of several coal companies that detested Obama's climate policies.

They hoped European leaders could persuade Trump he would risk damaging diplomatic relations if he withdrew. Ivanka Trump also brought Gore to Trump Tower to try to sway her father's mind during the presidential transition, and Pope Francis handed the president a copy of his papal encyclical on climate change when the two men met at the Vatican last week.

Trump took calls from a parade of business leaders and foreign leaders in recent weeks, most pressing him to remain, according to a senior administration official — and the calls continued on Wednesday.

"He had tremendous pressure from international leaders, from members of his own Cabinet and advisers in the international sphere not to pull out of the accord because of the perceived loss of face," said McIntosh, the Club for Growth president.

But while the leaders of G-7 nations all pressed Trump to remain in the agreement during last week's summit in Italy, Paris supporters in the White House have privately grouched that they didn't make an aggressive enough case.

European officials countered they tried not to push Trump too much during the meetings, believing that a hard-sell could backfire. And they were buoyed by early signals from White House officials ahead of the summit that Trump was open to remaining.

Indeed, European officials received a series of mixed messages from Trump's team during the summit. National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn, a Paris supporter and the only U.S. official permitted to attend meetings with G-7 leaders, told reporters that Trump was "evolving" on climate change, which many interpreted to mean that he would remain.

White House officials chalked up Cohn's comments to Trump's habit of echoing the perspective of the last person he talked to. By that time, Bannon and other opponents of the agreement had returned the United States. But Trump's decision to delay a final verdict on the agreement gave Pruitt and Bannon a final opportunity to make their case. Pruitt met with Trump to discuss Paris on Tuesday.

Most European officials were unwilling to comment about the prospect that Trump will withdraw, as they have not yet received official word from the White House and they

are still holding out hope that the president will change his mind.

The officials have already begun looking to other countries for support on climate change, with the European Union set to promise deeper cooperation with China. Some officials have even adopted a new informal nickname for the major remaining countries that support action on climate change: the G-6.

Some Trump administration officials were reeling on Wednesday after the news first broke that Trump was prepared to withdraw.

Trump had not officially told his entire team of senior aides he was considering leaving the agreement Wednesday when news leaked out. "Everyone assumed that's what was going to happen, but we weren't called all in and told, 'Oh, we're putting this story out today,'" one person said.

Having learned a lesson after Trump changed his mind about pulling out of NAFTA, administration officials cautioned against definitive reporting, warning that the president is notoriously fickle. As administration officials began tamping down reports that Trump's decision was final, White House aides were swamped with calls, emails and texts from lobbyists and diplomats seeking clarification.

Officials close to Trump sometimes leak information before it is final — hoping to back him into a corner, or believing that comments during a private meeting represent his ultimate view. White House officials put out word in April that he was pulling out of NAFTA, even though Trump had not made up his mind, and news leaked during the campaign that he would pick Mike Pence as his running mate even as he weighed other candidates.

"Sometimes people close to Trump put things into the media environment to see how he'll react to it," one adviser said. "If your idea gets good coverage, it's likely to help him decide to go with what you're saying."

One of the biggest lingering questions: If he withdraws, how will Trump do it?

He could abide by the formal procedures in the underlying text of the agreement, which mandate that a formal withdrawal will not go into effect until at least Nov. 4, 2020. Or he could pull out of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the underlying 1992 treaty that governs the negotiations, which would allow for a speedier pullout — a far more radical step that would see the U.S. abstain from the entire climate negotiating process.

He could also declare that the agreement is a treaty, which would require a two-thirds-majority ratification vote in the Senate that would certainly fail.

Whatever he does, supporters of the climate agreement expect a harsh

reaction from the United States' friends if the country pulls out.

"I think the diplomatic backlash will be worse than it was when the U.S. rejected Kyoto," said Susan Biniaz, the State Department's longtime former climate change lawyer,

referring to the George W. Bush administration's decision to spurn the 1997 Kyoto climate agreement.

One former U.S. official agreed: "Will global leaders trust the U.S. to negotiate a climate treaty ever again? After Kyoto and Paris, who

will trust us to keep our word as a nation? Our credibility is gone."

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**The
New York
Times**

The U.S. Is the Biggest Carbon Polluter in History. Will It Walk Away From the Paris Climate Deal? (UNE)

The United States, with its love of big cars, big houses and blasting air-conditioners, has contributed more than any other country to the atmospheric carbon dioxide that is scorching the planet.

"In cumulative terms, we certainly own this problem more than anybody else does," said David G. Victor, a longtime scholar of climate politics at the University of California, San Diego. Many argue that this obligates the United States to take ambitious action to slow global warming.

Against that backdrop, factions in the Trump administration are engaged in a heated debate over whether to remain a party to the 195-nation agreement on climate change reached in Paris in 2015. President Trump promised on Wednesday to announce his decision at 3 p.m. Thursday in the White House Rose Garden.

A decision to walk away from the accord would be a momentous setback, in practical and political terms, for the effort to address climate change.

An American exit could prompt other countries to withdraw from the pact or rethink their emissions pledges, making it much harder to achieve the agreement's already difficult goal of limiting global warming to a manageable level.

It means the United States — the country with the largest, most dynamic economy — would give up a leadership role when it comes to finding solutions for climate change.

"It is immoral," said Mohamed Adow, who grew up herding livestock in Kenya and now works in London as a leader on climate issues for Christian Aid, a relief and development

group. "The countries that have done the least to cause the problem are suffering first and worst."

Some backers of the agreement argue that the large American role in causing climate change creates an outside responsibility to help fight it, including an obligation to send billions of dollars abroad to help people in poorer countries.

The Obama administration pledged \$3 billion to an international fund meant to aid the hardest-hit countries. Only \$1 billion of that had been transferred to the fund by the time President Trump took office on Jan. 20. He wants to walk away from the balance of the commitment, though Congress may have the last word.

Mr. Trump, his Environmental Protection Agency administrator Scott Pruitt and Stephen K. Bannon, a top White House adviser, argue that meeting the terms of the Paris accord will strangle the American economy and lead to major job losses. Many in manufacturing and fossil fuel industries also want the United States to leave the pact, but corporate opinion is deeply split. Quitting Paris was a central Trump campaign pledge.

While the United States is historically responsible for more emissions than any other country, it is no longer the world's largest single emitter of greenhouse gases. China surpassed the United States a decade ago, and its emissions today are about double the American figure. Some of China's emissions are from the production of goods for the United States and other rich countries.

But the United States has been burning coal, oil and natural gas far longer, and today the country, with

just over 4 percent of the world's population, is responsible for almost a third of the excess carbon dioxide that is heating the planet. China is responsible for less than a sixth. The 28 countries of the European Union, taken as a group, come in just behind the United States in historical emissions.

China has four times as many people as the United States, so the Chinese still burn far less fossil fuel on average than Americans — less than half as much, in fact. The typical American also burns roughly twice as much as the average person in Europe or in Japan, and 10 times as much as the average person in India.

The Trump administration made clear months ago that it would abandon the emissions targets set by President Barack Obama, walk away from pledges of money to help poor countries battle global warming, and seek to cut research budgets aimed at finding solutions to climate change.

Experts say the climate crisis has become so acute that every country has to pitch in to help solve it, with no room for emissions in developing countries to reach the high levels that have been typical of rich countries.

One of the political breakthroughs that led to the Paris agreement was that nearly all the nations of the world came to grips with that reality and agreed to do what they could to help solve the problem. The agreement recognized that the poorest countries could not afford to do much on their own, which is why they were promised extensive financial and technical help.

Energy experts say that poorer countries may be able to develop

their economies without depending entirely on fossil fuels, with new technologies like renewable power and electric cars plunging in cost and opening the possibility of a widespread cleanup of the world's energy system.

"Nobody really wants barrels of oil or tons of coal," said John D. Sterman, a professor of management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a founder of a think tank called Climate Interactive. "They need a warm, dry, safe place to live, and access to healthy food, and lighting when it's dark."

If it turns out that those goods can really be provided with clean energy, that may be the economic opportunity of the 21st century — and increasingly, countries like China and India seem to see things that way. Recent analyses by Climate Action Tracker, an alliance of European think tanks, suggest that both countries are on track to beat the targets they set in the Paris agreement, even as the United States backs away.

The New York Times asked Climate Interactive to calculate when Americans would have run out of fossil fuel if the nation's population had somehow, at the beginning of the industrial era, been allocated a share equal to those of the rest of the world's people. The calculation was premised on limiting emissions enough to meet international climate goals.

The answer: Americans would have used up their quota in 1944, the year the Allied armies stormed the beaches of Normandy.

**The
New York
Times**

World Awaits Trump Decision on U.S. Future in Paris Accord

Davenport
9-11 minutes

Michael D. Shear and Coral

no verdict had been reached. Mr. Trump, speaking to reporters on Wednesday afternoon, offered only that "I'm hearing from a lot of people, both ways," and promised a decision "very soon."

aides further exposed the fault lines of a chaotic decision-making process that has swirled around Mr. Trump since he took office.

Signs have been increasing for weeks that Mr. Trump was heading toward pulling out of the Paris agreement, apparently believing that

a continued United States presence in the accord would harm the economy; hinder job creation in regions like Appalachia and the West, where his most ardent supporters live; and undermine his "America first" message.

Other White House insiders disputed those reports, saying that

With the world watching nervously, the feuding among the president's

At home, he faced urgent pleas from corporate leaders, including Tim Cook, the chief executive of Apple, who told Mr. Trump on Tuesday that pulling out was wrong for business, the economy and the environment. Elon Musk, the chief executive of Tesla, threatened to resign from two White House advisory boards if the president withdrew from the Paris agreement.

On his recent trip to Europe, Mr. Trump waded aside a barrage of private lobbying by other heads of state to keep the United States in the agreement.

A frustrated Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, said he opposed "behaving as vassals of the Americans" and assailed Mr. Trump for failing to even understand the mechanics of a withdrawal, which he said could take three or four years to fulfill.

"This notion — 'I am Trump. I am American. America first, so I'm going to get out of it.' — that is not going to happen," Mr. Juncker said. "We tried to make that clear to Mr. Trump in clear, German principal clauses in Taormina, but it would appear that he did not understand."

He added, "Not everything in international agreements is fake news."

Mr. Trump has shown a willingness to shift direction up until the moment of a public announcement. He met on Wednesday with Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, who has advocated that the United States remain a part of the Paris accord. Other advisers pressing Mr. Trump to remain were furiously making their case.

In the past, such appeals have worked. In April, Mr. Trump was set to announce a withdrawal from the North American Free Trade Agreement, but at the last minute changed his mind after intense discussions with advisers and calls from the leaders of Canada and Mexico. Last week, a senior administration official said Mr. Trump would use a speech in

Brussels to explicitly endorse NATO's Article 5 mutual defense provision, which states that an attack on one NATO member is an attack on all. He did not.

The exit of the United States, the world's largest economy and second-largest greenhouse gas polluter, would not dissolve the 195-nation pact, which was legally ratified last year, but it could set off a cascade of events that would have profound effects on the planet. Other countries that reluctantly joined the agreement could now withdraw or soften their commitments to cutting planet-warming pollution.

"The actions of the United States are bound to have a ripple effect in other emerging economies that are just getting serious about climate change, such as India, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia," said Michael Oppenheimer, a professor of geosciences and international affairs at Princeton, and a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a United Nations group that produces scientific reports aimed at informing global policy makers.

Once the fallout settles, he added, "it is now far more likely that we will breach the danger limit of 3.6 degrees" — the average atmospheric temperature increase above which a future of extreme conditions is considered irrevocable.

The aim of the Paris agreement was to lower planet-warming emissions enough to avoid that threshold.

"We will see more extreme heat, damaging storms, coastal flooding and risks to food security," Professor Oppenheimer said. "And that's not the kind of world we want to live in."

Foreign policy experts said the move could damage the United States' credibility and weaken Mr. Trump's efforts to negotiate issues far beyond climate change, like trade and terrorism.

"From a foreign policy perspective, it's a colossal mistake — an abdication of American leadership,"

said R. Nicholas Burns, a retired career diplomat and an under secretary of state for President George W. Bush.

"The success of our foreign policy — in trade, military, any other kind of negotiation — depends on our credibility," Mr. Burns said. "I can't think of anything more destructive to our credibility than this."

But Mr. Trump's supporters, particularly coal-state Republicans, have cheered the move, celebrating it as a fulfillment of a signature campaign promise. Speaking to a crowd of oil rig workers last year, Mr. Trump vowed to "cancel" the agreement, and Stephen K. Bannon, Mr. Trump's chief strategist, has pushed the president to withdraw from the accord as part of an economic nationalism that has so far included pulling out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a multilateral trade pact, and vowing to renegotiate Nafta.

Coal miners and coal company executives in states such as Kentucky and West Virginia have pushed for Mr. Trump to reverse all of President Barack Obama's climate change policies, many of which are aimed at reducing the use of coal, considered the largest contributor to climate change.

In a May 23 letter to Mr. Trump from Attorney General Patrick Morrisey of West Virginia and nine other state attorneys general, Mr. Morrisey wrote, "Withdrawing from the Paris agreement is an important and necessary step toward reversing the harmful energy policies and unlawful overreach of the Obama era." He added, "The Paris agreement is a symbol of the Obama administration's 'Washington knows best' approach to governing."

Although the administration has been debating its position on the Paris agreement for months, the sentiment for leaving appears to have the upper hand over the views of Mr. Tillerson and Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and close adviser.

Other countries have vowed to continue to carry out the terms of the Paris agreement, even without the United States.

President Xi Jinping of China, the world's largest greenhouse gas polluter, has promised that his country will move ahead with steps to curb climate change, regardless of what happens in the United States.

During a telephone call in early May with President Emmanuel Macron of France, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Mr. Xi told the newly elected French leader that China and France "should protect the achievements of global governance, including the Paris agreement."

But the accord's architects say the absence of the United States will inevitably weaken its chances of being enforced. For example, the country has played a central role in pushing provisions that require robust and transparent oversight of how emissions are monitored, verified and reported.

Without the United States, there is likely to be far less pressure on major polluting countries and industries to accurately report their emissions. There have been major questions raised about the accuracy of China's emissions reporting, in particular.

"We need to know: What are your emissions? Where are your emissions?" said Todd D. Stern, the lead climate negotiator during the Obama administration. "There needs to be transparent reporting on countries' greenhouse gas emissions. If the U.S. is not part of that negotiation, that's a loss for the world."

Correction: May 31, 2017

An earlier version of this article misstated the institution of which Jean-Claude Juncker is the president. It is the European Commission, not the European Union.



Peker in Brussels

5-7 minutes

World Powers Vow to Defend Climate Deal if Trump Withdraws

Matthew Dalton in Paris and Emre

From Brussels to Beijing, leaders say they are ready to move ahead without Mr. Trump and implement the agreement. In some cases, nations have agreed to accelerate their adoption of the Paris deal.

The European Union and China are due Friday to sign a statement at a summit in Brussels that calls for "stepping up action" in the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy,

according to a draft of the document viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

"The EU and China underline their highest political commitment to the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement," the draft states. "They call on all parties to uphold the Paris Agreement."

The push to rally international support for the Paris deal reflects determination to prevent a decadelong diplomatic effort from

unraveling without the involvement of the world's leading economy. It is also a sign of flexibility built into the deal that was needed to win backing from more than 190 nations: The agreement prescribes no target for emissions reductions, only that governments prepare plans to limit carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

A U.S. withdrawal, however, risks fostering long-term ill will among

Updated May 31, 2017 4:18 p.m. ET

World powers are locking arms to defend the 2015 Paris climate accord should President Donald Trump decide to pull the U.S. from the deal.

America's negotiating partners, particularly in the developed world.

"They may feel resentful, given that they went far to accommodate the U.S. vision of how the agreement should be designed," says Susan Biniaz, a former State Department lawyer who was one of the lead U.S. negotiators on the Paris deal.

The expected EU-China statement comes after the Group of Seven nations meeting in Italy last weekend, where chiefs of leading democracies mounted a last-ditch effort to keep Mr. Trump from withdrawing from the deal. The meeting ended six against one: The leaders of Germany, France, the U.K., Canada, Italy and Japan stated their "strong commitment" to the Paris deal, and noted that Mr. Trump was still thinking about it.

Afterward, French President Emmanuel Macron sounded an optimistic note about keeping Mr. Trump on board, saying the summit yielded "progress, real discussions and real debate" on climate change.

On Wednesday, Mr. Trump tweeted that he would make a decision on the Paris accord "over the next few days."

Among the biggest developing nations, support for the accord is holding despite the threat of U.S. withdrawal. China, the world's top emitter of greenhouse gases, in particular has emerged as a forceful advocate for the deal, principally for domestic reasons. As air pollution in Chinese cities increasingly becomes a political problem, the government has embraced renewable energy technologies such as solar power and wind turbines.

In a May phone call with Mr. Macron, then France's president-elect, Chinese President Xi Jinping said the two sides should work together to "defend" the Paris agreement, according to China's Foreign Ministry.

Under the accord, Beijing has committed to reducing China's greenhouse gas emissions starting in 2030. China has pledged to lower emissions relative to its gross domestic product by as much as 65% by 2030, compared with 2005 levels.

India has also signaled it will still implement the Paris deal if Mr. Trump pulls out. "It's not subject to some other country's decision," said a senior Indian official.

Under the deal, India didn't agree to cap or cut its emission like some other emerging economies. Instead, it pledged to boost use of renewable energy and reduce emissions relative to its gross domestic product up to 35% by 2030 compared with 2005.

Developed world emissions-reductions plans are far more ambitious than the targets of China and India, reflecting the fact that wealthier nations use far more energy per capita. The U.S., the world's second-biggest emitter, for example, previously pledged to cut emissions by at least 26% below 2005 levels by 2025.

As Mr. Trump leans toward nixing U.S. climate-change commitments, the EU-China declaration due Friday also signals that global players stand ready to fill a leadership vacuum left by the president's criticism for multilateral agreements.

A U.S. withdrawal could be particularly damaging to provisions of the deal that call for developed countries to help poorer nations transition into clean energy. The EU urged its partners to deliver on pledges to raise \$100 billion annually by 2020. China and the

bloc also agreed to support sustainable investment and the green finance initiative led by Beijing.

Officials overseas held out hope the U.S. could still meet earlier climate targets without being in the Paris agreement. They cited state and local programs that will reduce emissions regardless of Mr. Trump's policies.

"Economic factors in the United States would prevail in the end," said Maros Sefcovic, vice president of the European Commission, the EU's executive arm. "If they decide to pull out it would be disappointing but I really don't think this would change the course of mankind."

—Brian Spegele in Beijing and Rajesh Roy in New Delhi contributed to this article.

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Appeared in the June 1, 2017, print edition as 'Leaders Defend Global Agreement.'

Is Trump's Paris Decision and Broader Climate-Change Agenda Politically Sustainable?

the Atlantic

Ronald Brownstein
7-9 minutes

Predictability is a necessity for the key industries that fit into America's energy puzzle, especially electric utilities, oil and gas producers, and automobile manufacturers. All of these businesses make huge capital investments with very long lifespans. Utilities build power plants that provide electricity for decades. Oil companies drill wells that take years to complete. Auto companies plan car models five or more years in advance. None of these industries turn on a dime.

That's why President Trump's efforts to systematically reverse Barack Obama's energy and environmental policies represent such a gamble for them. Before Trump took office, technological advances, consumer preferences, cost trends, and government policies at the state, federal, and international level were all jointly pushing toward a lower-carbon future that stressed greater efficiency and cleaner power sources.

Now Trump, working through Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt and

Energy Secretary Rick Perry, has steered federal policy in direct opposition to those other forces—a redirection capped by reports he is likely to withdraw from the global Paris Agreement, in which virtually every nation agreed to reduce its carbon emissions. While the other key private- and public-sector dynamics are still driving toward a cleaner energy future, Trump is seeking to resist that transition and restore the primacy of fossil fuels.

Related Story

Donald Trump and the Triumph of Climate-Change Denial

Elements of the oil and auto industries (and a much smaller share of utilities) are welcoming some of the president's moves. But his whiplash-inducing reversal is exposing all of these industries to what their executives and investors fear most: uncertainty. In setting their long-term plans, all must now decide whether Trump's direction represents a lasting shift away from concerns about climate or a final bump in the road toward a lower-carbon future.

Melissa Lavinson, chief sustainability officer at PG&E Corp,

the huge Northern California utility, frames the industries' choice—as well as the most responsible answer—when she says: "If you have to go to a board of directors and say, 'I have to make a multibillion-dollar investment that is multi-year,' are you going to base it on two or four years in the political cycle or ... on long-term economic, technological, and consumer trends?"

The unifying thread through Trump's environmental agenda is an attempt to resurrect an earlier energy order centered on maximizing fossil-fuel production and marginalizing considerations about the carbon emissions linked to climate change. His EPA has already started to reverse Obama-era regulations that required continued improvements in fuel efficiency from auto manufacturers after 2022 and reduced carbon emissions from power plants. The Interior Department is working to open more onshore and offshore public lands for oil, gas, and mineral extraction. And Perry has suggested the administration may try to preempt state mandates that require utilities to use more renewable power on the grounds that such rules undermine the dependability of the electrical grid. (He's ordered an internal Energy Department study, due in

mid-June, that's expected to try to justify that argument.) The increasing indication that Trump intends to withdraw from the Paris accord would culminate this crusade of restoration with a stunningly self-destructive act of diplomatic and environmental isolation.

"Trump is fighting the battle from 10 years ago when coal had a chance."

It's difficult to overstate how directly this revanchist agenda collides with both the marketplace and policy at all other levels. All of Trump's key moves affecting electricity generation, for instance, are intended to bolster coal. But coal's share of power generation has declined for years, first under pressure from lower-cost natural gas, and now from increasingly affordable solar and wind. Since 2002, federal data show, utilities have retired more than twice as much coal-generating capacity as they have added. In 2016 alone, the amount of new capacity utilities added in wind and solar—including small-scale decentralized resources like rooftop solar arrays—equaled the total amount of coal power brought online over the past 15 years. Privately, the utility industry has even urged Trump to uphold the Paris Agreement. "Trump is fighting the battle from 10 years ago when

coal had a chance," independent energy consultant Paul Bledsoe told me.

Some in the auto industry are also fighting the last war by pushing Trump to loosen Obama's long-term mileage-economy standards so they can sell more (highly profitable) light trucks and SUVs. But, as veteran environmentalist Dan Becker notes, even if Trump loosens the federal requirements, the industry will still face tougher mileage restrictions in most European and Asian markets. They'll also face higher standards in the U.S. states that follow the rules California imposed with the unique authority it exercises under the federal Clean Air Act; those states represent about

one-third of American vehicle sales. For Detroit, shifting investment toward gas-guzzling behemoths—what Becker calls "Trump-mobiles"—risks ceding those domestic and international markets to more green competitors.

Likewise, policy and marketplace risks will still confront oil companies even if Trump can overcome legal and political challenges to open more offshore waters to exploration. One is that they wouldn't be able to finish any new wells before a possible new administration in 2021 could change the environmental rules governing any drilling. The bigger problem is that offshore drilling remains uneconomical with oil prices so low. "There is a

question of how much new drilling we'd see in deepwater offshore in a world with \$50 oil," said Joseph Aldy, formerly Obama's top environmental economist.

While Trump pursues restoration, states like Virginia, California, and Nevada are debating proposals for further carbon reduction. All of the G-7 industrial nations, except for the United States, last week reaffirmed support for the Paris climate accord. Big industrial consumers like Wal-Mart and Google are demanding cleaner power from utilities. Breakthroughs in the development of self-driving vehicles could rapidly accelerate demand for electric cars.

Fossil fuels will remain critical to powering America for years. But the balance in the nation's energy mix has been steadily tilting toward cleaner fuels and greater efficiency. Now, with investments that extend for decades, these big industries must decide whether Trump's attempt to reverse the shift toward more sustainable energy is itself politically sustainable. It's more likely Aldy is correct when he calls Trump's crusade a temporary "aberration" in the world's long march toward confronting potentially catastrophic changes in the climate.



Climate Change: Donald Trump to Make Paris Announcement

5-6 minutes

(WASHINGTON) — President Donald Trump will announce his decision on whether to pull the United States out of the Paris climate accord during a Rose Garden event Thursday afternoon.

Trump promoted his announcement Wednesday night on Twitter, after a day in which U.S. allies around the world sounded alarms about the likely consequences of a U.S. withdrawal. Trump himself kept everyone in suspense, saying he was still listening to "a lot of people both ways."

The White House signaled that Trump was likely to decide on exiting the global pact — fulfilling one of his principal campaign pledges — though top aides were divided. And the final decision may not be entirely clear-cut: Aides were still deliberating on "caveats in the language," one official said.

Everyone cautioned that no decision was final until Trump announced it. The president has been known to change his thinking on major decisions and tends to seek counsel from both inside and outside advisers, many with differing agendas, until the last minute.

Abandoning the pact would isolate the U.S. from a raft of international allies who spent

years negotiating the 2015 agreement to fight global warming and pollution by reducing carbon emissions in nearly 200 nations. While traveling abroad last week, Trump was repeatedly pressed to stay in the deal by European leaders and the Vatican. Withdrawing would leave the United States aligned only with Russia among the world's industrialized economies.

Read More: *3 Major Costs of Withdrawing From the Paris Climate Agreement*

American corporate leaders have also appealed to the businessman-turned-president to stay. They include Apple, Google and Walmart. Even fossil fuel companies such as Exxon Mobil, BP and Shell say the United States should abide by the deal.

Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, enacted the deal without U.S. Senate ratification. A formal withdrawal would take years, experts say, a situation that led the president of the European Commission to speak dismissively of Trump on Wednesday.

Trump doesn't "comprehensively understand" the terms of the accord, though European leaders tried to explain the process for withdrawing to him "in clear, simple sentences" during summit meetings last week, Jean-Claude Juncker said in Berlin. "It looks like that attempt failed,"

Juncker said. "This notion, 'I am Trump, I am American, America first and I am getting out,' that is not going to happen."

Some of Trump's aides have been searching for a middle ground — perhaps by renegotiating the terms of the agreement — in an effort to thread the needle between his base of supporters who oppose the deal and those warning that a U.S. exit would deal a blow to the fight against global warming as well as to worldwide U.S. leadership.

That fight has played out within Trump's administration.

Trump met Wednesday with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who has favored remaining in the agreement. Chief strategist Steve Bannon supports an exit, as does Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt.

Trump's chief economic adviser, Gary Cohn, has discussed the possibility of changing the U.S. carbon reduction targets instead of pulling out of the deal completely. Senior adviser Jared Kushner generally thinks the deal is bad but still would like to see if emissions targets can be changed.

Read More: *Republican Congressman Says God Will 'Take Care Of Climate Change*

Trump's influential daughter Ivanka Trump's preference is to stay, but

she has made it a priority to establish a review process so her father would hear from all sides, said a senior administration official. Like the other officials, that person was not authorized to describe the private discussions by name and spoke only on condition of anonymity.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said Wednesday in Alaska that he had "yet to read what the actual Paris Agreement is," and would have to read it before weighing in.

Scientists say Earth is likely to reach more dangerous levels of warming sooner if the U.S. retreats from its pledge because America contributes so much to rising temperatures. Calculations suggest withdrawal could result in emissions of up to 3 billion tons of additional carbon dioxide in the air a year — enough to melt ice sheets faster, raise seas higher and trigger more extreme weather.

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucy, Michael Biesecker and Seth Borenstein in Washington and Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed to this report.



Sachs: US faces disgrace if Trump drops Paris climate pact

By Jeffrey Sachs

Trump on the Paris climate deal
00:16

Story highlights

- Trump reportedly meeting with advisers on pulling out of Paris Climate Agreement. If it

pulls out, US would be sole signatory among 196 to do so

- Jeffrey Sachs: Transition to a low-carbon economy well underway, and oil companies agree. If Trump pulls out, he will look like an incompetent

Jeffrey Sachs is a university professor and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his.

(CNN)President Donald Trump is expected to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, senior US

officials familiar with his plans told CNN Wednesday. While not unexpected, this is a major break that would isolate the United States in global climate change efforts. Naturally, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, a career-long, oil-industry shill from Oklahoma, has argued to pull out.

Jeffrey D. Sachs

Yet even Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, former CEO of ExxonMobil, is arguing to stay. If Trump goes with Pruitt instead of Tillerson, he will immediately create a worldwide consensus on climate action: to fight the American recklessness that Pruitt epitomizes.

I happened to have been in the White House (discussing solutions to the AIDS epidemic) the day in early 2001 that George W. Bush Jr. pulled the US out of the Kyoto Protocol to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The move was a predictable disaster: it delayed effective global action on global warming for another 15 years. Yet Bush used an argument then that is utterly closed off today.

The Bush administration argument in 2001 was that the US should not commit to Kyoto until China and other large middle-income emitting countries also commit to it. This attitude had been pushed by the Senate in the 1997 Byrd-Hagel Senate Resolution, passed 95-0, which had signaled that the Senate would not ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

Sachs on EPA's Pruitt "he's a stooge" 01:38

Under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to which the US is a signatory, the high-income countries (so-called Annex I countries) were obligated to move first. China, a non-Annex I country, was legally correct under the UNFCCC to tell the U.S., "After you, thank you." Nonetheless, Bush responded politically, not legally: No thanks to Kyoto, we'll move when China and other developing countries move.

In 2017, Trump can't pull the same stunt as Bush in 2001. Under the Paris agreement, every country in the world is obligated to act. Barack Obama, to his great credit, took great care to ensure that the US and China would agree in Paris. Indeed, every one of the 193 members of the UN have signed on to act (as well as three additional signatories, Cook Island, Niue and the European Union).

When the US pulled out of Kyoto, it could argue that most of the world was not obligated by the Kyoto Protocol. If Trump pulls out of Paris,

it will be 195-to-1 against the United States.

Moreover, there are two other matters of supreme significance. Back in 2001, Bush could still feign doubt about climate science. The scientific consensus already existed then, but it was not as clear to world leaders and the public as it is today. Today, we are at the stage in "The Wizard of Oz" after Toto has already pulled back the curtain on the wizard.

We now see clearly that climate-denying politicians do the bidding of companies like Continental Resources (the head of the Oklahoma oil company has backed Pruitt), the Koch Brothers or other fossil fuel interests. And if the science weren't sufficient, we have the record-breaking temperatures of recent years to make the case.

EPA head questions climate change 01:59

The other reality is that the transition to a low-carbon economy is already far underway. Trump may try to undo the Obama-era regulations at EPA (and may fail at it); he may

approve the Keystone XL pipeline; he may dream of a resurgence of coal. Yet investors know better. Only the worst "losers" (to use a Trumpism) would invest in these miserable projects, since they are likely to fail as the world moves away from fossil fuels.

Yes, Trump can delay, prevaricate, obfuscate, annoy and even shut down federal science. But he can't resurrect an industry that is way past its sell date. It's no surprise that foreign oil companies Statoil, Shell and ConocoPhillips have recently sold off their stakes in high-cost, high-carbon Canadian oil sands to Canadian interests, and that Chevron is considering to do the same.

If Trump actually pulls out of Paris, in short, he will accomplish one thing: to confirm for the entire world, in a single move, that America has indeed elected an incompetent President. Even Trump is likely to figure this one out and avoid the opprobrium that would follow.

**NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE**

Tuttle: Paris Agreement Is a Treaty Requiring Two-Thirds Senate Vote

5-6 minutes

President Trump is, apparently, mulling what to do about the Paris climate accords. Opinion among White House advisers reportedly is split: Steve Bannon wants to leave, as does EPA administrator Scott Pruitt; Ivanka wants to stay, and so does Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. The president has said that he will announce his decision soon.

There remains considerable debate about the merits of the climate agreement. It is far from clear whether it will have a significant effect on projected rates of global warming, given that key signatories (namely, China and India) made only nominal carbon-reduction commitments; the agreement's usefulness as a diplomatic tool is uncertain; and it may have a retardant effect on domestic economic growth.

But wherever the president and his team ultimately fall on those questions, one thing should be clear: The final determination ought to be up to the U.S. Senate.

The first reason is straightforward: The Paris Agreement is a treaty. President Obama, aware that the accord would struggle to meet the two-thirds threshold required by the Constitution's Treaty Clause (Article

II, Section 2), engaged in extravagant rhetorical contortions to avoid calling the Paris Agreement what it was. President Trump could send a clear signal about the limits of presidential power by delivering the accords to the Senate for "advice and consent." As James Wilson, a key Founding-era political thinker and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, explained: "Neither the President nor the Senate, solely, can complete a treaty; they are checks upon each other, and are so balanced as to produce security to the people."

President Obama's unwillingness to put the Paris Agreement before the Senate was revealing, though, for reasons other than the short-term political calculation. The president did not believe that he could persuade enough legislators to support his plan — even though "the science is settled" on climate change, and "97 percent of scientists agree," as he liked to say. Accusing the Republican majority of "anti-science" boobery, he signaled his belief that addressing climate change was too important to be left to traditional democratic mechanisms. "We the people," acting through our representatives, could not be trusted with something so momentous.

What the president did — as on the Iran nuclear agreement (another non-treaty treaty) and other acts of

executive overreach — was to "depoliticize" the issue, taking the power to adjudicate the issue away from the voters and their representatives and investing it instead in the hands of a small coterie of supposed experts. Policy made by the Congress is accountable to voters; policy made by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change isn't.

If we are in a moment of populist revolt, it is in part because the last generation of political leaders have preferred to remove certain hot-button issues from the public forum rather than subject them to popular scrutiny.

If we are in a moment of populist revolt, it is in part because the last generation of political leaders have preferred to remove certain hot-button issues from the public forum rather than subject them to popular scrutiny. This is true on both sides of the Atlantic. The Obama administration's unflinching confidence in technocrats to "solve" political puzzles — for instance, employing wonks such as MIT's Jonathan Gruber to erect a "rational" health-care system — is the same confidence that has animated European Union bureaucrats and that characterizes the neophyte Macron administration in France. It has left ordinary citizens

disempowered, stripped of opportunities to express and enact their policy preferences.

Donald Trump spent 2016 hammering the "elites" who develop public policy tailored to their own interests and unresponsive to the needs of most citizens, especially those living outside the country's metropolitan hubs of power. His populism may have swerved, with distressing frequency, into demagoguery, but he nonetheless exposed a serious problem: Too many issues have been cordoned off from public adjudication and entrusted to unaccountable cliques that purport to know better how to run people's lives than the people do themselves.

Obviously, our constitutional structure is designed to prevent a tyrannical rule of the majority; not everything ought to be subject to plebiscite. Likewise, there is a place for experts; their input is valuable, if not necessarily decisive.

But there is a need to "repoliticize" central questions in our politics. The sense that a democratic politics is legitimate is strengthened when citizens know they have a role in political decision-making. Restoring that role is not only in the current administration's best interests; it's in the country's.

5-7 minutes

President Trump and his advisers are debating whether to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate accord, and if he does the fury will be apocalyptic—start building arks for the catastrophic flood. The reality is that withdrawing is in America's economic interest and won't matter much to the climate.

President Obama signed the agreement last September, albeit by ducking the two-thirds majority vote in the Senate required under the Constitution for such national commitments. The pact includes a three-year process for withdrawal, which Mr. Trump could short-circuit by also pulling out of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Paris was supposed to address the failures of the 1997 Kyoto protocol, which Bill Clinton signed but George W. Bush refused to implement amid similar outrage. The Kyoto episode is instructive because the U.S. has since reduced emissions faster than much of Europe thanks to business innovation—namely, hydraulic fracturing that is replacing coal with natural gas.

While legally binding, Kyoto's CO₂ emissions targets weren't strictly enforced. European countries that pursued aggressive reductions were engaging in economic masochism.

According to a 2014 Manhattan Institute study, the average cost of residential electricity in 2012 was 12 cents per kilowatt hour in the U.S. but an average 26 cents in the European Union and 35 cents in Germany. The average price of electricity in the EU soared 55% from 2005 to 2013.

Yet Germany's emissions have increased in the last two years as more coal is burned to compensate for reduced nuclear energy and unreliable solar and wind power. Last year coal made up 40% of Germany's power generation compared to 30% for renewables, while state subsidies to stabilize the electric grid have grown five-fold since 2012.

But the climate believers tried again in Paris, this time with goals that are supposedly voluntary. China and India offered benchmarks pegged to GDP growth, which means they can continue their current energy plans. China won't even begin reducing emissions until 2030 and in the next five years it will use more coal.

President Obama, meanwhile, committed the U.S. to reducing emissions by between 26% and 28% below 2005 levels by 2025. This would require extreme changes in energy use. Even Mr. Obama's bevy of anti-carbon regulations would get the U.S. to a mere 45% of its target.

Meeting the goals would require the Environmental Protection Agency to impose stringent emissions controls on vast stretches of the economy including steel production, farm soil

management and enteric fermentation (i.e., cow flatulence). Don't laugh—California's Air Resources Board is issuing regulations to curb bovine burping to meet its climate goals.

Advocates in the White House for remaining in Paris claim the U.S. has the right to unilaterally reduce Mr. Obama's emissions commitments. They say stay in and avoid the political meltdown while rewriting the U.S. targets.

But Article 4, paragraph 11 of the accord says "a party may at any time adjust its existing nationally determined contribution with a view to enhancing its level of ambition." There is no comparable language permitting a reduction in national targets.

Rest assured that the Sierra Club and other greens will sue under the Section 115 "international air pollution" provision of the Clean Air Act to force the Trump Administration to enforce the Paris standards. The "voluntary" talk will vanish amid the hunt for judges to rule that Section 115 commands the U.S. to reduce emissions that "endanger" foreign countries if those countries reciprocate under Paris. After his experience with the travel ban, Mr. Trump should understand that legal danger.

The Big Con at the heart of Paris is that even its supporters concede that meeting all of its commitments won't prevent more than a 0.17 degree Celsius increase in global

temperatures by 2100, far less than the two degrees that is supposedly needed to avert climate doom.

It's also rich for Europeans to complain about the U.S. abdicating climate leadership after their regulators looked the other way as auto makers, notably Volkswagen, cheated on emissions tests. This allowed Europeans to claim they were meeting their green goals without harming the competitiveness of their auto makers. The EPA had to shame the EU into investigating the subterfuge.

The U.S. legal culture will insist on carbon compliance even if Europe and China cheat. Even if Mr. Trump would succeed in rewriting U.S. emissions targets, his predecessor could ratchet them back up. That possibility might deter some companies from investing in long-term fossil-fuel production.

The simplest decision is to make a clean break from Paris. But if Mr. Trump doesn't want to take the political heat for withdrawing on his own, here's a compromise: Atone for Mr. Obama's dereliction and submit Paris to the Senate for approval as a treaty. Then we can see whether anticarbon virtue-signaling beats real-world economic costs for Democrats from energy states like Heidi Heitkamp (North Dakota), Joe Manchin (West Virginia) and Joe Donnelly (Indiana).

Appeared in the June 1, 2017, print edition.

Breitbart : Six Arrested In France On Terror Charges Including Former Guantanamo Bay Inmate

by Chris Tomlinson 31 May 2017 664

3 minutes

GEOFFROY VAN DER HASSELT/AFP/Getty Images

31 May, 2017 31 May, 2017

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The raids and subsequent arrests were carried out by the SDAT, a division of French police who specialise in counterterrorism operations. A total of four men and two women were arrested in the raids which took place in Bordeaux and the central region of Ile-de-France, newspaper *L'Express* reports.

The suspects, aged 27 to 48, were arrested on Monday night and the early hours of Tuesday morning.

They are believed to have aided would-be jihadists with money and logistical help to get to Syria where the radical Islamists would receive training and fight for known terrorist groups.

The oldest of those arrested, according to sources, is a former inmate of the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Authorities in France have said that as of March earlier this year they estimate there to be at least 700 French nationals who are fighting with terror groups in the Middle East. Among that 700, around 300 are thought to be women.

French officials also note that more than 250 of these Islamic radicals have likely been killed in the ongoing conflict. A report from May stated that 213 jihadists had

returned to France after being either trained by Islamic terror groups like the Islamic State or fighting on behalf of them in the region.

Earlier this month five other radical Islamists were arrested and found to have been hiding various weapons according to a Paris prosecutor. The suspects, who were between 18 and 24 years old, were arrested in various parts of France after police foiled a plot to attack a French presidential candidate's headquarters weeks before.

The two men arrested in the failed plot in Marseille were found to have been in possession of pistols, long guns or rifles, and materials to make explosives.

Radical Islamism has become an extremely important and divisive issue in France where most of the

attackers from the Charlie Hebdo massacre in 2015, the Bataclan massacre later that year and other attacks, have often come from migrant-heavy ghettos like those just north of Paris.

Top academic on radical Islamism in France Gilles Kepel has warned that the Islamists are trying to take Europe down a path to civil war. He told Breitbart London in an exclusive interview in Paris earlier this month that the only solution to the problem is through education and described how Islamic radicalism had developed in Paris's migrant suburbs.

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

What Trump and Macron can teach you about power handshakes

By Christian Gollayan

2 minutes

Talk about hand-to-hand combat.

Last Thursday, President Trump and newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron went several rounds in a series of tense handshakes when they met in Brussels ahead of the NATO summit.

Early in the day, next to a crowd of dignitaries, Trump grabbed Macron's hand

and gave France's new president a light pull before patting his shoulder.

Body language expert Traci Brown says that Trump's tug-of-war style in that moment was a way of demonstrating dominance.

"It's [Trump's] way of showing [he's] in control," Brown, who's based in Boulder, Colo., and is the author of "Body Language Confidential," tells The Post. "He likes keeping people off balance."

But then Macron tried to literally get the upper hand. Later that day, during a one-on-one meeting, Macron gripped Trump's hand so

tightly and with such force that the US president had to pull away.

Modal TriggePresidents Trump and Macron seemed to engage in a tug-of-war in Brussels. Getty Images

Macron later told French media that the move was meant to show that "he would not make small concessions, not even symbolic ones, but also not overdo things."

Brown says that one can learn from the idiosyncracies of Trump and Macron's handshakes — and employ them for your own good.

"You can get a lot of information out of someone within the first five

seconds, just by their handshake," Brown says. "It tells you how you want to behave around them to effectively persuade and influence them."

Women, especially, should be more aware of their handshake style and what it communicates.

"As a gender, [women] have only started using handshakes in the '70s, so we have a lot of work to do," Brown says.



4-5 minutes

French Prosecutor Opens Probe Into Macron Minister (online)

William Horobin

de Bretagne while serving as a lawmaker and participating in parliamentary debates about health-insurance reform.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Ferrand didn't immediately respond to requests for comment. Mr. Ferrand has confirmed the rental agreement and his employment history, but denies any wrongdoing or illegal activity.

"Everything I've done in my professional life is legal, public and transparent," Mr. Ferrand said on French radio Wednesday.

The investigation come at a delicate moment for Mr. Macron. His freshly appointed government is preparing a bill on the "moral improvement" of politics designed to deliver on Mr. Macron's call during the presidential campaign for an end to favoritism and nepotism.

Le Canard Enchaîné has also reported that after becoming a lawmaker in 2012, Mr. Ferrand briefly employed his son as a parliamentary aide. Mr. Ferrand has confirmed the four-month stint, saying his son was filling in for an assistant who was on sick leave.

Polls show Mr. Macron's party, La République en Marche, is on track to win a majority in legislative elections this month. Without that majority, Mr. Macron would struggle to implement labor overhauls he says are needed to repair the economy, but which are deeply unpopular with broad segments of French voters.

Mr. Macron declined to comment on the probe when asked by television journalists Thursday. At a cabinet meeting Wednesday, the 39-year-old president told his ministers they must be "exemplary," but only the legal system can pass judgment, government spokesman Christophe Castaner said.

"Things don't necessarily go well when the press becomes judge," Mr. Castaner said.

With little more than a week to go until the first round of the legislative elections, the probe places Mr. Macron in a bind. Mr. Ferrand, who is a candidate in Brest, was one of Mr. Macron's earliest supporters, helping orchestrate the presidential candidate's rapid rise from behind-the-scenes government adviser to the French presidency. But Mr. Macron is also wary that French

voters have shown a heightened sensitivity to the conduct of political figures in recent months.

Conservative leader François Fillon —once a clear favorite to win the presidential election—was knocked out in the first round of voting amid an investigation into allegations he paid his family with public funds for fake jobs. Mr. Fillon has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing.

Mr. Macron's political opponents, including National Front leader Marine Le Pen and senior figures from the Socialist party, have called for Mr. Ferrand to step down from his post as minister.

"The situation is becoming untenable, harmful, if not toxic for this government," Razy Hammadi, Socialist Party spokesman said Thursday on French television BFM TV.

A nationally representative survey by Harris Interactive Tuesday showed 73% of French people consider the allegations against Mr. Ferrand are serious and 70% think he should resign from his ministerial post.

Write to William Horobin at William.Horobin@wsj.com

Updated June 1, 2017 7:08 a.m. ET

PARIS—A French prosecutor opened a preliminary probe Thursday into the past business dealings of one of Emmanuel Macron's ministers and closest allies, muddying the president's effort to win legislative elections on a promise to clean up politics.

The probe will examine whether Housing Minister Richard Ferrand — who ran Mr. Macron's presidential campaign—damaged property or violated rules of probity during his term as an executive at health insurer Mutuelles de Bretagne, said Eric Mathias, a prosecutor in Brest, the town where the company is based.

The preliminary probe comes after satirical weekly Le Canard Enchaîné reported that Mr. Ferrand's companion won a contract to rent a building to Mutuelles de Bretagne in 2011 when Mr. Ferrand headed the insurer. Other French media reported Mr. Ferrand continued to work as a consultant for Mutuelles



French Prosecutor Opens Preliminary Probe Into Macron Minister

Mark Deen @MarkJDeen

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3 minutes

by and

1 juin 2017 à 05:10 UTC-4

Richard Ferrand.

Photographer: Charly Triballeau/AFP via Getty Images

A French prosecutor opened a preliminary probe into one of President Emmanuel Macron's key ministers, maintaining pressure on the government in its first weeks in office.

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Brest prosecutor Eric Mathias said his inquiry aims to establish whether Regional Development Minister

Richard Ferrand committed any crime when, as managing director of the Mutuelles de Bretagne, he gave contracts to both his current partner and his former wife. Ferrand, one of the earliest backers of Macron's presidential bid and the secretary general of his political party, has repeatedly denied wrongdoing.

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.

Macron made his first public comments on the matter during a visit to a shipyard in Saint-Nazaire, western France, on Wednesday.

"A government has to govern, the press has to do its work of

questioning and searching for truth and after that there is an independent justice system that will do its work and

we must not confuse these roles," he said. Ferrand was present at a dinner Macron had with regional officials yesterday evening.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Fletcher

5-6 minutes

Updated May 31, 2017 2:15 p.m. ET

MANCHESTER, England—Young Libyans torn between ordinary life in Britain and violence in the chaotic North African nation are often known here as “double shafras,” after the Arabic word for SIM cards.

Salman Abedi, who killed 22 people last week when he detonated a bomb strapped to his back outside an Ariana Grande concert, was one of them.

Double shafras may live in quiet suburbs or tightknit neighborhoods. But Islamist extremism, suspicions about informants and gang rivalry are rife, and Libya's struggle is a constant presence. Some are drawn back to join the fight.

Abedi, who was 22 years old at the time of the attack, grew up in a community of Libyan immigrants in Manchester. When his father, Ramadan, traveled to Libya in 2011 to fight against the longtime Libyan dictator, Moammar Gadhafi, Abedi, who was then 16, went with him.

Abedi's sister, Jomana, 18, said she noticed changes in her older brother in 2015. Their father had stayed in Libya, leaving her and her brothers with their mother in Manchester. Abedi became more focused on prayers and fasting and more withdrawn, she said.

Manchester Suicide Attacker Lived Between Two Worlds

Hassan Morajea, Jenny Gross and Laurence

“He didn't have friends or people too close to him. He would pray and come home,” she said.

The brutality of the front lines was a shock for some young Libyans from Manchester. But trying to reintegrate after months in Libya was often a bigger shock.

“When they went there, they smelled blood and heard rattles of the Kalashnikovs,” said Hisham Ben Ghalbon, a Libyan native and longtime Manchester resident who used to go to the same mosque as the Abedi family. “That level of adrenaline, they got hooked.”

A young man named Mohamed, one of Abedi's friends from college, said some contemporaries who returned to south Manchester after taking up arms in Libya “came back a bit crazy.”

“You could tell by the fights they were having on the street,” said Mohamed, who wanted to use only his first name. “They weren't scared of anything—even knives, hammers.”

British authorities still have 11 people in custody in the U.K. in connection with the attack. Abedi's father and brother, Hashem, are being held in custody in Libya, Abedi's sister said.

Manchester police said Tuesday they had a good understanding of what the bomb was made up and where the parts came from.

Abedi made most of the purchases of the bomb's core components by himself and many of his actions were carried out alone in the four

days that he was in the U.K. before the attack, according to Manchester police. Abedi had gone to Libya most recently in mid-April.

“It is vital that we make sure that he is not part of a wider network and we cannot rule this out yet,” the police said. “There remain a number of things that concern us about his behavior prior to the attack and those of his associates which we need to get to the bottom of.”

The British government is still working to determine if Abedi had any links with Islamic State, which claimed responsibility for the attack, a Western security official said. Officials are focused on what role other family members, and particularly his father, played in his path toward radicalization, the official said.

Young people who are susceptible to extremist ideology are sometimes first exposed to it at home through their families, said Hamed El-Said, professor at Manchester Metropolitan University focusing on terrorism and business.

Mr. El-Said said that radicalization in Manchester, in the past few years, has happened more in person than online because young people don't want authorities to be suspicious.

Naser Shukri, 47, a Manchester resident from Libya and an acquaintance of Ramadan Abedi, said the father was harshly critical of those who he perceived weren't true Muslims.

“He regarded a lot of Libyan people who had different views as non-Muslims,” said Mr. Shukri, a former

political consultant for the United Nations mission in Libya.

Several years ago, Mr. Shukri said, Ramadan Abedi lashed out at him for wearing a tie in a television interview with BBC Arabic.

Salman Abedi spent his spare time with other young men from a strict Muslim background, said a former schoolmate. “Salman was always seen with these people,” he said. When the schoolmate acknowledged supporting Gadhafi, Salman became agitated, telling him: “You can't be a Muslim if you're supporting Gadhafi.”

One of Abedi's neighbors, Raphael Hostey, was a recruiter and fighter for Islamic State who was killed in a drone strike in Syria last year.

Another of Abedi's schoolmates, Abdalraouf Abdallah, who fought in Libya, was sentenced last year to more than five years in prison for terrorism-related offenses.

Double shafras “spend all their time in Manchester...feeling like they don't belong here, they belong somewhere else,” Mr. Ben Ghalbon said. “And when they went somewhere else, they didn't belong there either. They look different, they behave different, they speak different.”

—Joshua Robinson contributed to this article.

Write to Jenny Gross at jenny.gross@wsj.com and Laurence Fletcher at laurence.fletcher@wsj.com

The New York Times

Theresa May's Lead in British Polls Narrows After Missteps

Dan Bilefsky

6-7 minutes

On Wednesday, Mr. Corbyn shook up the race with a last-minute decision to join a televised debate in Cambridge that Mrs. May did not attend. Emboldened after a competent performance in a television event on Monday, Mr. Corbyn sought, before the debate, to portray Mrs. May as weak and evasive for not appearing.

“Refusing to join me in Cambridge tonight would be another sign of Theresa May's weakness, not strength,” Mr. Corbyn, who has been trying to revamp his own image as a

weak-kneed pacifist, said in a statement.

In explaining why she would not be participating, Mrs. May said she had been facing Mr. Corbyn week after week in the ritual prime minister's questions in Parliament, and had also been taking questions from voters directly on the campaign trail.

The home secretary, Amber Rudd, represented the Conservatives in the televised debate.

Just six weeks ago, Mrs. May had a lead of as much as 24 percentage points over Mr. Corbyn in some polls. Pundits were already asking if Mr. Corbyn, a gaffe-prone leftist viewed by many in his own party as unelectable, would step down if he

lost the election. “Theresa on the March,” proclaimed the headline in The Sun, a popular tabloid.

Now, though, after initially casting herself successfully as the only “strong” and “stable” leader qualified to lead Britain as it exits the European Union, Mrs. May appears to have alienated many voters through a mix of hubris and austerity policies. At the same time, Mr. Corbyn, the beneficiary of subterranean expectations, appears to have been given a lift by simply not messing up badly.

Seeking to explain the perceived reversal of Mrs. May's fortunes, Anthony Wells, research director at YouGov polling, said Mrs. May had erred by failing to present a

proactive narrative, much in the same manner as Hillary Clinton was seen by some as defining herself as a foil to Donald J. Trump without adequately explaining what she stood for.

“The Conservatives don't seem to have a strong message to their campaign,” he said. “May has fashioned herself as ‘not Corbyn’ without explaining why people should vote for her. At the same time, she has made some very damaging U-turns, while Corbyn has not proven to be the scary monster that some had feared.”

Mrs. May, who has sought to portray herself as a compassionate conservative, provoked the ire of many voters when, during this

month's publication of the Conservative manifesto, she was forced to retreat from an unpopular proposal to make older Britons shoulder more of the costs of long-term home care. The proposal, derided as a "dementia tax," undermined her image as the champion of those "just about managing" to get by financially.

Adding ammunition to rivals seeking to portray her as a Scrooge, the conservatives proposed a less advantageous system for automatic raises in pensions and contentious plans to scrap universal free school lunches for children.

In contrast, the Labour Party's manifesto offered many populist measures, among them increasing funding for the National Health Service and a pledge to scrap tuition fees for students starting college in September.



10-13 minutes

CLACTON-ON-SEA, England — It was a night beyond all compare.

Less than a year ago, Britain voted to get out of the European Union. And as the country's new destiny dawned in the early hours of June 24, veteran activists of the U.K. Independence Party — an anti-E.U. movement long derided as extremist — felt the sweet satisfaction of having forced the referendum and steered the national debate with their anti-immigration rhetoric.

"Twenty-one years of being called a closet racist or a swivel-eyed loon," said Tony Finnegan-Butler, a party activist since UKIP was born in the mid-1990s who is now the party's chair in Clacton-on-Sea, a pro-Brexit stronghold. "And one night you learn that more than half the population thought you were right in the first place."

But if the vote brought vindication, it has not ushered UKIP any closer to political power. In fact, exactly the opposite.

Candidates in Clacton, England discuss the upcoming June 8 election and the future of the U.K. Independence Party. Candidates in Clacton, England discuss the upcoming June 8 election and the future of the U.K. Independence Party. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

(Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

Peter Kellner, a leading political analyst and polling expert, said the narrowing of the polls at least partly reflected that Mr. Corbyn appeared to be resonating with young people and women, who welcomed his calls for more money for the country's strapped social services.

He said many initially reluctant Labour voters, who had voted for the party in the past but had been wavering, had also decided to stay. "A lot of people regarded Corbyn as uselessly and extreme and not up to running the country," he said. "But when exposed to him over the past few weeks, a number have found him not so bad after all."

Mrs. May's conspicuous absence at Wednesday's debate overshadowed the event as her opponents criticized her for running scared. "How dare you call a general election and run away from the debate," Tim Farron, leader of the

Liberal Democrats, said, chiding her openly. Addressing voters, he added: "You're not worth Theresa May's time. Don't give her yours."

The Scottish National Party deputy leader, Angus Robertson, also criticized her for not having the "guts" to face voters.

Mrs. May's absence threatened to solidify a growing perception of her, fairly or not, as remote and arrogant. On Monday, she had already declined to appear on the same stage to debate Mr. Corbyn, resulting in an awkward spectacle in which both candidates were questioned separately.

That had followed a series of embarrassing flip-flops — not the least her call for early elections after insisting she would not — that were undercutting her carefully cultivated image for straight-talking honesty. A satirical song about her, "Liar, Liar,"

shot to the top of the charts in Britain this week, an indication that the actions were taking a toll.

Referring to Mrs. May's decision not to attend the debate — and invoking former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's famous phrase of steadfastness, "the lady's not for turning" — Angela Rayner, who represents Labour on education policy, said, "This prime minister is for turning, but not for turning up," according to The Financial Times.

Whoever wins, Ed Miliband, the former Labour leader who lost badly in 2015 after predictions of a close race, warned against giving credence to the pollsters, who had shown their fallibility.

"The pollsters have been off my Christmas card list since 2015," he wrote on Twitter.

For Britain's populist right, Brexit success comes with a poisoned pill

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

What happens to far-right populist movements when their fondest dreams come true? If the experience of UKIP is any guide, the answer is that they fall apart.

A year after achieving its most sacred ambition, the party long led by President Trump's favorite European politician, Nigel Farage, is in disarray, scarred by prominent defections and by vicious feuding — some of it physical — among its remaining members. An election on June 8 in which the party's share of the vote is expected to crater may be UKIP's death blow.

[Macron's strong finish in French election shows populist wave may be ebbing]

The arc of UKIP's story — years of obscurity followed by one astonishing success and now a rapid and possibly terminal decline — illustrates one way of blunting the appeal of populist movements: Give them exactly what they want.

"We're suffering for our success," said Finnegan-Butler, 73, who acknowledged that even he is wavering on whether to continue backing the party.

But UKIP's sudden decline also demonstrates the degree to which right-wing populists have shifted the European policy debate toward their turf. If UKIP is losing support, it is not because the party's ideas have lost favor. It is because mainstream parties have co-opted their causes and adopted their rhetoric.

"We're happy that the UKIP vote is going down. But we're not celebrating," said Nick Lowles, chief executive of the London-based anti-

extremism group Hope Not Hate. "If anything, it's the worst of all outcomes, because we've seen the mainstreaming of these views that were once considered beyond the pale."

It's not just in Britain, where Prime Minister Theresa May, a Conservative, sounds every inch the die-hard Brexiteer with her pledges to carry out a hard break with Europe.

Across the continent, mainstream politicians are attempting to beat back the far-right wave by mimicking the language and policies of the populists on hot-button issues such as immigration, cultural identity and Islam.

In the Netherlands, Prime Minister Mark Rutte fended off a challenge from anti-Muslim leader Geert Wilders this spring using the slogan "Act normal or go away" — a phrase widely seen as a firm line on Dutch tolerance toward newcomers.

In Austria, both major mainstream parties have sharpened their tone on immigration ahead of elections this fall that the far-right Freedom Party could win.

Even German Chancellor Angela Merkel — a favored boogeyman of the far right because of her welcoming policies toward refugees — has endorsed a ban on burqas "wherever legally possible" as she confronts a challenge from her right flank.

But nowhere in Western Europe is the mainstream's acceptance of the populist right's agenda more complete than in Britain. And nowhere has the collapse of support

for a populist right party been more complete.

For much of its nearly quarter-century existence, the U.K. Independence Party was the equivalent of a rounding error in British political life. With its single-minded devotion to a seemingly quixotic goal — an E.U. exit — UKIP struggled to capture more than a couple of percentage points in national elections.

Future prime minister David Cameron famously dismissed the party as a band of "fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists."

But amid a surge in immigration following the E.U.'s expansion into Eastern Europe, UKIP suddenly became a major player in 2014, topping British elections for the European Parliament that spring.

[Populist wave falls short in 'Brexit capital of Britain,' but Labour's troubles deepen]

Later that year, UKIP gained its first seat in Britain's Parliament after Clacton's Conservative representative, Douglas Carswell, defected to the insurgent party and won a special election.

The bombastic, beer-swilling Farage crowed that "the UKIP fox is in the Westminster henhouse" and promised that other anti-E.U. Tories in Parliament would soon turn predator rather than risk becoming prey.

In the end, there was only one more defection. But Cameron had been nervous enough about UKIP's rise to double down on promises that the country would hold a referendum on E.U. membership if his Conservative

Party won the national election in 2015.

It did (UKIP placed third, with 13 percent of the vote), and the referendum campaign was on.

When, against all odds, the nation opted for Brexit, it would have seemed that UKIP's moment had finally arrived. But perhaps sensing it had already passed, Farage abruptly quit as party leader just days after the vote.

Since then, UKIP has cycled through leaders and would-be leaders — including one who collapsed and had to be hospitalized after a fight with a party rival at the European Parliament.

[E.U. to Britain: We're in control of Brexit talks, not you]

Meanwhile, the Conservative Party quickly coalesced behind a successor to Cameron — May — who, despite having campaigned against Brexit, took to the cause with the zeal of a convert.

She has repeatedly promised a hard break with the E.U. — one that will leave the country outside the single market, the customs union and the European Court of Justice.

May has also vowed to be “a bloody difficult woman” in negotiations with European leaders — a suggestion that sent a shiver of excitement through the hearts of even the most devoted Ukipers, as the party's stalwarts are known.

“Unlike every other prime minister we've had, she's willing to say no to Europe,” said Finnegan-Butler, a courtly retiree who sailed the world with the British merchant marine.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Legorano

4-5 minutes

May 31, 2017 10:56 a.m. ET

ROME—A tentative agreement by Italy's main parties on a new law that could pave the way for snap elections as soon as September is reviving the prospect of political instability in a country seen as among the weakest in the eurozone.

Matteo Renzi, the former Italian prime minister and head of the country's governing center-left Democratic Party, said late Tuesday that Italy's main parties have agreed on new electoral rules that would allow a snap election far sooner than the 2018 timetable many had expected.

“The more I listen to Mrs. May, the more I trust her.”

His car is emblazoned with a placard stating in bold purple letters: “I'm voting for UKIP.”

But if he weren't the party's local chairman, he said, he probably wouldn't.

In this pretty but faded seaside region of pebble beaches and long London commutes — the only area that UKIP won in the 2015 parliamentary elections — it seems that few others are backing the party, either.

Carswell, the party's former representative here, quit UKIP in March after a spectacular falling-out with Farage. In his place, the party drafted a candidate with no ties to the area and, as UKIP support nationally drops below 5 percent, virtually no prospects for success.

[In Britain's working-class heartland, populist wave threatens to smash the traditional order]

Instead, the seat is almost certain to be claimed back by the Conservatives, whose candidate reflects the party's drift toward pro-Brexit evangelism under May.

Before last year's referendum, Giles Watling was an ardent advocate for keeping Britain in the E.U.. But like the prime minister, he has reversed course since discovering that the country disagreed.

The candidate, a charismatic, 64-year-old actor turned politician who is known to voters for his roles on stage and screen, campaigns on the need to give May the strongest possible hand as she heads into contentious exit talks with her soon-

to-be-former counterparts in the E.U.

“It's a fight that we needn't have had,” Watling said. “But it's there, and we can win it.”

Among those lured back to the Tory fold by that message is Valerie Grove, a retired civil servant who strayed into the UKIP column in 2014 after a lifetime of voting Conservative.

It's not that her views have changed. She is still adamantly against the immigration that she says is “changing our entire way of life.”

“I don't want to live in a country where there's a mosque on every corner,” Grove said. “It's not the British way.”

But she feels at home again with the Conservatives, led by a prime minister who, Grove said, understands the need to control immigration. And unlike UKIP, she said, the Tories can actually deliver.

“I was a little skeptical of Theresa May,” Grove said. “But my goodness. She's proven that she's got what it takes.”

Not everyone is convinced. On a recent warm spring day, UKIP candidate Paul Oakley — a pinstripe-suited London lawyer who was brought into Clacton to run at the last minute amid intraparty feuding over who should replace Carswell — acknowledged that he is likely to lose.

But as he campaigned in Jaywick, a neighborhood of tattered seaside bungalows that is among the poorest in Britain, he made his best case for why UKIP still matters.

“The referendum was D-Day. It wasn't the fall of Berlin. People can't sit back and assume that we've won,” he said. “It's all very well to sound like UKIP. But Theresa May and Giles Watling voted to remain. We can't trust people like that to deliver a proper Brexit.”

Indeed, even as he takes a break from running for office — he has lost seven campaigns for Parliament — Farage has been singing the same tune on his radio talk show, warning of the “Brexit betrayal” to come.

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Whether Farage returns to UKIP or builds a new party, political observers say it is likely he will have ample material to launch a comeback.

Farage and UKIP may have helped sell a majority of British voters on the promise that getting out of the E.U. will solve the nation's ills. But now that May and the Conservatives are delivering on those sky-high expectations, disappointment is almost certain to follow.

“Theresa May can't satisfy everyone,” said David Cutts, a political science professor at the University of Birmingham. “There's still a role there in British politics for the populist right.”

Karla Adam in London contributed to this report.

Prospect of Early Italy Election Increases Uncertainty

Giovanni

Investors were reassured after the defeat of populist parties in the Netherlands and France. The prospect of snap elections in Italy—where an anti-establishment movement is high in the polls—in the fall is likely to unnerve markets.

Milan's FTSE MIB index ended down 2% on Monday, with banks taking a big hit, as prospects of an early election flared up, though they were calmer on Wednesday.

The new law still faces big hurdles, but even if Italians don't vote in September, there will be a drumbeat of speculation that could leave investors on edge.

Since Mr. Renzi's resignation in December, Italy has been in political limbo, with a number of parties pushing for snap elections and a new government led by Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni regarded as

little more than a caretaker administration.

A major obstacle to snap elections has been the need for a new electoral law following a court ruling early this year that ordered changes to the existing rules on the grounds that parts were unconstitutional.

After months of bickering, Italy's main parties have tentatively agreed to a new model similar to Germany's, in which each party gets parliamentary seats in proportion to its electoral result, with a 5% threshold needed to enter the legislature. Currently, an absolute majority is assigned in the lower house to the party that wins at least 40% of the vote in general elections.

Parliamentary elections are currently due before May 2018. Mr. Renzi said the new electoral law could win parliamentary approval by early

July, which would allow for parliament to be dissolved and new election to be held between 45 and 70 days later.

But if the new rules are approved, some doubt that President Sergio Mattarella, who has the power to dissolve parliament, would allow for autumn elections. Political analysts give the prospect about a 50% chance.

The main obstacle is the budget approval process, which consumes much of the final months of each year, a major reason Italy has never held parliamentary elections in the autumn.

“It will be very complicated to approve the budget law and have elections in the middle of the process,” said Roberto D'Alimonte, professor of political science at

Rome's LUISS University. "Very complicated."

When Italians finally do go to vote, the fragmentation of Italy's electorate in recent years could produce a hung parliament, reigniting fears that political instability will paralyze a country that has yet to come to grips with its

**The
New York
Times**

Sauerbrey: Trump and Merkel Hate Each Other. So What?

Anna Sauerbrey
5-6 minutes

BERLIN — The Atlantic is rough these days, as stormy disregard blows from the United States to Europe and back. After President Trump attacked Germany's trade practices, Chancellor Angela Merkel told a campaign rally in Munich that "the times we can completely rely on others are somewhat over" and that "we Europeans must take our destiny into our own hands." Mr. Trump reacted with a tweeted threat, citing Germany's failure to meet NATO's military spending goals, saying "this will change."

Ms. Merkel's statement went viral, and by the next day her spokesman Steffen Seibert was doing damage control. He stressed that Ms. Merkel had called for more European independence before (which is correct) and that the chancellor is "a deeply convinced trans-Atlanticist" (which is correct, too). And it is true: On many levels, despite all the rhetorical thunder, little has changed in substance, so far.

Military experts say that within NATO, day-to-day business is somewhat hampered because positions on the American side are still unfulfilled but that it's otherwise pretty much business as usual. They point out that the American brigade deployed in January 2017 to

deep economic problems.

The anti-establishment 5 Star Movement—one of Europe's biggest populist parties—is running neck-and-neck with the Democratic Party at around 30% of the votes, according to public opinion polls. Other large parties, such as Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia and anti-

reassure Eastern Europe about Russia is still there.

The same is true for economic and environmental cooperation, at least in Germany. Scientists continue working together, and Germany's economics minister, Brigitte Zypries, recently had a constructive, friendly meeting in Washington with Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and the United States trade representative Robert Lighthizer.

And yet Ms. Merkel's statement was much more than just campaign chatter. Yes, she needs to assert independence in the face of a stronger-than-expected challenge from the center-left Social Democrats. But she meant what she said, and her statement accurately captures a new direction in trans-Atlantic relations.

As Mr. Seibert said, this isn't the first time a European has called for self-sufficiency from America. It has been an annoying refrain for decades. But suddenly it's being sung with new urgency — and excitement.

Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and President Trump in Sicily in May. Sean Gallup/Getty Images

For all the fears of Brexit and the National Front ripping apart Europe, the continent has an unprecedented opportunity to move closer together. Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea in 2014 created a need to

immigrant and euroskeptic Northern League have about 13% support.

If the Democratic Party were to garner the most votes and be tasked with the formation of a new government, Mr. Renzi would likely draft the support of Mr. Berlusconi to create an unwieldy left-right coalition.

act in solidarity against an outside threat. For all the bitter fights, the union came out stronger for its struggles during the financial and refugee crises.

The German-French axis, the heart of the European project, is likely to gain new strength with the energetic President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, who won the election on a decidedly pro-European ticket. And the 2016 Brexit referendum put the European Union in fight-or-flight mode — and many seem to opt for fight along with France and Germany.

None of this has anything to do with Mr. Trump, who came into the story late. But with all this already underway, he will undoubtedly accelerate the trend away from the United States and toward a more unified, independent continent.

Don't expect a sudden break, though. It's not what Europe does. Take all the recent steps toward a unified military force. At last fall's summit in Bratislava, Slovakia, the big achievement was asking the European Commission to come up with a "concrete implementation plan" to better coordinate the 27 national military forces. "This could have quite an impact," said Claudia Major, a senior associate at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs — which is true, but also an indicator of how slowly things move on the continent.

Alternatively, if the 5 Star Movement—which pledges to call a referendum on Italy's membership of the eurozone if it comes to power—got most of the votes, it may try to form a minority government with external support of the Northern League, politicians and academics say.

And without an independent military, Europe is going to continue to rely on the United States. The European Union states together spend about half of what the United States spends on its military. It would take the European states decades to catch up.

In other words, the current trans-Atlantic contretemps are real and will have a significant impact — with limits. Europe won't be going its own way. Whatever its leaders and publics think about America, they need it, and so their quest for self-sufficiency will be more about leveling the playing field than leaving the game.

What really threatens the trans-Atlantic relationship is not the European quest for more self-sufficiency but the loss of trust that Ms. Merkel made so clear in her comments in Munich. We will continue to need the United States, but that need will be tempered by a worrying loss of trust in its leadership.

Over the next few years, trans-Atlantic relations will be defined by a single question: Which is more important, the practical administration of tangible mutual economic and defense interests, which will continue unimpeded, or the intangible but vitally important emotional bond, which is fast wearing away? To put it differently: How long can the United States and Europe work together without being friends?

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

EU Weighs Politically-Sensitive Steps to Strengthen Eurozone

Laurence Norman
3-4 minutes

Updated May 31, 2017 9:18 a.m. ET

BRUSSELS—The eurozone may need to set up a common budget, treasury and borrowing capacity to secure its stability, requiring politically-sensitive steps, the European Union's executive arm said Wednesday.

In a report on the future of the eurozone, the European Commission outlined a two-stage

process that by 2025 could include a greater pooling of resources and eventually lead to a full-fledged eurozone budget overseen by a common treasury.

The ideas come as new French President Emmanuel Macron is seeking to prod the German government into advancing some longstanding ideas for deepening the bloc's economic and monetary union.

Berlin and other capitals have responded that some ideas for integrating the eurozone are possible over time but France must

first implement politically challenging structural reforms.

"Responsibility and solidarity, risk reduction and risk-sharing will have to go hand in hand," the new paper said.

The commission outlined several modest steps to strengthen the eurozone over the next two years. They include reducing nonperforming loans, establishing a common backstop for winding-down banks and deepening the capital-markets union.

A second, more ambitious set of proposed reforms would run from 2019 to 2025. These could require changes to EU treaties, often a time-consuming and politically risky approach, or the easier route of specific intergovernmental agreements.

The commission avoided setting out a specific blueprint for future changes and instead laid out options that governments could choose from.

They include setting up a eurozone treasury, with a dedicated EU finance minister. The official would

oversee economic and fiscal policy and manage a stabilization fund aimed at cushioning economies during downturns. The office would also manage funds to help governments handle jumps in unemployment or help maintain key infrastructure investment during an economic shock.

Those funds could evolve over time into a fully-fledged eurozone budget, with borrowing capacity and permanent transfers among member states. That “may rather be a longer-term goal,” the commission said.

The paper also raised the prospect of a European Monetary Fund that could pool liquidity assistance and

broaden the eurozone’s current bailout fund.

The commission also suggested the development of a security dubbed a European Safe Asset, which could be funded either by eurozone governments or issued privately.

The investment would allow European banks to diversify their balance sheets away from national government bonds toward pan-eurozone debt.

Write to Laurence Norman at laurence.norman@wsj.com



Editorial : Europe and its attractive power win a key battle

The Christian Science Monitor

3 minutes

May 31, 2017 —Just three years ago, pro-democracy protesters in Ukraine were in the streets demanding their country start down the path to joining the European Union. After Russia objected and took pieces of its neighbor by force, thousands of Ukrainian soldiers were forced to fight for their country and its goal. Thousands have been killed in an ongoing war on Europe’s fringe.

Finally, on May 30 the 28-nation EU took the last major step in approving a pact that grants a close association with the Eastern

European country, one that starts with opening trade and travel.

The critical approval came in a vote by the Dutch parliament, the last vote needed from each EU member state and the most difficult. Last year, during the peak of anti-EU populist sentiment in Europe, voters in the Netherlands passed a nonbinding referendum against any EU pact with Ukraine. Since then, the populist tide has ebbed. The EU promised the Dutch not to let Ukraine fully join the union without later approval. Dutch lawmakers then gave the nod. Now a formal acceptance of the pact is expected in July.

At a time when three major countries — the United States, Britain, and Turkey — are pulling

away from Europe, Ukraine’s eagerness to embrace the EU and its values shows how much other countries want in. Ukraine still has far to go to cement full membership. The country’s wealthy elite still wield too much power in its democracy. The fight against corruption has only begun. And even as it struggles with each political reform, the government also struggles against Russian military aggression in its eastern region and the loss of Crimea.

Still, this victory will provide “a guarantee of our freedom, independence, and territorial integrity,” says Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. “Europe is our civilizational choice.” And Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the

European Commission, spoke of the new partnership with the Ukrainian people as “one of our closest and most valued.”

Foreign tourists in Europe often treat it as a theme park, drawn by the cultural and historical attractions. For others outside the EU, however, the allure is a deeper theme, that of civic values such as equality and openness. And they are willing to make big sacrifices to join the Continent’s biggest club.

With this approval, the EU is now in a better position to negotiate with Russia in ending the war in Ukraine. Europe’s soft power of attraction is winning out over Moscow’s hard power.

INTERNATIONAL



Amiri

7-9 minutes

Updated May 31, 2017 6:56 p.m. ET

KABUL—A truck packed with explosives detonated in the heart of the Afghan capital on Wednesday, killing at least 90 people as the country reels from an escalating militant campaign that is ramping up pressure on the Trump administration over how to counter the violence.

The massive blast struck during the morning rush hour on the outskirts of a heavily fortified part of the city known as the Green Zone where major embassies and U.S. military headquarters are located. It was the first time a truck bomb had struck in the area, and it collapsed buildings, blew out glass windows and sent a mushroom cloud of smoke over the city.

The Afghan intelligence agency blamed the Haqqani network, a militant group that is part of the

At Least 90 Killed in Blast Near Embassies in Afghan Capital (UNE)

Jessica Donati and Ehsanullah

Taliban insurgency. Afghan and foreign officials often blame the network for high-profile attacks in the capital, but the group rarely issues public statements or makes claims. The Taliban denied responsibility for the bombing; the Taliban typically avoids claiming attacks that kill many civilians.

Hospitals were flooded with victims of the attack, which wounded more than 400 people. The vast majority were Afghan civilians who had been commuting to work at government agencies, companies and foreign embassies on foot or in buses. The death toll from the blast was expected to rise as more bodies were discovered in the debris and collapsed buildings.

“When we come to the office, we don’t know if we’ll come back,” said Ekramuddin Hamdard, an employee of an Afghan telecom company who spoke from his bed at Kabul’s Emergency Hospital, where he was being treated for a head wound. “Every day is death for us,” he added.

The blast came a week before the Afghan government of President Ashraf Ghani is to host a gathering

of representatives of more than 20 countries to discuss political solutions to the long-running conflict with the Taliban.

It also came amid debate in the administration of President Donald Trump over the direction of U.S. policy in Afghanistan. The bombing would appear unlikely to alter that debate, though it may intensify it, one administration official said.

The Pentagon has recommended sending an additional 3,000—or possibly as many as 5,000—U.S. troops to combat militant groups and assist the Afghan military. White House officials say it could be weeks before a final proposal is sent to the president for a decision.

Mr. Trump called Mr. Ghani on Wednesday to express his “deepest condolences,” White House spokesman Sean Spicer said.

The Taliban, which has waged war against the U.S.-backed government for 16 years, has carried out increasingly devastating attacks in the capital since most foreign troops withdrew in 2014, with the goal of turning Afghans against the government by creating

an impression of unmanageable chaos and instability.

The group has also taken advantage of the vacuum left by foreign troops to seize swaths of territory and threaten at least half a dozen major cities.

The Pentagon fears that territorial losses by the Afghan government could allow foreign terrorists to use Afghanistan as a haven, as it did when the Taliban government hosted late former al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden, blamed for the Sept. 11 attacks in the U.S.

There was no immediate response to the attack from the Taliban’s Islamist rival, the local branch of Islamic State, which in the past year has expanded its operations beyond its stronghold in eastern Nangarhar province and carried out large attacks in Kabul. Islamic State cooperates with the Taliban in some parts of Afghanistan but has clashed with them in others, as they compete for territory.

Afghanistan and Iraq, both of which are embroiled in fights against violent religious extremists, have been hit by a spate of attacks since

the start of Ramadan on Saturday. The holy month is a time of prayer and spiritual reflection for many Muslims, who fast during daylight hours. But some extremist groups such as Islamic State claim killing enemies is a noble act during the period.

With the Taliban and Islamic State turning increasingly to vehicle-borne bombs, Afghan and foreign officials have been bracing for the possibility of a large assault on Kabul's busy center.

Emergency Hospital, itself damaged in the blast, received more than a hundred victims in the first half-hour after the attack, officials there said.

Relatives cried outside the gates, while others scoured lists of casualties for names of family members and friends.

Afghans working for government agencies, media organizations and foreign embassies were among the

dead in the rush-hour explosion. They included 10 Afghan security personnel working for the U.S. government, according to an internal U.S. State Department update. A driver for the Afghan service of the British Broadcasting Corp. was also killed.

Eleven U.S. citizens working as contractors in Kabul were injured, a State Department official said, adding that none of their injuries appeared life threatening.

An Afghan guard at the German embassy was killed and German diplomatic staff were injured in the explosion, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said. The blast destroyed the outer walls of the compound and caused severe damage to the buildings inside.

"I was in the makeup room preparing for my morning show. A huge boom shook the room and everything collapsed. It was

terrible," said Taban Ibraiz, an anchor for Afghan television network 1TV, located near the blast. "The entire studio, newsroom and offices have been destroyed."

An employee of Roshan, a mobile phone company, said many of his colleagues were killed and wounded in the blast. "The two floors of office building collapsed completely as a result of the explosion," he said. Then, the "office's generators caught fire as well."

Wednesday's carnage marked the first major attack on Kabul since March, when Islamic State fighters disguised as doctors broke into a military hospital and massacred scores of people. The final death toll of that assault remains unknown, but Afghan and foreign officials have said more than 100 may have been killed.

In addition to calling for the deployment of more U.S. troops in

Afghanistan, the Pentagon has proposed that U.S. forces be allowed to target the Taliban directly on their own. Currently, under procedures approved during the administration of former President Barack Obama, the U.S. can strike the militant group only in joint raids with Afghan forces.

There are currently 8,500 U.S. troops in the country, along with 6,500 troops representing members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

— Andrea Thomas, Maria Abi-Habib, Felicia Schwartz, Carol E. Lee and Habib Khan Totakhil contributed to this article.

Write to Jessica Donati at Jessica.Donati@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 1, 2017, print edition as 'Kabul Bomb Sows Carnage.'

The New York Times **Deadly Bombing in Kabul Is One of the Afghan War's Worst Strikes** (UNE)

Mujib Mashal, Fahim Abed and Jawad Sukhanyar

5-7 minutes

KABUL, Afghanistan — A truck bomb devastated a central area of Kabul near the presidential palace and foreign embassies on Wednesday, one of the deadliest strikes in the long Afghan war and a reminder of how the capital itself has become a lethal battlefield.

In one moment, more than 80 lives ended, hundreds of people were wounded and many more were traumatized, in the heart of a city defined by constant checkpoints and the densest concentration of Afghan and international forces.

President Ashraf Ghani, whose palace windows were shattered in the blast just as he had finished his morning briefing, called it "a crime against humanity." President Trump called him to offer condolences.

The bombing happened just as the United States is weighing sending more troops, deepening its entanglement, to try to slow or reverse government losses to the Taliban insurgency this year.

Continue reading the main story

"The attack demonstrates a complete disregard for civilians and reveals the barbaric nature of the enemy faced by the Afghan people," Gen. John W. Nicholson Jr., the commander of American and NATO

forces in Afghanistan, said in a statement.

He applauded the Afghan security forces for having prevented the truck from entering the Green Zone, the area that houses the headquarters of the coalition forces as well as several foreign embassies.

But Kabul's vulnerability to such an attack spoke volumes to the frustrations of stabilizing the country despite 15 years of American-led military intervention to thwart the Taliban, coupled with hundreds of billions of dollars in foreign aid to a population that for the most part has known only war.

Security has steadily worsened since 2014 and the end of the main NATO combat mission, which at its peak featured more than 100,000 American troops and tens of thousands more from alliance partners like Britain. The current international force in Afghanistan numbers about 13,000 — about 8,400 of them are American — mostly tasked with training and advising the Afghan forces.

The Trump administration and military commanders are debating whether to send up to 5,000 more troops to stem the government's losses.

Although the main Taliban spokesman claimed the group had nothing to do with the Kabul bomb, the Afghan intelligence agency, the National Directorate of Security, blamed the Haqqani wing of the

organization. Over the years, the Haqqanis have made an industry of large-scale attacks on the capital, and the militant cell has become integrated in the central leadership of the Taliban.

The deputy interior minister, Gen. Murad Ali Murad, said that besides the more than 80 people killed, with the death toll sure to rise, at least 463 had been wounded. Still, the general said the attacker had actually failed to get all the way to his most likely target: Security cameras showed the truck stopped by police officers who guarded the entrance to the street housing the German and Indian Embassies, as well as compounds for the coalition forces.

But for an explosion that shattered windows within a mile, a few steps off target made little difference.

With most of the city fasting to observe the holy month of Ramadan, residents urgently took up what has become a routine: sweeping broken glass, calling loved ones and calling others in search of news.

In different corners of the city, workers and relatives dug graves for the ones who, with life having become a game of chance, just were not lucky. Parents arrived to escort panicking children home from school, holding their hands and cautiously walking close to walls — as if walls could protect against such violence.

For more than two hours, smoke rose from the blast site, a 13-foot crater centered on a vast circle of destruction. The German Embassy, where officials said employees had retreated deeper into the compound after an earlier warning of a threat against them, was extensively damaged, with dozens of windows blown in.

"There was a big tremble, and then we heard a massive explosion," Ramin Sangar, a cameraman at a television channel near the bombing site, said as he was loaded into an ambulance. "All the windows are broken. Our studios collapsed."

As security forces established a wide cordon and ambulances whizzed between hospitals and the street, dozens of people gathered on each side of the cordon, inching closer in hopes of hearing any good news at all about their missing.

There was a heavy security presence, including forces from the United States-led coalition, and helicopters circled overhead. Emotions were running high, as the Afghan security forces and emergency medical workers, too, were working while fasting.

Intelligence officers closely checked the paperwork of emergency workers, fearing that they might have been infiltrated by militants planning a follow-up attack. At one point, after a senior police official tried to pass the cordon with a large entourage of guards, a scuffle broke out, and the police and intelligence officers faced off with their weapons

ready. But the situation was quickly defused.

For the residents, much of the search for their loved ones then shifted to the hospitals, and crowds began to grow around the city's treatment centers.

More than 300 people anxiously waited outside the Emergency Hospital, one of the main trauma centers in the city. Some were weeping and wailing, while others were trying to look up names of loved ones on the lists that employees handed out. Inside the hospital, where the windows had also been shattered by the force of the blast, doctors were attending to dozens of wounded.

Outside Wazir Akbar Khan hospital, the main



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8-9 minutes

Civilians and security forces made up most of the victims of a massive blast that struck Afghanistan's capital during rush hour on May 31. Civilians and security forces made up most of the victims of a massive blast that struck Afghanistan's capital during rush hour (Sarah Parnass, Dani Player/The Washington Post)

(Sarah Parnass, Dani Player/The Washington Post)

KABUL — A massive blast tore through the diplomatic quarter of the Afghan capital Wednesday, killing at least 80 people and wounding more than 460, officials said. The devastation left Kabul in shock and underlined the country's security struggles as it confronts a sustained wave of insurgent and terrorist attacks.

Interior Ministry officials said a huge quantity of explosives, hidden in a tanker truck, detonated at 8:30 a.m. during rush hour on a busy boulevard in the Wazir Akbar Khan district, which houses embassies, banks, supermarkets and government ministries. An entire city block was ravaged, with office buildings left in rubble and charred vehicles strewn across the road in one of the deadliest single attacks in Kabul.

The scenes of human horror were appalling, even for a country accustomed to war and violence.

[In Kabul, a massive bombing took its toll on me and a city I love.]

government hospital, a white-bearded man in his 60s named Azizullah searched for news of his 22-year-old son, Abdullah, who worked at a telecommunications company near the site of the blast.

"I searched all hospitals. He is nowhere," said Mr. Azizullah, who would crouch and then get up to pace. "Abdullah has two children, a wife and an old mother. What will I tell them?"

Mr. Azizullah received a call from someone who appeared to be inside the hospital, telling him about unrecognizable bodies.

"Can you search the person whose body is cut up?" he asked the caller. "He may be my son. Try to find his documents."

At Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital, a steady stream of ambulances and police trucks delivered burned and mangled bodies, many streaming blood. Medical aides struggled to zip them quickly into body bags as distraught people crowded around, looking for missing relatives.

"I felt like it was an earthquake, and after that I do not know what happened," said Mohammed Hassan, 21, who was attending a training program at the Azizi Bank, a half-block from the blast, and suffered cuts on his head and arms. "All the staff around me, everyone, was injured." He said he was brought to the hospital by an Afghan army ranger truck.

The dead and wounded were almost all Afghan civilians and security forces: police officers, bank clerks, cart pullers, telephone company workers. The dead included at least five women, an Afghan driver for the BBC and at least nine Afghan guards stationed at points outside the U.S. Embassy.

Although many foreign offices are nearby — many surrounded by high blast walls — there were no reports of foreigners among the fatalities. But some workers in diplomatic compounds, including those of Japan and Germany, were among the injured.

A huge blast tore through the diplomatic quarter of the Afghan capital of Kabul on May 31. Smoke and dust was visible throughout many areas of the city. A huge blast tore through the diplomatic quarter of the Afghan capital of Kabul on May 31. Smoke and dust was visible throughout many areas of the city. (Naeem Nazari)

(Naeem Nazari)

By the morgue in the hospital, a group of men tried to figure out whether the badly burned body in the back of an ambulance was their friend Ahmad Reshad, an employee of a telecom company in his 30s. One of the men was on the phone with Mr. Reshad's wife, as others searched the body to try to make out details that could identify him: How much money was carrying? What color tie did he have on? The body had pills in one of his pockets — was Mr. Reshad carrying pills?

They could not identify the body, so it was shipped off for a forensic examination. The men continued their search at another hospital.

In a televised address as the city was preparing to go to sleep, President Ghani came out with a

resolute message, calling for unity in the face of attackers who he said were receiving help from outside intelligence forces — frequent shorthand here for Pakistan's military intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence, which has long maintained ties with the Haqqani network.

The year's traumatic news began piling up even before the spring fighting season took off: massacres at a fortified army hospital and then an even more heavily fortified army base, another district fallen to the Taliban as stretched security forces collapsed, a city overrun two times on verge of falling again, more civilians killed.

Kabul blast: Explosion in city's diplomatic area kills at least 80 (UNE)

At least 11 U.S. citizens working as contractors also were injured, a State Department spokesman said.

The Afghan Taliban denied any role in the bombing, which was followed by a second, smaller blast in another part of the city. The Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, did not speculate on which group could have carried out the attacks but said it should "become clear at a later stage."

[Russia and Iran carve out more influence in Afghanistan]

Security agencies had warned that Taliban insurgents and regional affiliates of the Islamic State were planning to attack high-profile targets in the city in the early part of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month that began last week.

Many injured survivors were cut by shards of glass from storefronts, offices and foreign compounds — as far away as several miles from the main blast site. By midmorning, many were limping or being wheeled out of local hospitals, with their clothes covered in blood and their heads, arms or feet wrapped in bandages.

Nearby, distraught families squatted around bloody body bags, guarding them in patches of shade.

There were muffled, choking sounds of men weeping. Most of the dead had been seared by the blast; some were wrapped in cloth but others were half-naked and dripping blood. The Afghan Ministry of Public Health placed the death toll at 80 and the injury count at 463.

"What will I tell his children?" a sobbing man said into a cellphone as he knelt beside a bag containing the remains of his brother, a guard in a building near the explosion.

"Look, that one is a woman. Shame, shame," said an elderly man, pointing to a stretcher with a slender body wrapped in cloth and a hank of long hair dangling outside.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government issued a statement condemning the blasts as "heinous acts that go against the values of humanity as well [as] values of peaceful Afghans." It also said the attacks "demonstrate the extreme level of atrocity by terrorists against innocent civilians."

A statement from NATO forces in Afghanistan praised "the courage of Afghan Security Forces, especially the police and first responders."

"Attacks such as these only serve to strengthen our commitment to our Afghan partners as they seek a peaceful, stable future for their country," the NATO statement added.

There are 8,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan supporting the government, but earlier this year, Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander there, said he needed several thousand more to break the stalemate. The U.S. Embassy is about a half-mile from the blast site, but at least nine Afghan guards died in the blast, the State Department said.

[U.S. sees military expansion in Afghanistan]

Public anger at the Afghan government built during the traumatic hours after the blast. People with grim, dazed faces strode along the sidewalks, avoiding piles of glass, or sat glumly in modern offices with all their windows gone, watching the news on TV.

"This is an inept government that cannot protect the people and must be dissolved. It is time for an interim government to be formed," said Mirwais Yasini, a member of parliament.

The Ghani government, weakened by internal tensions, has faced an uphill battle to fend off an aggressive push by Taliban insurgents in recent months, as well as a number of assaults claimed by the Islamic State.

Others expressed disgust for the attackers, especially since they chose Ramadan, a period that

Muslims devote to prayer and fasting.

"How can the people who did this call themselves Muslims?" demanded Ahmed Mohibzada, 24, an office worker who had walked to the Wazir Akbar Khan Hospital to donate blood after hearing of the massive number of injured survivors.

He was lying on a gurney in the hospital porch with his sleeve rolled up. "I just felt I had to do something," he said.

Others wept in frustration when they scanned lists of injured patients on

the hospital wall and could not find the name they were looking for. One man pounded angrily on the hospital's front door, arguing with the guard.

The Health 202 newsletter

Your daily guide to the health-care debate.

A woman ran through the crowd, shouting hysterically. "My son is a good Muslim. I have to find him," she shrieked over and over, long past caring who was listening.

The diplomatic zone in Kabul is among the city's most highly

protected. Yet attackers have managed to breach its security in the past.

In 2015, suspected Taliban gunmen rampaged through the area, engaging in an overnight gun battle with security forces. The four attackers were killed, but there were no civilian casualties.

Brian Murphy in Washington contributed to this report.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Editorial : The Assault on Kabul

May 31, 2017
7:16 p.m. ET 15

After 16 years it's a reasonable question.

Taliban, al Qaeda and Islamic State.

COMMENTS

2 minutes

Yet the situation is not as dire as the headlines seem. After a visit to Afghanistan in April in which he said 2017 would be another tough year for Afghan forces, Defense Secretary James Mattis noted at a meeting in Denmark that Islamic State "has lost about two thirds of its strength" in Afghanistan. The Afghans are undertaking the bulk of their own defense and taking horrific casualties to fight against the

The U.S. has roughly 8,400 troops in Afghanistan, but in February the commander on the ground, Army Gen. John Nicholson, told the Senate that he nonetheless has "a shortfall of a few thousand" troops. President Trump is now weighing how many more to send, and we hope he fulfills Gen. Nicholson's request.

Barack Obama's main goal in Afghanistan was getting out, but

even he came around to seeing that U.S. withdrawal might let the Taliban win. A terrorist triumph in Afghanistan would provide a new safe haven for jihadists in the region, without bases for the U.S. forces on the ground to counter it. At the very least a decision on U.S. troops should be made mindful of the large strategic stakes, not as an overreaction to a single truck bomb.

Appeared in the June 1, 2017, print edition.

Los Angeles Times

Rand Paul, Ro Khanna: The case for restraint in American foreign policy

Rand Paul, Ro Khanna

5-6 minutes

After 9/11, Al Qaeda was mostly contained in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Today, the Islamic State network is spreading across the world. We have destabilized regions and, in so doing, helped strengthen a new generation of terror groups.

million Yemenis face the threat of famine because of this conflict.

In a speech delivered to Congress on July 4, 1821, John Quincy Adams rightly argued that America must hold high the banner for "Freedom, Independence, Peace," but exercise restraint in foreign policy. He understood that we should offer our prayers and voices to others who seek liberty while avoiding the trap of venturing abroad "in search of monsters to destroy."

What makes matters worse is that the Saudis have formed a temporary alliance of convenience with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, also known as AQAP, to fight the Houthi rebels. AQAP is our enemy. The group claimed credit for the attack on the USS Cole in 2000, the "underwear bomber" in 2009 and the intercepted plot to send bombs to Jewish organizations in Chicago in 2010. By supporting the Saudi war against the Houthis, we are creating a vacuum for Al Qaeda to gain power.

While we don't oppose all overseas military action, Adams' warning has never been more relevant. After 15 years of war, Americans are weary of constant conflict, and our interventions have made us less safe. When we were attacked on 9/11, most Americans, including the two of us, supported striking the terrorists in Afghanistan. But our limited and appropriate mission to defend our homeland has morphed into a broader pursuit of regime change abroad.

Defending our country remains the federal government's foremost constitutional priority. To effectively carry out that responsibility, we must craft a 21st century foreign policy based on the restraint Adams envisioned. We should reject the establishment consensus, whether neocon or neoliberal, which too readily defaults to the use of force in the pursuit of perceived American interests and values when there is no direct threat to our national security.

Instead of changing course in light of Saudi Arabia's track record and actions, our country is agreeing to what a Pentagon official called "the largest single arms deal in American history" with the Saudis, involving nearly \$110 billion in immediate defense equipment sales and training, and up to \$350 billion across 10 years. The deal comes less than a year after Congress voted overwhelmingly to allow the families of 9/11 victims to sue Saudi Arabia. Such a comprehensive commitment with an ally that is questionable at best, especially one with a poor human rights record, should not be finalized without

thorough congressional debate, and we therefore support a joint resolution of disapproval in order to force such a discussion. Continuing to send billions of dollars in arms to Saudi Arabia will only further destabilize the region without eradicating terrorism.

Syria is another example of failed American foreign policy. Our calls for regime change since 2011 have helped make Syria a magnet for terrorism. No one disputes that Syrian President Bashar Assad is a brutal dictator. But instead of intervening, which has made matters worse, we should seek regional cease-fires involving all the players in the region, including Russia and Turkey. A political solution will not be easy, but reactive and sporadic military involvement does nothing to advance peace.

Invading Iraq, toppling Gadhafi in Libya and interfering in Yemen and Syria have been strategic blunders.

American political leaders have been tempted to call for military action in recent decades because that is seen as decisive and strong, but restraint often takes more resolve and strength. "Supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting," wrote the ancient Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu. "If you know neither the enemy nor

yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

By repeatedly undertaking interventions without a proper understanding of

Los Angeles Times

Davis : The president has inverted America's foreign policy

M. Thomas Davis
6-7 minutes

In June 1976, I was a young Army captain commanding an artillery battery stationed in Gelnhausen, just east of Frankfurt, in what was then West Germany. We were part of the 3rd Armored Division, whose mission it was to defend the Fulda Gap, the Soviets' presumed attack avenue into West Germany. Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic were on tour in Europe and scheduled to perform in Frankfurt, so a group of us from our small post bought tickets to attend.

The Fourth of July was approaching, and 1976 was America's bicentennial year. We were feeling more patriotic pride than usual, along with some disappointment that we would not be home to celebrate this milestone in the traditional American way. But that turned out to not be a problem.

At the concert, Bernstein conducted several classics along with some of his contemporary compositions. When the performance ended, he departed the stage to a warm round of applause followed by the customary demand for an encore. When Bernstein reappeared, he tapped his baton and the orchestra played "The Stars and Stripes Forever."

Along with my Army colleagues seated in the balcony, I rose and applauded — but so did the Germans throughout the auditorium. I recall we were all a bit surprised by their enthusiasm, which slowly drowned out our own. When Bernstein finished, he turned and

our enemy, we have weakened our national security. We need to return to the founding principles articulated by Adams; we need to craft a foreign policy that reflects our

bowed to the audience, which itself then turned to face our relatively small contingent sitting above them. Feet stomped, hands clapped high in the air, cheers echoed — for us. I've never in my life felt so honored and touched.

Nineteenth century British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston famously said this about international affairs: "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Only our interests are eternal and perpetual." Henry Kissinger has resurrected this phrase on many occasions, and in fact, America's list of friends and enemies has changed many times since that day in Germany more than 40 years ago.

The United States now has formal diplomatic and significant economic relations with China, and American tourists flock to Vietnam. The Middle East, with its oil wealth and economic leverage, remains strategically important despite a growing regional chaos that runs wider and deeper than any time in modern memory. But what has not changed are America's interests in Europe and NATO, the alliance under which my unit would have fought in case of a Soviet invasion through the Fulda Gap.

It is, therefore, profoundly puzzling that President Trump seems intent on reducing our strategic partnership with NATO and Europe in favor of an improved relationship with Russia, a nation that does not reflect American values, that launched a significant attack against our electoral system last year, that invaded and annexed portions of an adjacent state, that casts a dark shadow across Eastern Europe,

values yet does not prioritize the use of our power.

Rand Paul is a U.S. senator from Kentucky and a member of the Senate Committee on Foreign

and that is led by a president whose professional past would not suggest friendly intentions toward the United States.

In an appearance in Washington two years back, former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt described Vladimir Putin's Russia as an "unpredictable country" on a path that is "revisionist, reactionary, and perhaps reckless." These disturbing words are grounded in recent Russian behavior reflecting what Putin undoubtedly sees as his nation's eternal and perpetual interest — reducing the influence of Western Europe in general and, specifically, fracturing NATO.

At NATO headquarters last week, the president emphasized one theme that was poorly received by our NATO allies, and ignored another, which was certainly well received by Putin. Lecturing NATO's members on defense spending was certain to be offensive, and irrelevant in the absence of a strategic context for additional investments. Most NATO members are concerned about Russian behavior, which seems not to offend Trump, so what would be the purpose of meeting the spending guidelines Trump seems so fixated on?

But of greater concern was the absence of any reference to Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, stipulating that an attack on one is an attack on all, a treaty provision that has only been evoked once — following the 9/11 attacks on the United States. The three NATO members most vulnerable to Russian threats and intimidation are Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, all former subjugated Soviet states. For the most obvious

Relations. Ro Khanna represents California's 17th District in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

of reasons, these three NATO allies were as disturbed by the absence of public support for Article 5 from the president of the United States as Vladimir Putin is no doubt thrilled.

Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, stated recently that the United States has always been seen by its allies as "dependable and reliable; and should those qualities disappear they will certainly recalibrate their relations with us." In that regard, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's declaration following the NATO meeting that a new chapter in U.S.-European relations had opened, and going forward Europeans must "take our fate into our own hands," was only startling in the rapidity with which it was made. Evidently, the recalibration has begun.

The United States has an enduring and perpetual interest in standing with its closest friends and allies, and standing against domestic and international recklessness. And even if friends are not eternal and perpetual, it is important to know who they actually are at any given moment. That should not be a challenging analysis, but it is uncertain that the current White House is up to conducting it. Germans once cheered "The Stars and Stripes Forever." It would be a significant strategic tragedy if they, and their fellow Europeans, were no longer moved to do so.

M. Thomas Davis is a retired Army officer who commanded an artillery unit during operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and taught international relations and economics at West Point.

The New York Times

U.S. Begins Arming Syrian Kurds for Final Assault on Raqqa

Eric Schmitt
4-5 minutes

WASHINGTON — The United States has started arming Syrian Kurds with heavy machine guns, antitank weapons and other arms, a critical step in preparing a pivotal part of the force that will carry out the final assault on the Islamic State's de facto capital of Raqqa, Pentagon officials said.

The weapons deliveries follow the Trump administration's decision

earlier in May to arm the American-backed Kurdish militias over the objections of Turkey, an important NATO ally that considers the Kurdish fighters to be terrorists.

"The U.S.-led coalition has begun issuing arms and equipment to Kurdish elements of the S.D.F.," Col. Ryan S. Dillon, a military spokesman in Baghdad, said in an email on Tuesday, using the abbreviation for the Syrian Democratic Forces, a combination of mostly Syrian Kurdish and Arab militias.

Colonel Dillon said the equipment provided included "small arms, ammunition, heavy machine guns" and antitank weapons to use against "heavily armored vehicle-borne I.E.D.s," or improvised explosive devices. NBC News first reported that the arms shipments had begun.

American military commanders have long argued that arming the People's Protection Units, or Y.P.G., a Kurdish militia fighting alongside Syrian Arab forces against the Islamic State, is the fastest way to seize Raqqa.

But Turkey has strongly objected to such a move, raising fears of a backlash that could prompt the Turks to curtail their cooperation with Washington in the struggle against the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL. Turkish officials have issued veiled threats that they would shut down allied operations at Incirlik Air Base, the major air hub for American and allied warplanes in the battle.

Turkey's National Security Council said on Wednesday that the Trump administration's decision to arm the

Kurdish militia in Syria was “not befitting of an alliance.”

Equipment provided to the Kurds, which is being drawn from stockpiles in the region, will be limited in quantity and by mission, and will be doled out incrementally as objectives are reached, Colonel Dillon said.

American military officials have insisted for months that the weapons are needed to help the lightly armed Kurdish and Arab fighters cope with urban warfare in Raqqa against Islamic State militants who have been building fortifications for months and are equipped with car bombs and even some tanks they captured from the Syrian Army.

Thousands of Syrian Kurdish and Arab fighters have pushed to within about two miles of the city, where American military officials and humanitarian groups are bracing for a bloody, monthslong battle — similar to the fight Iraqi forces have

carried out in Mosul, another Islamic State stronghold. In preparation for the assault, American and allied warplanes have intensified airstrikes against militant forces in and around Raqqa in recent weeks.

At the same time, the Kurdish and Arab militias, which American Special Operations forces are advising, have been tightening a rough cordon around most of the city, capturing dozens of small towns and villages as they go. The fighters have surrounded Raqqa from the north, the west and the east. The extremists still have an exit from the south, even though the American-led coalition destroyed two southern bridges over the Euphrates River.

To address Turkish concerns that the arms might be used against them after the fight for Raqqa is over, the supply of weapons and ammunition will be limited to what the Kurds and Arab fighters need to carry out specific operations, American officials said.

“Wherever possible, our advisers will monitor the use of the weapons and supplies we give the Kurdish elements of the S.D.F., ensuring use only against ISIS,” Colonel Dillon said. “Any alleged misuse or diversion of U.S. support will be taken seriously and lead to the possible curtailment of support, if verified.”

The United States has long worked with the Y.P.G. under the umbrella of the Syrian Democratic Forces. The American military has always emphasized that those forces include Arab fighters, who make up nearly half of the total force and most of the fighters near Raqqa. But the Y.P.G. is generally considered to have the most experienced and battle-hardened fighters.

The Turkish government has long insisted that the Kurdish militia is closely linked to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, a separatist group. That group is listed by Turkey, the United States and Europe as a terrorist organization.

Some Syria analysts said on Wednesday that the militias would need to include more of the local Sunni Arab tribes to maintain the fighting force’s potency after the battle for Raqqa, if they aim to vanquish pockets of remaining Islamic State resistance in the region.

“Arming the Kurdish elements of the S.D.F. will make them more militarily effective against ISIS in Raqqa,” said Andrew J. Tabler, an expert on Syria at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. But, he added, referring to President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, “if they don’t expand to include more of the Sunni Arab tribes of the Euphrates River valley, who make up the majority there, the S.D.F. will have a hard time holding that area because of the Kurdish-Arab split, leaving that area vulnerable for an Assad regime comeback.”



Trump’s ‘Secret Plan’ to Defeat ISIS Looks a Lot Like Obama’s

Paul McLeary | 54 mins ago

5-6 minutes

Remember presidential candidate Donald Trump’s secret plan to defeat the Islamic State? And his boast that he knew more than the generals did about the Islamic State (thus implying he’d replace them once in office)? More campaign rhetoric crashing on the rocks of reality: The Trump administration just endorsed the core elements of former President Barack Obama’s counter-Islamic State plan, and Trump has decided that Obama’s generals weren’t so bad, either.

On May 19, a day when Washington was consumed with the latest developments in the scandals enveloping the White House, the Pentagon announced that the chairman and vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford and Air Force Gen. Paul Selva, respectively — would be renominated for another term. The commanders leading the military campaigns in Afghanistan, Iraq, North Africa, and Syria — all places with significant Islamic State presences — also remain in place.

That same day, Dunford and Secretary of Defense James Mattis updated the Pentagon press corps on the counter-Islamic State

campaign, which Trump has ordered them to accelerate. They gave few details of the plan presented to the president. But what they did say was revealing. They highlighted only two significant changes: delegation of more authority to field commanders, and a tactical shift from shoving the Islamic State out of safe locations to surrounding it in its strongholds. Notably, Mattis emphasized that the rules of engagement had not changed, and that U.S. forces would maintain “continued extraordinary efforts to avoid innocent civilian casualties.” So much for the Trump campaign pledge to “bomb the hell out of ISIS.” Apparently shelved, too, is National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster’s reported interest in significantly expanding the U.S. troop presence in Syria.

These are tactical shifts, not a fundamental change of strategy. The Obama approach of working by, with, and through partners in Iraq and Syria continues, as does the campaign of U.S. and coalition air strikes and targeted raids, along with arming, training, and advising local partners, using a relatively small number of U.S. troops on the ground. The core objectives remain: seizing the two remaining centers of the so-called caliphate — Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria — and countering the Islamic State elements in southern Syria and the

Euphrates valley. To his credit, the president also recently approved the arming of the Syrian Kurds — part of a larger force that will take Raqqa — in the face of strong opposition from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

As Obama concluded, and as the Trump team apparently concedes, the current approach is the most sustainable. Significant increases in U.S. troop presence in Iraq would undoubtedly add to the danger to our troops, as it would invite greater mischief by Iran and its Shia militia proxies in Iraq, and take away from the government in Baghdad the burden of owning the challenge of defeating the Islamic State and building an inclusive government after its fall. It would also impose higher costs for the United States. The operation against the Islamic State has cost less than \$15 billion since August 2014, and 11 American lives have been lost due to hostile action (compared to the hundreds of billions of dollars and thousands of lives lost in Iraq a decade ago).

Obama believed in the maxim that war is too important to be left to the generals, and thus kept a tight rein on their actions in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere. Close White House review may have sometimes had opportunity costs, but it also ensured that the commander-in-chief was prepared to bear the

responsibility for mistakes, a trait that Trump has not yet shown, as we saw after he blamed the generals for mistakes made in a counterterrorism raid in Yemen early in his tenure.

Importantly, Trump’s decision to delegate does not mean a change in targeting practices. The United States and its partners could win the battles for Mosul and Raqqa more quickly by less discriminate bombing — tactics employed by Russia and the Syrian regime in Aleppo — but that would be inconsistent with the laws of armed conflict and our values, and would hand the Islamic State a propaganda and recruiting tool. (Recent increases in civilian casualties in Mosul are more likely due to the complexity of the urban battlefield, not a change in tactics.)

From the start, the generals never said the war against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria would be easy or quick. But it has yielded results, with steady gains of territory once controlled by the Islamic State. Let’s hope the president has the patience to stick with the plan he has now embraced.

Photo credit: JIM WATSON/AFP/Getty Images

Russia Fires Missiles at Islamic State Targets in Syria From Mediterranean

James Marson in Moscow and Raja Abdulrahim in Beirut

2-3 minutes

May 31, 2017 4:44 a.m. ET

MOSCOW—Russia launched four cruise missiles at Islamic State targets in Syria from a warship and submarine in the Mediterranean, the Russian Defense Ministry said Wednesday.

The launches hit sites to the west of Palmyra, which Russian-backed Syrian regime forces and Iranian-backed militias recaptured from Islamic State in March. The strike destroyed all targets, which included heavy

weapons and fighters that had been deployed there from Islamic State's stronghold of Raqqa, the Defense Ministry said in its statement.

The ministry said that U.S., Turkish and Israeli military commanders had been informed about the launches "at the appropriate time."

"We are aware of the reports of Russian cruise missiles, but have no further information to provide," Col. Ryan Dillon, spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition.

The Syrian regime had lost control of the ancient city of Palmyra to the extremist militants for a second time in December as its forces and allies were focused on battling

antigovernment rebels in the northern city of Aleppo.

Since regaining control of Palmyra, Syrian forces have continued to advance eastward through the desert controlled by Islamic State. The push toward the Iraqi border has put the regime and Iranian-backed forces on a collision course with U.S.-backed rebels also battling Islamic State.

Earlier in May the U.S.-led coalition launched airstrikes on those pro-regime forces as they neared the rebels in al-Tanf, near the borders with Iraq and Jordan. It was only the second time the U.S. launched a deliberate strike against the Syrian regime and came after the coalition

said it had warned the pro-regime forces to stop their advance.

The regime has lost most territorial control in eastern Syria, maintaining a foothold in only a few large cities. As the regime has continued to rack up victories against rebels, it has turned more attention to fighting Islamic State, in part as a bid to underscore its long-held narrative that it is fighting terrorism.

—Ben Kesling in Erbil, Iraq, contributed to this article.

Write to James Marson at james.marson@wsj.com and Raja Abdulrahim at raja.abdulrahim@wsj.com

Judge Orders Russian Opposition Leader to Delete Parts of Investigative Video

Nathan Hodge

6-8 minutes

May 31, 2017 1:12 p.m. ET

MOSCOW—A Moscow court on Wednesday ordered Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny to delete portions of an investigative video that drew millions of viewers and helped spark unusually large street demonstrations across Russia.

Alisher Usmanov, a billionaire who ranks fifth on the Forbes list of richest Russian businessmen, filed suit in April against Mr. Navalny for defamation, after Mr. Navalny and a team of investigators from his Anti-Corruption Foundation released a video alleging the businessman gave property to a foundation linked to Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev. Mr. Usmanov, who is a majority shareholder in a leading mobile operator and Russian-language social-media enterprises and owns a share in the Arsenal Football Club, said the opposition leader was engaged in a smear campaign.

The Lyublino district court in Moscow ruled Wednesday afternoon in favor of Mr. Usmanov, Russia's official court-reporting agency said. News agency RIA-Novosti said Judge Marina Vasina said allegations made by Mr. Navalny in his investigation were "untrue and discrediting the honor, dignity and business reputation" of Mr. Usmanov.

Vladimir Usenko, an attorney for Mr. Usmanov, said his legal team sought to remove any references to Mr. Usmanov from the video and online publications. A written decision is expected in five days, he added.

"We are satisfied with today's decision," he said.

Mr. Navalny said he would appeal the court's decision.

"The court ordered me to remove the investigation," Mr. Navalny said on Twitter. "That absolutely won't happen."

The investigative video, which was released in early March, has been an online sensation, drawing over 21 million views on YouTube. In late March, the Russian opposition leader mobilized thousands of demonstrators across Russia to protest official corruption. The country's state-controlled media largely ignored the marches, which presented an unexpected challenge to President Vladimir Putin's political rule.

Mr. Medvedev has dismissed the video as a "compote" of unsubstantiated allegations.

The feud between the anti-Kremlin activist and the well-connected tycoon propelled Mr. Navalny into the spotlight again, following the March 29 demonstrations. In addition to the civil case, Mr. Usmanov took the unusual step of pressing his case in the court of public opinion.

In mid-May, Mr. Usmanov posted an online video attacking the

opposition leader. Seated at a desk, the billionaire delivers a twelve-minute statement in a gravelly monotone, calling Mr. Navalny a "luzer" (loser) and a failed businessman.

"Our lawyers will now see you in court," Mr. Usmanov warned, concluding the video with the line, "spit on you, Alexei Navalny."

That line—rudely addressing the opposition leader with the informal pronoun *ty*—quickly went viral. Mr. Navalny responded with his own video, noting that one of the richest men in Russia had "turned into a video blogger."

Mr. Usmanov, contacted through his representatives, didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

In essence, Mr. Usmanov was taking on Mr. Navalny on his own turf. The opposition leader enjoys almost no airtime on official state channels, so he has turned a website, Twitter account and YouTube channel into a forum for disseminating his message.

The flame war between Messrs. Navalny and Usmanov drew massive hits on YouTube, and inspired parodies, caricatures and memes. The billionaire then followed with a sequel—entitled "Spit on You Again"—drawing in more viewers to the burgeoning feud. On Monday, Mr. Usmanov offered a humorous take on the affair, saying he was "very flattered that my video calls attracted so much attention."

The businessman then announced a contest for the most creative parody, video clip or memes, offering a prize of an iPhone 7 Plus—the same device used to shoot Mr. Usmanov's original video—and an autographed T-shirt.

But the trading of allegations between the opposition leader and the businessman reflects how Mr. Navalny has grown in stature as Russia's top opposition figure, even as other opponents to the Kremlin have been marginalized or run out of the country.

Anti-Kremlin demonstrations in Moscow that began in late 2011 forced no major change, and opposition to Mr. Putin became more fractured and divided. Two of the most visible opponents to Mr. Putin have met unpleasant fates: Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a former oil tycoon, remains in exile after serving 10 years in prison for alleged financial crimes, and opposition politician Boris Nemtsov was gunned down in Moscow in February 2015.

Mr. Navalny has also come under intense pressure. Earlier this year, he was found guilty of embezzlement by a court in Kirov, 500 miles east of Moscow, a verdict he says was meant to exclude him from running in next year's presidential election. In late April, an assailant splashed him with a green antiseptic dye, an attack that left him largely blind in one eye.

The Russian government is quick to cast opposition politicians as insignificant. A recent opposition forum in Lithuania, a former Soviet

republic, is a case in point: Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova described the private and off-the-record event as a “farce,” the news agency TASS reported, saying its participants were politically marginal.

But the Kremlin is increasingly

worried about political discontent among young voters, who turned out for Mr. Navalny's protests in large numbers.

Mikhail Kasyanov, a former Russian prime minister, said the prospect of young, discontented voters mobilizing “frightened” the Kremlin.

“This phenomenon has just begun,” Mr. Kasyanov said. “These are people who are still quite young, they want some kind of justice, having visited one or another European country, and they understand that people can live differently.”

Write to Nathan Hodge at nathan.hodge@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 1, 2017, print edition as 'Putin Rival Told To Amend Video.'

POLITICO Russia escalates spy games after years of U.S. neglect

By Ali Watkins

8-10 minutes

In the throes of the 2016 campaign, the FBI found itself with an escalating problem: Russian diplomats, whose travel was supposed to be tracked by the State Department, were going missing.

The diplomats, widely assumed to be intelligence operatives, would eventually turn up in odd places, often in middle-of-nowhere USA. One was found on a beach, nowhere near where he was supposed to be. In one particularly bizarre case, relayed by a U.S. intelligence official, another turned up wandering around in the middle of the desert. Interestingly, both seemed to be lingering where underground fiber optics cables tend to run.

Story Continued Below

According to another U.S. intelligence official, “They find these guys driving around in circles in Kansas. It’s a pretty aggressive effort.”

It’s a trend that has led intelligence officials to conclude the Kremlin is waging a quiet effort to map the United States’ telecommunications infrastructure, perhaps preparing for an opportunity to disrupt it.

“Half the time they’re never confronted,” the official, who declined to be identified discussing intelligence matters, said of the incidents. “We assume they’re mapping our infrastructure.”

As the country — and Washington in particular — borders on near-obsession over whether affiliates of Donald Trump’s campaign colluded with the Kremlin to swing the 2016 presidential election, U.S. intelligence officials say Moscow’s espionage ground game is growing stronger and more brazen than ever.

It’s a problem that’s sparking increasing concern from the intelligence community, including the FBI. After neglecting the Russian threat for a decade, the U.S. was caught flat-footed by Moscow’s election operation. Now, officials are scrambling to figure out

how to contain a sophisticated intelligence network that’s festered and strengthened at home after years’ worth of inattention.

“We’ve definitely been ignoring Russia for the last 15 years,” another intelligence official said, calling the Kremlin “resurgent.”

Politico spoke with half a dozen current and former US intelligence officials about Russian spy strategies. All requested anonymity to openly discuss espionage.

“They’ve just got so many bodies,” the first intelligence official said of the Russians. “It’s not about what we know [is happening]. It’s about what we don’t know.”

It’s one of the most poorly kept secrets in the intelligence community: The Russian effort is a startlingly open and aggressive one, and often falls in a complex legal gray zone.

For example, the second official said, diplomats wandering around the desert might be a violation of certain travel requirements, but it’s not necessarily illegal.

Most U.S. intelligence officials can relay stories of run-ins with Russian intelligence operatives — often moonlighting as lobbyists, diplomats and businessmen — hanging around popular Washington happy hours. It’s an open assumption that they use Capitol Hill and its public office buildings as a farming ground for potential recruits. And the presumed agents aren’t hard to spot, according to officials: an oft-traded joke is to go to one of Washington’s handful of Russian restaurants and look for the guy in a tracksuit.

As the Russians continue aggressively pushing legal boundaries in both the United States and Moscow, there’s a tangible frustration among U.S. intelligence officials and on Capitol Hill that the U.S. has consistently missed its chance to crack down on Moscow’s spy games.

For years, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle had pressed a hesitant Obama White House to crack down on some of the Kremlin’s more brazen stateside maneuvers.

“There was a general feeling that this was not getting the attention it deserved,” said Sen. Ron Wyden, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee who has supported the panel’s efforts in pressing the White House to tow a harder line with the Kremlin.

Around last summer, that tension reached a fever pitch.

Lawmakers, frustrated by Russian diplomats’ repeated violation of travel rules, had inserted a provision in last year’s intelligence authorization bill would have required Russian diplomats to provide ample notice to the State Department if they planned to travel more than 50 miles from where they were based, and further, would have required the FBI to validate that travel. According to several sources involved in the discussions at that time, the Administration fought desperately — and failed — get those provisions taken out of the bill.

Around that same time, two key democratic lawmakers informed the White House of plans to publicly finger Russia as the foreign power behind a widespread effort to manipulate the ongoing US election — something no official US government entity had yet done. Fearful of escalation, the administration tried to get Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Adam Schiff, then the two leading Democrats on the Senate and House intelligence committees, respectively, to back off. They didn’t, and released the statement anyway. Backed into a corner by Congress, the Administration released a statement saying the same a week later.

The Obama administration’s tentativeness in the weeks leading up to Nov. 8 — especially in the high-stakes context of a presidential election — is something that still bewilders corners of the intelligence world. Some speculate that Secretary of State John Kerry, desperate for a peace deal in Syria, urged the White House to lie low. Some blame it on fear of igniting a cyberwar, and still others say it stems from a generalized underestimation of the Russian threat.

Blaming one factor, one of the officials said, is “oversimplified.” But the frustration — and regret — is tangible.

Underscoring all this is that the Kremlin shows none of the same reluctance at home, nor does it show any propensity to abide by the gentlemen’s espionage rules that the U.S. tends to uphold, sometimes to the chagrin of its own spy corps.

“We can’t even leave the compound over there without being followed,” the first U.S. intelligence official said.

One well-publicized incident continues to agitate officials in Washington. In June of last year, a U.S. diplomat was returning to the embassy in Moscow when a guard with the FSB, the domestic Russian security service, exploded from his booth on the compound’s perimeter and assaulted him. A surveillance video shows the guard tackling the man and throwing him to the ground before the U.S. diplomat was able to drag himself inside the doors of the embassy, to safety.

The U.S. diplomat, whom POLITICO confirmed was actually a CIA officer, had done the impossible — he had lost his tails as he maneuvered in Moscow. Infuriated, the Russians sent an FSB guard the man wouldn’t recognize to wait outside the embassy for his inevitable return. The officer was beaten so badly he was immediately flown out of the country for urgent medical attention.

The account was confirmed by another person familiar with the incident.

“They are far more aggressive on counterintelligence issues in Russia than we are here,” one of the officials said.

It’s these incidents that subsequently worry and frustrate the Americans. The unspoken rules of spying mean nothing to the Kremlin.

“They agree to rules, and then break them,” another U.S. official said.

Former CIA Director John Brennan made reference to this frustration in recent congressional testimony.

Though he stopped short of explicitly discussing the June 2016 incident in Moscow, he told lawmakers that he had brought up the broader harassment issue to his Russian counterpart at Russian

state security services in August of last year.

"I first told him, as I had several times previously, that the continued mistreatment and harassment of US diplomats in Moscow was

intolerable and needed to stop," Brennan said.

The CIA declined to comment. The FBI did not respond to an official request for comment by deadline.

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**The
Washington
Post**

Trump administration moves to return Russian compounds in Maryland and New York

By Karen DeYoung and Adam Entous

10-13 minutes

The Trump administration is moving toward handing back to Russia two diplomatic compounds, near New York City and on Maryland's Eastern Shore, that its officials were ejected from in late December as punishment for Moscow's interference in the 2016 presidential election.

President Barack Obama said Dec. 29 that the compounds were being "used by Russian personnel for intelligence-related purposes" and gave Russia 24 hours to vacate them. Separately, Obama expelled from the United States what he said were 35 Russian "intelligence operatives."

[The luxurious, 45-acre compound in Maryland being shut down for alleged Russian espionage]

Early last month, the Trump administration told the Russians that it would consider turning the properties back over to them if Moscow would lift its freeze, imposed in 2014 in retaliation for U.S. sanctions related to Ukraine, on construction of a new U.S. consulate on a certain parcel of land in St. Petersburg.

Two days later, the U.S. position changed. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak at a meeting in Washington that the United States had dropped any linkage between the compounds and the consulate, according to several people with knowledge of the exchanges.

The Trump administration is looking to return the two Russian compounds that were closed by the Obama administration as part of sanctions for Moscow's election meddling. The two compounds are located in Maryland and New York. The Trump administration is looking to return the two Russian compounds that were closed by the Obama administration. (WUSA 9)

(WUSA 9)

[Inside the Oval Office with Trump and the Russians: Broad smiles and loose lips]

In Moscow on Wednesday, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov said Russia was "taking into account the difficult internal political situation for the current administration" but retained the option to reciprocate for what he called the "expropriation" of Russian property "if these steps are not somehow adjusted by the U.S. side," the news outlet Sputnik reported.

Senior Tillerson adviser R.C. Hammond said that "the U.S. and Russia have reached no agreements." He said the next senior-level meeting between the two governments, below the secretary of state level, will be in June in St. Petersburg.

Before making a final decision on allowing the Russians to reoccupy the compounds, the administration is examining possible restrictions on Russian activities there, including removing the diplomatic immunity the properties previously enjoyed. Without immunity, the facilities would be treated as any other buildings in the United States and would not be barred to entry by U.S. law enforcement, according to people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic matters.

Any concessions to Moscow could prove controversial while administration and former Trump campaign officials are under congressional and special counsel investigation for alleged ties to Russia.

[Comey may testify before Senate as early as next week on Trump interactions]

Changes in the administration's official posture toward the compounds come as Russian media recently suggested that Kislyak, about to leave Washington after serving as ambassador since 2008, may be proposed by the Kremlin to head a new position as U.N. undersecretary general for counterterrorism.

Kislyak, who met and spoke during the campaign and transition with President Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn;

Trump's White House adviser and son-in-law, Jared Kushner; Attorney General Jeff Sessions; and others, is known to be interested in the post. His replacement as ambassador, Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Antonov, was confirmed last month by the Russian Duma, or parliament. Officials in Moscow said Russian President Vladimir Putin will officially inform Trump of the new ambassador when the two meet in July, at the Group of 20 summit in Hamburg. It will be Trump's first meeting with Putin as president.

The U.N. General Assembly must first approve establishment of the counterterrorism slot, part of a larger U.N. reorganization and the first new post at that level for decades.

Russia will almost certainly claim the slot as the only member of the five permanent members of the Security Council without one of its nationals in a senior U.N. position. Jeffrey Feltman, a former senior U.S. diplomat, is undersecretary-general for political affairs; comparable jobs for peacekeeping, humanitarian affairs and economic affairs are held, respectively, by nationals from France, Britain and China.

Secretary General António Guterres will decide who fills the new job, although both Russia and the United States are expected to make their views known.

Kislyak has repeatedly rejected descriptions of him in the U.S. media as a spy. Asked whether U.S. intelligence considered him to be one, James R. Clapper Jr., the former director of national intelligence, told CNN on Sunday that "given the fact that he oversees a very aggressive intelligence operation in this country — the Russians have more intelligence operatives than any other nation that is represented in this country, still even after we got rid of 35 of them — and so to suggest that he is somehow separate or oblivious to that is a bit much."

[Russian ambassador told Moscow that Kushner wanted secret communications channel with Kremlin]

The Russian compounds — a 14-acre estate on Long Island and several buildings on secluded acreage along the Corsica River on Maryland's Eastern Shore — have been in Russian possession since the days of the Soviet Union. According to a Maryland deed in 1995, the former USSR transferred ownership of the Maryland property to the Russian Federation in 1995 for a payment of one dollar.

Russia said it used the facilities, both of which had diplomatic immunity, for rest and recreation for embassy and U.N. employees and to hold official events. But U.S. officials dating to the Reagan administration, based on aerial and other surveillance, had long believed they were also being used for intelligence purposes.

Last year, when Russian security services began harassing U.S. officials in Moscow — including slashed tires, home break-ins, and, at one point, tackling and throwing to the ground a U.S. embassy official entering through the front of the embassy — the Obama administration threatened to close the compounds, former Obama officials said.

In meetings to protest the treatment, the Obama administration said that it would do so unless the harassment stopped, and Moscow dropped its freeze on construction of a new consulate to replace the one in St. Petersburg, considered largely unusable because of Russian spying equipment installed there. Russia had earlier blocked U.S. use of a parcel of land and construction guarantees in the city when sanctions were imposed after its military intervention in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea.

The threat of closing the compounds was not pursued. In late December, after U.S. intelligence said there had been election meddling, and in response to the ongoing harassment in Moscow, Obama ordered the compounds closed and diplomats expelled. "We had no intention of ever giving them back," a former senior Obama official said of the compounds.

Trump, then at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, appeared to disparage the Obama administration sanctions, telling

reporters, "I think we ought to get on with our lives."

Surprisingly, Russia did not respond. It later emerged that Flynn, in a phone conversation with Kislyak, had advised against retaliation and indicated that U.S. policy would change under the Trump administration.

[Putin says he won't deport U.S. diplomats]

The Kremlin made clear that the compound issue was at the top of its bilateral agenda. Russia repeatedly denounced what it called the "seizure" of the properties as an illegal violation of diplomatic treaties.

On May 8, the U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs, Thomas Shannon, traveled to New York to meet with his Russian counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei

Ryabkov on what the State Department described as "a range of bilateral issues" and what Russia called "irritants" and "grievances."

Ryabkov brought up the compounds, while Shannon raised St. Petersburg and harassment, suggesting that they deal with the operation of their diplomats and facilities in each others' countries separate from policy issues such as Syria and proposing that they clear the decks with a compromise.

Russia refused, saying that the compound issue was a hostile act that deserved no reciprocal action to resolve and had to be dealt with before other diplomatic problems could be addressed. In an interview with Tass, Ryabkov said Moscow was alarmed that Washington "carries on working out certain issues in its traditional manner, particularly concerning Russia's

diplomatic property in the states of Maryland and New York."

Two days later in Washington, Tillerson told Lavrov that the United States would no longer link the compounds to the issue of St. Petersburg.

Immediately after their May 10 meeting at the State Department, Tillerson escorted Lavrov and Kislyak to the Oval Office. There, they held a private meeting with Trump. The night before, the president had fired FBI Director James B. Comey, who was then heading an FBI investigation of the Russia ties.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

Comey, Trump told the Russians, was a "real nut job," and his removal had "taken off" the Russia-

related pressure the president was under, the New York Times reported. Later in May, the Justice Department appointed former FBI director Robert S. Mueller III as special counsel to oversee the federal investigation.

In a news conference at the Russian Embassy after his meetings with Tillerson and Trump, Lavrov said of the compound closures, "Everyone, in particular the Trump administration, is aware that those actions were illegal."

"The dialogue between Russia and the U.S. is now free from the ideology that characterized it under the Barack Obama administration," he said.

Julie Tate contributed to this report.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Jonathan Cheng

7-8 minutes

Updated May 31, 2017 6:13 p.m. ET

SEOUL—The South Korean defense minister deliberately withheld from a report to President Moon Jae-in the fact that additional components of a controversial U.S. missile-defense system had arrived in the country, the president's office said Wednesday.

The conclusion is likely to add more fuel to a monthslong controversy over the U.S. missile system, called Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or Thaad, at a time when Washington and Seoul are looking for ways to respond to North Korea's growing nuclear-missile threat. It suggests that a split in national opinion in South Korea about the system reaches the top levels of government.

The U.S. on Tuesday claimed success in shooting down a mock intercontinental ballistic missile that is similar to the capabilities that North Korea is believed to be working toward.

The apparent effort to exclude South Korea's president from the planning underscores the uncertainties still swirling around the nascent Moon administration ahead of a planned summit meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump scheduled for late June in Washington. Mr. Moon still doesn't have a cabinet in place, and is relying on holdovers from his

South Korean President Kept in the Dark About Missile-Shield Parts, Office Says

predecessor's conservative government, including the defense minister.

Yoon Young-chan, a spokesman for the presidential Blue House in Seoul, said Wednesday at a news briefing that an investigation had confirmed that the Ministry of National Defense had "intentionally dropped mention" of the additional Thaad components in a report to the president. Mr. Moon said he was "shocked" by the discovery, Mr. Yoon said.

An earlier draft of the report went into detail about the number of total Thaad launchers, but the final version that was sent to Mr. Moon omitted that detail in favor of a vague reference to the Thaad system, Mr. Yoon said the investigation found.

Defense officials in Washington dismissed the idea that the U.S. secretly colluded with the South Korean military to accelerate plans for the missile-defense system and suggested that the problem appeared to be one between the South Korean military and the president.

"If there's a breakdown in communication it's one internal to the Korean government," said one defense official. "We're not sneaking stuff in there."

Mr. Moon, the country's first left-leaning president in nearly a decade, took power three weeks ago in a snap election after campaigning in part to halt the missile battery's deployment.

As a candidate, Mr. Moon criticized the decision-making process by his predecessor, the conservative president Park Geun-hye, to deploy Thaad, which he says was conducted in a nontransparent fashion. He said that as president he would review that process.

China strongly opposes the deployment of the missile-defense system in South Korea, calling it a threat to its national security, and is believed to have responded with cyberattacks and economic sanctions against South Korean companies. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its concern on Wednesday, saying the system "will not be conducive to denuclearization and regional peace and stability."

The U.S. says Thaad is purely defensive, and a critical bulwark against North Korean threats. Pyongyang has conducted three missile tests since Mr. Moon was elected, most recently on Monday.

The hitherto-undisclosed arrival of the additional Thaad components is likely to strengthen widely held perceptions among the South Korean public that the U.S. and South Korean militaries are rushing to deploy Thaad before it can be halted.

Polls show that most South Koreans support tougher measures on North Korea, though a vocal protest against the Thaad deployment has garnered attention. Meanwhile, statements from Mr. Trump and the Chinese government have raised concerns about the potential costs of proceeding with the deployment.

In March, after the country's National Assembly voted to impeach Ms. Park, the U.S. military brought the first Thaad components into South Korea in an overnight operation.

The U.S. military moved those components onto a golf course in southern South Korea during another overnight operation, and declared the system operational one week before the May 9 presidential election.

A Thaad battery typically contains six launchers, but the original deployment in South Korea only included two. It is unclear when the four additional launchers arrived in South Korea.

A spokesman for South Korea's Ministry of National Defense confirmed that the four launchers had arrived, but declined to comment on the timing or say whether they were at the golf course. He didn't address the Blue House accusation that the Defense Ministry purposefully withheld information on the launchers.

A spokesman for the U.S. military in South Korea referred inquiries to the South Korean Defense Ministry. Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said Tuesday that the Thaad deployment process had been "very transparent."

During the news briefing on Wednesday, Mr. Yoon laid out the timeline in detail, saying that Chung Eui-yong, Mr. Moon's newly appointed national security chief, received a briefing on Friday from the Defense Ministry.

Mr. Chung eventually confronted the defense minister, Han Min-woo, over lunch on Sunday about the four additional launchers. "Is that so," Mr. Han, a holdover from Ms. Park's conservative government, asked Mr. Chung, according to Mr. Yoon.

After Mr. Chung briefed him on Monday, Mr. Moon called the defense minister on Tuesday and confirmed the arrival of the four additional launchers.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Margaret Coker

7-9 minutes

Updated May 31, 2017 6:23 p.m. ET

ISTANBUL—Turkey is expanding efforts abroad to capture opponents by canceling their passports to force foreign governments to send them back, Turkish officials said, describing a strategy that nearly netted an NBA player this month.

The efforts accelerated this spring in what one of the officials said is part of a counterterrorism campaign focused on Turkish followers of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, a critic of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan whose network Turkey classifies as a terrorist group.

Oklahoma City Thunder center Enes Kanter told The Wall Street Journal he narrowly escaped a government attempt to force him back to Turkey after his passport was abruptly invalidated during a multinational charity tour that included stops at schools affiliated with Mr. Gulen's movement.

The NBA player, a 25-year-old legal U.S. resident, has been outspoken in his support for Mr. Gulen and criticism of Mr. Erdogan. Mr. Kanter was allowed to return following the intervention of U.S. and NBA officials.

"It's crazy," Mr. Kanter said. "The government is going after anyone who speaks up for democracy and against [Mr. Erdogan]."

Turkey seeks Mr. Kanter's arrest on charges of glorifying terror related to his links to Mr. Gulen, one of the Turkish officials said on Friday. The official described Mr. Kanter as a dangerous individual—and said governments have an obligation to hold or deport people who don't have valid travel documents.

Turkish officials accuse Mr. Gulen of masterminding a failed July coup attempt and consider his religious

Go Myung-hyun, an analyst at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul, said he doesn't expect Mr. Moon to renege on Thaad deployment altogether, but saw the new president's strong reaction as a tactical move to signal to Mr. Trump that the new South Korean administration will seek a "more equal relationship between South Korea and the U.S."

Mr. Trump, who said last year that U.S. allies such as South Korea

should pay more for the U.S. military's presence abroad, roiled the South Korean election campaign earlier this year by saying that Seoul should pay for the \$1 billion system, words that national security adviser Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster later appeared to walk back.

"If Trump brings up the issue of burden sharing in the upcoming summit, I think Moon is going to use the ongoing controversy to argue

that the entire deployment was not done properly," Mr. Go said.

—Dion Nissenbaum contributed to this article.

Write to Jonathan Cheng at jonathan.cheng@wsj.com

Turkey Tried to Force Return of NBA's Enes Kanter in Global Arrest Strategy

network a grave national-security threat. Mr. Gulen and his supporters dismiss the accusations as politically motivated and he has denied any role in the coup, saying he rejects violence.

The Gulenist movement runs more than 700 schools around the world as well as businesses worth billions of dollars, Turkish officials say.

Mr. Gulen says he has no oversight of these enterprises, which are run by private individuals or foundations and licensed by local authorities.

Turkey has arrested roughly 50,000 people and purged approximately 140,000 others from the civil service since the coup attempt, accusing most of links to Mr. Gulen.

Mr. Erdogan on Tuesday warned international allies that Turkey wouldn't release their wanted suspects or citizens from Turkish jails unless those countries sent so-called Gulenists back to Turkey.

"The fight against terror is not local, it's rather international. If we are struggling against terror all together, then you should extradite these people to us," he said.

Turkey has formally requested Mr. Gulen's extradition from the U.S., where he is a legal resident, but U.S. officials say purported evidence compiled by Ankara doesn't meet American legal standards.

The Turkish push to force deportations is driven by frustration in Ankara that foreign judicial procedures are too cumbersome, one Turkish official said.

Turkish officials said there are hundreds of alleged Gulenists abroad whom they want repatriated to face charges.

It is unclear how many of these people are in jeopardy of losing their passports. Turkish officials didn't respond to requests to explain what criteria are used to invalidate identity documents.

At least 16 Turkish teachers and businessmen were deported in May from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Myanmar, despite their longtime residency in those countries, lawyers representing them said.

The men were detained for having invalid documents; some were accused of terrorist ties by their host nations, according to lawyers and family members. All 16 have been charged with terrorism in Turkey, according to Turkey's state news agency.

Lawyers representing the 16 say they are innocent and the charges are politically motivated.

One of the men, Muhammet Furkan Sokmen, a 30-year-old administrator at a Gulenist school in Myanmar, said Myanmar authorities deported him after Turkey informed them they had canceled his passport.

Speaking from the Bangkok airport last week, he said he sought asylum in Thailand, but Thai officials refused.

"They are taking me. No one can help me now," Mr. Sokmen said shortly before being forced onto a plane to Istanbul.

Mr. Sokmen was arrested upon arrival Saturday at Istanbul's international airport, according to the Turkish state news agency.

Myanmar authorities told local and Turkish state media that they deported Mr. Sokmen because he had no valid papers. Thai and Myanmar authorities, and officials at the Turkish Embassy in Myanmar, didn't respond to requests for comment.

The U.N. Human Rights Office in Southeast Asia said it had serious concerns regarding the safety in Turkey of the men who had been deported from the region.

Lawyers said they are helping fight deportation for several Turkish nationals linked to Gulenist schools

in Pakistan and the Republic of Georgia.

Mr. Kanter is one of several high-profile Turkish sports stars closely tied to the Gulen movement. He broke off ties with his family last year in an attempt to keep them safe from government retribution and has taken security precautions for himself and his management team, he said.

After the Thunder were eliminated from the NBA playoffs in April, he and his manager set off on a global tour. Mr. Kanter traveled on his Turkish passport to seven Asian countries, including South Korea and Japan, without any problem.

He decided to skip a planned Malaysia stop, deeming it too dangerous given recent deportations.

After arriving in Jakarta, Indonesia, Mr. Kanter said he traveled with private security guards as well as a police escort on May 19 to publicity events. He coached a children's basketball camp at a private school run by a Gulenist foundation.

Mr. Kanter had planned on sleeping at the school, but opted at the last minute to stay at a hotel in a bed that could accommodate his 6'11" frame.

Around 2 a.m., his manager got a call from a school administrator warning them that Indonesian authorities were there looking for Mr. Kanter.

Indonesia's immigration spokesman Agung Sampurno said there was no written request from Turkey or Indonesian institutions to cancel Mr. Kanter's passport or deport him. Jakarta police said they had no information on the matter.

Mr. Kanter and his manager, also a Turkish citizen, bought tickets on a 5:30 a.m. flight to Singapore. Indonesian authorities didn't question them at the airport. Approximately 12 hours later, upon arrival in Bucharest, where their

next charity event was scheduled, authorities said his passport had been canceled. It took several hours to get Romanian and U.S. clearance to fly back to America.

Five days later, after Mr. Kanter was back in the U.S., Turkish authorities confirmed there was a criminal probe against him and they had canceled his passport.

—Anita Rachman in Jakarta, Indonesia, contributed to this article.

Write to Margaret Coker at margaret.coker@wsj.com

Corrections & Amplifications
The Oklahoma City Thunder were eliminated from the National Basketball Association playoffs in April. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated the team was eliminated in May. (5/31/17)

**The
New York
Times**

Trump Considers Rolling Back Obama's Opening With Cuba

Julie Hirschfeld
Davis

6-7 minutes

WASHINGTON — President Trump is considering reversing major pieces of the Obama administration's opening with Cuba and reinstating limits on travel and commerce, citing human rights abuses by the Castro government as justification for a more punitive approach.

Mr. Trump wants to announce the changes in Miami as early as June and deliver on a campaign promise that remains a cherished demand for the politically conservative Cuban-American exile community, according to aides who spoke on the condition of anonymity. But he has not made a final decision on the steps he will take because of internal disagreements within his administration over how far to go in unwinding one of President Barack Obama's most significant foreign policy achievements.

Clamping down on engagement with Cuba would be a high-profile way for Mr. Trump to showcase a stark break with his predecessor and to fulfill a pledge, delivered during a speech in Miami in September, to a crucial constituency that disproportionately supported him. It would also enable the president to reward the loyalty of Cuban-American lawmakers who have been agitating for a harder line on Cuba, including Senator Marco Rubio and Representative Mario Diaz-Balart, both Republicans of Florida.

But as the White House has sought to formulate a series of steps for Mr. Trump to announce, a split has emerged over rolling back a policy that many senior officials privately agree has been an improvement on the Cold War dynamic that shaped relations with Cuba in the past. In addition to the revival of diplomatic relations for the first time in a half-century and liberalized rules for trade, travel and commerce, the new approach has paved the way for cooperation in intelligence-sharing, drug interdiction, scientific research and a host of other areas.

"A lot of the bureaucracy has been resisting a complete rollback" of Mr. Obama's policy, said Christopher Sabatini, a Latin America specialist and executive director of Global Americans, a research organization. "Trump is the 'Art of the Deal' guy, and there's no deal to be had here if they reverse the entire policy."

The dilemma is a familiar one for the president, who built his campaign and political persona around bold, contrarian policy pronouncements like building a wall on the southern border, instituting a Muslim ban and canceling the Paris climate accord, only to see his hopes for quick and simple action scuttled by thorny questions of law and policy, and resistance from the business community.

"I am confident the president will keep his commitment on Cuba policy by making changes that are targeted and strategic and which advance the Cuban people's aspirations for economic and political liberty," said Mr. Rubio, who has met with and talked to Mr. Trump and his top aides several times on the matter.

As the White House labored in March to corral Republican votes for an unpopular health care overhaul measure, Mr. Diaz-Balart asked for assurances from Mr. Trump that he would hold to the hard line on Cuba he laid out in his campaign. The Florida Republican supported the measure and has played an influential role in shaping the new Cuba policy.

"It is my duty to advocate for the issues that are important to my constituents, and I will not apologize for using every available avenue to effectively resolve them," Mr. Diaz-Balart said in a statement.

Among the measures the Trump administration is considering are proposals pressed by Mr. Rubio and Mr. Diaz-Balart to block transactions between American companies and firms that have ties to the Cuban military. Such a restriction could have far-reaching consequences for existing deals, such as the one struck by Starwood Hotels and Resorts last year to manage hotels in Cuba — one of which is owned by the military conglomerate

Gaviota — and effectively freeze future ones, since the military in Cuba has a hand in virtually every element of the economy.

"This is a return to the old playbook of creating ambiguity and uncertainty so that nobody knows what is permissible and what isn't, and it would add another level of legal exposure to doing business in Cuba," said Robert L. Muse, a Washington lawyer who specializes in American law regarding Cuba. "It would add one more obstacle to the obstacle course, which is already pretty complex."

Mr. Trump, according to people close to the discussions, is also considering tightening restrictions on Americans traveling to Cuba that were eased last year on the eve of Mr. Obama's historic trip to Havana. The new policy allows Americans who are making educational or cultural trips to Cuba to initiate their own travel there without special permission from the United States government and without a licensed tour company.

Reversing it, or intensifying enforcement to require travelers to show evidence that their trips are legal, would probably slow the recent influx of American tourism to Cuba to a trickle, leaving airlines that have started direct flights there with fewer customers to serve.

And the president is weighing an increase in funding for the United States Agency for International Development for programs that promote democracy in Cuba, initiatives that the Castro government has long condemned as covert efforts to overthrow it.

The changes are far more limited than those sought by Cuba hard-liners, who have pressed Mr. Trump to reimpose all the sanctions lifted by the Obama administration and cut off diplomatic relations unless Cuba, a military dictatorship, quickly schedules democratic elections, institutes an independent judiciary and shows progress on settling American financial claims and returning American fugitives to the United States.

Forged in secret by Mr. Obama's top aides along with senior officials in the government of President Raúl

Castro of Cuba during more than a year of clandestine talks, the official thaw between the United States and Cuba began with a surprise announcement in December 2014 and was then followed by a series of diplomatic and regulatory changes designed to be difficult to unravel.

At a high-level meeting on the policy changes led by the National Security Council in May, officials from a wide array of agencies said they supported continuing the aspects of the policy that pertained to their departments, people familiar with the discussion said, as Mr. Trump's legislative affairs operation, which tracks the president's private commitments to lawmakers, made the case for changes.

Without a consensus, an announcement that had initially been anticipated on May 20, Cuban Independence Day, never materialized. A White House official said on Wednesday that Mr. Trump has yet to receive any recommendations for how to move forward, and while he would like to announce his new policy in June, there is no guarantee that he will do so, and no milestone date driving the process.

In seeking to justify his changes on human rights grounds, Mr. Trump would be taking an approach far different from the one he has applied to other parts of the world, where he and his advisers have viewed human rights considerations as an impediment to trade and partnerships that create jobs in the United States.

"Given their complete lack of concern for human rights around the world, it would be a tragic irony if the Trump administration uses that to justify policies that harm the Cuban people and restrict the freedom of Americans to travel and do business where they please," said Benjamin Rhodes, a former deputy national security adviser to Mr. Obama who negotiated the 2014 announcement. "It's clear that the Cuban and American people want to move forward, and nothing can change that reality."

by The Editors
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4-6 minutes

Pay up or hush up.

Photographer: Mandel
Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

If Donald Trump and Barack Obama agree on something, does that mean it's true? In the case of Europe's woeful support of its collective defense, yes: Member states need to contribute their "fair share" toward the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a phrase both men used in speeches in European capitals.

The question is what "fair share" means. Instead of measuring how much member nations spend on their defense, NATO should pay more attention to how they spend it.

The current definition -- members are expected to spend at least 2 percent of gross domestic product on defense -- is both misleading and unfair. Currently, only four European members meet the alliance's target and things are going the wrong direction. Across Europe, including non-NATO

members, military spending as a percentage of GDP has dropped by almost 9 percent in the last five years.

Free Riders or Vital Partners?

Defense spending by NATO members as percentage of GDP in 2015

Source: NATO

But some kinds of military spending are better than others. Money for major training exercises, or transport planes and helicopters for airlift operations, is far more valuable than lots of spending on ill-equipped troops in glorified jobs programs.

Spending on national defense is always going to reflect national priorities. That said, better coordination among member nations can bolster both their security and the alliance's. A wealthy nation may want some shiny new fighter jets, but the collective defense may be better served by more prosaic equipment such as refueling tankers. To their credit, not only have the alliance's newer members such as the Baltic States been paying up, they've been helpful in buying what NATO most needs.

Arriving at a consensus as to what constitutes useful spending among 28 separate militaries would be contentious and difficult, to put it mildly. It would still be a useful exercise.

What kind of criteria might NATO consider? Broadly defined, it should be measuring the ability to react quickly to a military crisis: the speed with which combat troops and their heavy equipment can be deployed; the number of tactical aircraft and major warships (aircraft carriers, cruisers, nuclear submarines and the like); the experience of pilots (as measured by flight hours); the age of its technology for reconnaissance, surveillance and other such tasks; and the percentage of defense spending on cybersecurity, and research and development. And so on.

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Member nations should also get credit for contributing to alliance missions, whether in Afghanistan or with troops in the easternmost nations and waters bordering an increasingly restive Russia. The alliance could also give

weight to spending per capita, a metric under which Norway towers over all members other than the United States. Finally, it might consider the percentage that each nation contributes to the continent's overall military spending, as illustrated here:

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies

The Europeans aren't "free riders" (another concept both Trump and Obama have invoked). At the same time, they can certainly do more to contribute to the continent's collective security. Coming up with more concrete and constructive ways to measure those contributions would be a great benefit to both NATO and its member nations.

--Editors: Tobin Harshaw, Michael Newman

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ETATS-UNIS



Del Quentin Wilber

3-4 minutes

Updated May 31, 2017 3:14 p.m.
ET

Former FBI Director James Comey is expected to testify as early as next week before a Senate committee that President Donald Trump asked him to back off the investigation of former national security adviser Mike Flynn, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee would be Mr. Comey's first time speaking in public following his unexpected firing on May 9 by President Trump.

Mr. Comey wrote in a memo after a February encounter with Mr. Trump in the Oval Office that the president said to him, "I hope you can let this

Comey to Testify That Trump Asked Him to Back Off Flynn Investigation

go," referring to the FBI's investigation of Mr. Flynn, according to people who have seen the memo. Mr. Trump has denied asking Mr. Comey to drop the investigation of Mr. Flynn.

The Oval Office conversation took place shortly after Mr. Flynn resigned under pressure for having misled Vice President Mike Pence about the nature of his phone conversations with a Russian diplomat.

The former national security adviser is also being investigated by federal authorities for potential violations of a law regarding the disclosure of work for a foreign power.

In early March, Mr. Flynn filed a retroactive disclosure form with the Justice Department detailing how his firm received \$530,000 in 2016 from a Turkish businessman through a Dutch company called Inovo BV.

The Senate Intelligence Committee, along with several other congressional panels, is investigating possible collusion by members of the Trump campaign with Russia in its meddling in the 2016 elections.

Mr. Comey was spearheading the Federal Bureau of Investigation's probe into Moscow's interference when he was fired by Mr. Trump. Mr. Trump has said there was no collusion with Russia and called the investigation a witch hunt. Russia has denied the allegations.

Following the firing, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointed a special counsel, former FBI Director Robert Mueller, to lead the federal inquiry.

Mr. Comey has spoken to members of Mr. Mueller's team to ensure his testimony won't hurt the special counsel's investigation, according to the person familiar with the matter.

It isn't clear if the White House will seek to intervene and block Mr. Comey's testimony.

The testimony could come as early as June 8, according to people close to Mr. Comey.

Rebecca Watkins, a spokeswoman for Sen. Richard Burr (R., N.C.), the chairman of the intelligence committee, said in a statement that the committee "welcomes the testimony of former Director Comey, but does not have an announcement to make at this time."

Rachel Cohen, a spokeswoman for Sen. Mark Warner, the committee's top Democrat, declined to comment.

Write to Del Quentin Wilber at del.wilber@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 1, 2017, print edition as 'Comey to Testify on President's Alleged Request.'

House Intelligence Panel Issues Seven Subpoenas as Russia Probe Ramps Up (UNE)

Byron Tau and Shane Harris

7-9 minutes

Updated May 31, 2017 8:38 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The House Intelligence Committee issued seven subpoenas on Wednesday, in a sign that its investigation into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 election is advancing in scope and intensity, according to people familiar with the matter.

The Republican-led committee issued four subpoenas related to the Russia investigation, targeting President Donald Trump's former national security adviser Mike Flynn, Mr. Trump's personal attorney, Michael Cohen, and their businesses. The committee is also investigating possible ties between Trump associates and Russia.

The other three subpoenas were issued to the National Security Agency, the FBI and the Central Intelligence Agency for information about a procedure known as "unmasking." The subpoenas are related to questions about how and why the names of the president's associates were unredacted and distributed within classified reports by Obama administration officials during the transition between administrations.

Wednesday's requests were the first subpoenas issued by the House committee in the Russia probe so far and showcase the continuing divide within the committee over the direction of the probe. Democrats are seeking an aggressive investigation into Mr. Trump and his associates, and Republicans are pushing for a probe into the unmasking.

The Senate Intelligence Committee also is examining suspected Russian involvement in last year's campaign. That panel is expected to hear testimony as early as next week from former FBI Director James Comey, who was overseeing the agency's Russia investigation until Mr. Trump fired him on May 9. Russia has denied interfering with the election and Mr. Trump has denied that his associates colluded with the Russian government.

Mr. Comey is expected to testify Mr. Trump asked him to back off the investigation of Mr. Flynn, according to a person familiar with the matter. The panel's request for Mr. Comey's testimony was sparked by his abrupt dismissal by Mr. Trump and allegations that Mr. Trump may have been trying to interfere in the continuing investigation. The president has denied the allegations. Mr. Flynn was forced to resign in February after misleading senior White House officials about his conversations in December with the Russian ambassador.

The probe by the Federal Bureau of Investigation is now headed by former agency director Robert Mueller, who was tapped by the Justice Department to serve as a special counsel.

The House investigation suffered a setback when its Republican chairman Devin Nunes was forced to step aside in April after an ethics complaint was filed over his handling of classified materials. Mr. Nunes remains the chairman of the committee but recused himself from the Russia inquiry.

Mr. Nunes signed all seven subpoenas despite his recusal, according to people familiar with the matter. A GOP congressional aide said that the unmasking investigation was now considered separate from the Russia probe, allowing Mr. Nunes to act on his own authority even while recused.

Democrats on the committee criticized the move, saying they didn't consent to the unmasking subpoenas. "This action would have been taken without the minority's agreement. Any prior requests for information would have been undertaken without the minority's knowledge," said a senior Democratic committee aide.

Democrats are seeking an aggressive probe of Mr. Trump and his associates, including questions about whether they had any contact with Russian agents.

Republicans on the committee are pushing for an investigation of how the names of Trump campaign officials became exposed in classified intelligence reports based off intelligence community

intercepts, as well as questions about how classified information about Mr. Trump's associates was given to the media.

Mr. Nunes first raised the issue of unmasking in March based on information he received from the White House.

Typically, information about Americans intercepted in foreign surveillance is redacted, even in classified reports distributed within the government, unless a compelling need exists to reveal or "unmask" them. Unmasking requests aren't uncommon by top intelligence community officials but Republicans want to know whether any of the unmaskings of Trump campaign officials during the transition were politically motivated.

The most recent subpoenas to the intelligence agencies seek information on any requests made by former national security adviser Susan Rice, former CIA Director John Brennan and former United Nations Ambassador Samantha Power for names to be unmasked in classified material. The three didn't personally receive subpoenas, the people familiar with the matter said.

Mr. Brennan, Ms. Rice and Ms. Power didn't respond to requests for comment. Ms. Rice in April told CNN she never did anything "untoward" with intelligence collected on American citizens, including Trump aides working on the transition.

Ms. Power hasn't previously been reported as a potential witness in the probe so her inclusion in the subpoenas may mean Republicans are broadening their areas of investigation.

Unmasking is typically restricted to high-level officials to safeguard the privacy of Americans caught up in U.S. government spy operations directed at foreign targets. Typically, only top officials within the intelligence agencies and the administration have the ability to ask for unmasking, which is approved by the agency that controls the information.

Officials have acknowledged the names of some Trump aides were revealed in the classified

documents, and Republicans have questioned whether it might have been improper.

The four subpoenas related to the Russia investigation are aimed at Mr. Flynn and his business Flynn Intel Group LLC, as well as Mr. Cohen, a former Trump Organization attorney, and his law firm. "If subpoenaed, I will work with my lawyers to cooperate with the various investigations," Mr. Cohen said. An attorney for Mr. Flynn didn't respond to a request for comment.

Both have declined to voluntarily cooperate with the probe but Mr. Flynn is complying with a Senate subpoena for his business records.

The House panel also recently sent a letter to former White House press aide Boris Epshteyn asking him to voluntarily submit information to the committee. Mr. Epshteyn briefly served as special assistant to the president in the Trump administration before departing his post earlier this year. A lawyer for Mr. Epshteyn made the request public on Wednesday.

"Like many others, Mr. Epshteyn has received a broad, preliminary request for information from the House Intelligence Committee," an attorney for Mr. Epshteyn said Wednesday.

He added: "This is a voluntary request. Mr. Epshteyn has not been subpoenaed nor do we anticipate that he will be. We have reached out to the committee with several follow up questions and we are awaiting their response in order to better understand what information they are seeking and whether Mr. Epshteyn is able to reasonably provide it."

—Shelby Holliday, Carol E. Lee and Del Quentin Wilber contributed to this article.

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This Time, Trump Is Right About Trade (UNE)

Greg Ip

6-7 minutes

May 31, 2017 5:33 a.m. ET

President Donald Trump took his bellicose economic agenda abroad last week, blasting Germany for its

"very bad" trade surplus—or "evil" as one German newspaper translated it.

Though German Chancellor Angela Merkel did not seem to care for the messenger, she should nonetheless hear the message. While Mr. Trump

gets a lot wrong about trade, on this particular point he's right. Germany's current account surplus, which combines trade and investment income, is now the world's largest. Along with China's, it is a dangerous imbalance that leaves others, including the U.S. and the rest of Europe, worse off.

It's not just Mr. Trump who thinks so. "The criticism is right. Germany's trade surplus is excessive," says Marcel Fratzscher, president of DIW Berlin, a prominent German think tank. Mervyn King, former governor of the Bank of England, went further, arguing, "President Trump is right when he identifies a problem with current international trading and monetary relationships."

Mr. Trump does misstate the problem. It's not, as he frequently claims, that a trade deficit means one country is using protectionist policies to win at another's expense. Protectionism can change the patterns of a country's exports and imports, but not the overall balance.

Rather, deeper economic forces are at work. A trade surplus means a country consumes less than it produces and thus saves a lot. A deficit means the opposite. This can be benign: a country in the upswing of the business cycle, like the U.S., tends to have a deficit. A country in recession, or with an aging population, tends to have a surplus. However, the persistence and magnitude of Chinese and German surpluses and U.S. deficits

suggest actual policy decisions are at work.

This comes by interfering with currency markets. As Mr. King notes, a country with a weak economy and a trade deficit would expect its currency to fall to boost exports and restrain imports. That can't happen if exchange rates can't move, as is the case with China and Germany, though for different reasons.

China was the largest of a group of countries that from 2003 to 2013 spent more than \$5 trillion intervening in foreign exchange markets to hold down their currencies and bolster trade surpluses, according to a new book by Fred Bergsten and Joseph Gagnon of the Peterson Institute for International Economics. That drew production and jobs from deficit countries like the U.S., worsening the 2007-2009 recession and holding back the subsequent recovery. They estimate U.S. employment was depressed by more than one million jobs between 2009 and 2014 as a result.

China's behavior has changed in recent years. It has allowed its exchange rate to appreciate and since 2014 has intervened to support it, and the trade surplus has shrunk.

Messrs. Bergsten and Gagnon suggest a new approach to prevent China from reverting to its old ways: When a country buys dollars to hold down its currency for competitive advantage, the U.S. should respond

proportionately by purchasing that country's currency. They also recommend the U.S. go beyond current law, which requires the U.S. to discourage currency manipulation in new trade pacts, by prohibiting it outright. Mr. Trump may seek just that in a renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement. Since neither Mexico nor Canada manipulate their currencies, this would serve as a template for future pacts.

Germany is a tougher challenge. Since adopting the euro in 1999, it hasn't controlled its own currency. However, it did win competitive advantage over its neighbors in the currency union. Labor-market reforms restrained domestic wages. In 2007, a payroll tax cut, which made German labor more competitive, was financed with an increase in the value-added tax, which exempted exports.

In previous eras, those reforms would have pushed the deutsche mark higher, squeezing Germany's trade surplus. Inside the euro, though, the burden has fallen on Germany's neighbors, including France, to compete by grinding down domestic wages and prices through high unemployment and fiscal austerity. That has kept the entire region's economy weak, forcing the European Central Bank to hold down interest rates and thus the euro. That inflates the entire region's trade surplus with the world.

Mr. Fratzscher says the problem is not, as Mr. Trump claims, that

Germany exports too much: "You can't blame BMW for selling cars to American consumers." (Indeed, BMW AG, Daimler AG and Volkswagen AG all assemble cars in the U.S.) "The problem is Germany is importing too little."

In time that can be fixed if tight labor markets drive up German wages, bolstering domestic spending and imports. To hurry rebalancing, outsiders urge the German government to borrow and invest more, reducing domestic saving.

French President Emmanuel Macron is pressing for a "fiscal union" under which Germany in effect finances some of its neighbors' budgets, loosening the vise of austerity in the rest of Europe.

Neither is appealing to Ms. Merkel or austere Germans. Mr. King says the euro may have to break up into a strong currency area led by Germany and a weak currency area including France.

Until now, U.S. leaders have been too attached to the euro to point this out. By contrast Mr. Trump, unburdened by any commitment to the status quo, can engage in "ruthless truth-telling," as Mr. King puts it. After this past week, though, it's doubtful Mr. Macron or Ms. Merkel will be in any mood to listen.

Write to Greg Ip at greg.ip@wsj.com

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How Jared Kushner built a luxury skyscraper using loans meant for job-starved areas (UNE)

Boburg

11-14 minutes

JERSEY CITY — Jared Kushner and his real estate partners wanted to take advantage of a federal program in 2015 that would save them millions of dollars as they built an opulent, 50-story residential tower in this city's booming waterfront district, just across the Hudson River from Lower Manhattan.

There was just one problem: The program was designed to benefit projects in poor, job-starved areas.

So the project's consultants got creative, records show.

They worked with state officials in New Jersey to come up with a map that defined the area around 65 Bay Street as a swath of land that

By Shawn

stretched nearly four miles and included some of the city's poorest and most crime-ridden neighborhoods. At the same time, they excluded some wealthy neighborhoods only blocks away.

The tactic — critics liken it to the gerrymandering of legislative districts — made it appear that the luxury tower was in an area with extraordinarily high unemployment, allowing Kushner Companies and its partners to get \$50 million in low-cost financing through the EB-5 visa program.

The move was legal, and other developers have used similar strategies in recent years, often aided by state officials who welcome the infusion of cash. But it illustrates how Kushner, who ran his family's real estate company before he became a senior adviser to President Trump, and his partners exploited a loophole in a federal program that prominent members of

both parties say has been plagued by fraud and abuse.

On the south side of Jersey City, which has some of the most entrenched poverty in the New York City region, many people interviewed one day last week were surprised that their neighborhood's troubles were part of the reason that 65 Bay Street got cheap financing.

"That's very sad," said Pastor Shyrone Richardson of the World Outreach Christian Church in the struggling Bergen-Lafayette section of Jersey City. "Unfortunately, the people who are benefiting from this are not the people in this area."

Richardson's church is in a five-block area where nearly 1 in 5 were jobless and three fatal shootings occurred in 2015, according to an analysis of crime and census data.

His neighborhood seems a world away from the gleaming office

towers and trendy cafes that surround 65 Bay Street. The Jersey City waterfront saw a building boom after 9/11 that transformed the area into one of the hottest real estate markets in the New York metro region, drawing residents from Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Apartments in the Bay Street building, marketed as Trump Bay Street, rent for up to \$4,700 a month and offer sweeping views of Lower Manhattan. A nearby commuter train shuttles passengers to the World Trade Center within minutes. The area within a roughly three-block radius around the building had an unemployment rate of just 2.6 percent in 2015, according to census data.

The developers of Jersey City's 65 Bay St., the tower on the right, used an investor visa program to obtain \$50 million in low-cost financing. (Yana Paskova/For The Washington Post)

The developers linked 65 Bay St. to low-income areas, some nearly four miles away, allowing it to qualify as a high-unemployment zone. (Yana Paskova/For The Washington Post)

Under the EB-5 program, a wealthy foreigner can get a fast-track residence visa by investing at least \$500,000 in a project in a "targeted employment area." To qualify, the area must have an unemployment rate 1.5 times the national average. For developers, the terms of the investment are more favorable than a bank loan.

The Trump administration is considering whether to adopt changes that would prevent EB-5 gerrymandering. Kushner has said he will recuse himself from any discussions on the program.

Kushner Companies, meanwhile, is rushing to raise \$150 million in low-cost financing through EB-5 for a separate project in Jersey City: a pair of luxury towers in an area called Journal Square. Kushner's sister caused a stir this month when she mentioned her brother in a pitch for the project to investors in China.

Here's what you need to know about those visas. Here's what you need to know about investor visas. (Monica Akhtar/The Washington Post)

(Monica Akhtar/The Washington Post)

[In a Beijing ballroom, Kushner family pushes \$500,000 'investor visa' to wealthy Chinese]

For that project, too, the company is linking the development to blighted neighborhoods miles to the south while excluding adjoining neighborhoods that have lower unemployment rates, records show.

An executive at U.S. Immigration Fund-NJ, a firm helping Kushner Companies to raise EB-5 money for both projects, defended the practice. Mark Giresi, chief operating officer, called it a "common sense" approach that reflects the broader economic reality of each project's surroundings. He also said jobs created by the project could be filled by workers from the depressed areas only miles away.

"In large urban markets like Jersey City these types of real estate development projects create much-needed jobs, particularly in the construction industry across areas of the city that cover multiple census tracts," Giresi said in a statement. Census tracts are government-defined neighborhoods, sometimes as small as a few blocks in area.

Giresi said the Bay Street project created more than 1,280 construction and other jobs and that 1 Journal Square is projected to create 6,600. Under the EB-5 program, each \$500,000 investment must create at least 10 jobs.

The program's critics say that cobbling together multiple census tracts to push up the average unemployment rate too often benefits developers and areas that do not need the government help. They point to EB-5 projects in prosperous areas of Manhattan, downtown Washington and in Beverly Hills, Calif.

The government caps the number of EB-5 visas it issues each year, and most of the resulting investment goes to high-profile projects in prosperous areas.

"Many of these affluent-area projects would have been built and jobs created without the infusion of EB-5 capital," said Gary Friedland, a scholar in residence at New York University's Stern School of Business. "Consequently, deserving projects can't be built and the resulting jobs are lost because the projects are deprived of the essential capital to proceed."

A spokeswoman for Kushner Companies declined to comment, as did Jared Kushner's spokesman.

Jared Kushner has sold his interest in 1 Journal Square but maintains an ownership stake in 65 Bay Street. The KABR Group, a partner in the luxury tower on Bay Street, also declined to comment.

Kushner's prominence is drawing renewed attention to the use of the EB-5 process to raise financing, which has been the subject of years of debate in Congress and furious lobbying by the real estate industry. A writer for the policy magazine *City and State*, which published the maps for both projects last week, wrote in a commentary that the projects made "a mockery" of EB-5's intent.

In interviews along Martin Luther King Drive in Jersey City last week, there was a common reaction. "It's like we're being used," said Helen Gathers, a registered nurse who has lived in Jersey City for 38 years.

Down the block, Laville Penn, a 54-year-old who was released from prison in early 2016 after a drug-possession conviction, was looking for employment. He had been searching for steady work in construction for more than six months, he said, but had found only temporary day jobs.

Now, hoping to pick up some hours, he stopped by a lot where a friend was doing contract demolition work.

Penn said the high-rises built in Jersey City are typically union jobs. "It's difficult to get into the union if you don't have certification or experience," he said.

Travelers await trains on the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail line, which runs near the 65 Bay St. development. (Yana Paskova/For The Washington Post)

Laville Penn, left, who is seeking a job in construction, and Steven Price, a construction worker, talk about their Jersey City neighborhood. (Yana Paskova/For The Washington Post)

The EB-5 program was initiated in 1990 to help attract foreign investment to rural and poor urban areas that have trouble drawing conventional financing or investment.

But developers are free to string together an endless number of contiguous census tracts until they reach the unemployment threshold. In the years since the Great Recession, this has often meant finding the nearest poor area and drawing a line to it.

Documents obtained from New Jersey through a public records request show just how easy that was for Kushner Companies and KABR Group as they sought to build the Bay Street tower.

On May 6, 2015, Michael K. Evans, a consultant working on behalf of the project, sent an email to an official in the New Jersey Department of Labor asking that the Bay Street vicinity be deemed an area with high unemployment. Individual states are responsible for reviewing unemployment data and issuing letters certifying that projects qualify for the federal program.

Evans wrote that such an area could be created by combining 26 census tracts in Jersey City that stretch more than two miles to the northwest and three miles to the southwest.

"The client as always is in a great hurry so if you can e-mail me the letter as soon as it is finished it would be appreciated," Evans wrote. Evans did not respond to a request for comment.

There was a problem, though. Probably because the developers were using outdated census data, the tracts were not contiguous — and didn't include the project itself.

Three weeks later, the state wrote back that the project qualified under a different but similarly attenuated configuration that achieved the same goal. New Jersey's state website says it will help developers

"perform a special tabulation for the area" of their project using census data.

The state-approved map strung together 16 census tracts that went nearly four miles to the southwest, crossing the New Jersey Turnpike and heading south to the Bergen-Lafayette and Greenville areas. Together, those neighborhoods had an average unemployment rate that edged just higher than 9.3 percent, the qualifying rate at the time.

That likely saved Kushner and his partners millions of dollars.

Developers typically pay only 4 to 8 percent interest annually on money raised through EB-5, experts said. Conventional financing can carry interest rates of between 12 and 18 percent. On the \$50 million for Bay Street, the difference in interest charges amounts to millions of dollars annually over the life of the loan.

On Jan. 5, a little over two weeks before Trump was to take office, another consultant working on behalf of Kushner Companies got in touch with New Jersey state officials again. This time, it was about 1 Journal Square. The census tract where it is located had an unemployment rate of 2.9 percent in 2015, but the consultant suggested adding five neighborhoods to triple that unemployment rate.

The approval came four days later, records show. Kushner's sister went to China in May seeking the \$150 million in EB-5 financing.

5-Minute Fix newsletter

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The Trump administration will decide in the coming months whether to enact rules, proposed by the Obama administration, limiting the census tracts that can be considered for EB-5 eligibility to only those directly adjacent to the tract containing the development.

The proposal is being considered by Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly. Under the proposed rules, neither the 65 Bay Street tower nor the proposed 1 Journal Square project would be in a "targeted employment area."

At a station near 65 Bay St., passengers wait for trains on the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail line. (Yana Paskova/For The Washington Post)

A scene on a recent rainy day along Martin Luther King Drive in Jersey City. (Yana Paskova/For The Washington Post)

Andrew Ba Tran contributed to this report. The files and methodology

used in the data analysis for this story can be found here.

**The
New York
Times**

Biden to Create a Political Action Committee, a Possible Signal for 2020

Jonathan Martin

4-5 minutes

Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. delivering an address at Harvard University last week. Lisa Hornak/European Pressphoto Agency

WASHINGTON — Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. is planning to create a political action committee, the most concrete sign yet that he intends to remain active in the Democratic Party and is considering a presidential bid in 2020.

The “American Possibilities” PAC, which Mr. Biden intends to unveil on Thursday, will offer the former vice president a platform he can use to nurture relationships with donors, travel on behalf of the party and contribute to candidates in the two governor’s races in November and in next year’s midterm elections.

He has tapped a former aide in his

vice-presidential office and a veteran of President Barack Obama’s White House campaigns, Greg Schultz, to help lead it.

By creating a political organization, Mr. Biden, 74, is also sending an unmistakable message to the many other Democrats eyeing the White House that he is not planning to quietly recede into retirement.

“Biden has a lot of support out there, and this gives him a way to grow that support while also helping Democrats win and build the party,” said Stephanie Cutter, a veteran Democratic strategist who was not privy to the planning of the PAC.

The organization formalizes what has already been apparent from Mr. Biden’s schedule: He very much wants to keep open the prospect of seeking the presidency for a third time. He has already spoken at a dinner fund-raiser on behalf of the New Hampshire Democratic Party. Next month he will address Florida Democrats, and he has appeared at a handful of high-powered policy

gatherings stocked with the sort of donors he would turn to should he seek the White House.

In his public appearances, though, Mr. Biden has been careful to hedge when discussing his plans.

Asked at a recent hedge fund conference in Las Vegas about his 2020 plans, he said: “Could I? Yes. Would I? Probably not.”

Democrats who have spoken to Mr. Biden say that he is genuinely anguished about the direction of the country under President Trump and that he remains deeply frustrated that Hillary Clinton lost last year in part because the working-class white voters that he prides himself on connecting with abandoned their ancestral party.

At the gathering in Las Vegas, Mr. Biden was blunt in his assessment of Mrs. Clinton.

“I never thought she was a great candidate,” he said. “I thought I was a great candidate.” (He did note that

he thought “Hillary would have been a really good president.”)

Mr. Biden declined to seek the Democratic nomination in 2016 after an agonizing, monthslong deliberation in the aftermath of his eldest son’s death. But the former vice president, who ran for president in 1988 and 2008, has not forsaken his long-running ambition. He retains a small coterie of advisers, and they are said to be divided over whether Mr. Biden should run once more.

In a Medium post by Mr. Biden that is to publish on Thursday, he explains the name of the PAC.

“Thinking big is stamped into the DNA of the American soul,” he writes. “That’s why the negativity, the pettiness, the small-mindedness of our politics today drives me crazy.”

It is time, Mr. Biden adds, “for big dreams and American possibilities.”

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : Rule-Benders Require New Rules

The Editorial Board

5-6 minutes

Daniel Zender

President Trump blurted a telling remark in a presidential debate when he was accused of failing to pay income taxes: “That makes me smart.”

For Mr. Trump and his circle, what matters is not what’s right but what you can get away with. In his White House, if you’re avoiding the appearance of impropriety, you’re not pushing the boundaries hard enough.

Government ethics officials say dealing with this administration is an exhausting game of whack-a-mole: go after one potential violation, and two others crop up.

That’s because ethical regulations were not written with this sort of administration in mind. The current standoffs make clear that existing rules need to be clarified and strengthened, and new ones enacted, to ensure that the traditional standards we’ve expected of our public officials are met.

Past administrations got stuck in swampy territory. Leaving aside the sins of Richard Nixon, the Reagan administration’s dodgy dealings ranged from the truly alarming Iran-contra to questionable “loans” of designer gowns to Nancy Reagan. President Bill Clinton’s presidency, the low point of which was his impeachment after lying to a grand jury about his sex life, ended with the return of White House property amid public pressure.

These issues seem almost quaint by Trumpian standards. Before Mr. Trump stepped foot in the White House, his campaign was being investigated for possible collusion with the Russians to swing the election. Against that backdrop, it barely registers that his hotel blithely told Congress last week that it won’t track foreign government payments, in potential violation of the Constitution.

The administration poses serial challenges. Is it corruption for former lobbyists to devise policy on issues they had been paid to influence? For the president’s daughter to entertain the Chinese president on the day her company is granted Chinese patents? To use a State Department website to promote the president’s private club? For administration officials to hawk their own or one another’s

merchandise while on the job? For the president to host official meetings at his commercial properties? For his family to soak taxpayers for duplicative security and infrastructure to support their foreign business trips and New York lifestyle?

If there aren’t rules to cover these excesses, it’s because no one ever thought they would be needed. The federal ethics program was designed with the expectation that the president would throw his authority behind it, and strengthen it through example. The Office of Government Ethics, the government’s top ethics watchdog, has no investigative power. To make matters worse, Republicans in Congress have abdicated their duty to hold the White House accountable, weakening the most important constitutional check on presidential behavior, while helping Mr. Trump to define deviant government downward. They know that Americans divide along partisan lines when asked whether his profiteering presents a conflict of interest.

An important way to improve standards is to legally require presidential candidates to release their tax returns, and to provide a detailed accounting of businesses and assets, to inform voters of any

possible conflicts. For decades, until Mr. Trump, presidential candidates voluntarily released their tax information. While some financial information is required, it is very limited. Candidates should be required to name creditors and investors, so voters know to whom they’re indebted.

While the broad range of presidential power makes it hard to subject a president and vice president to conflict-of-interest rules that apply to others, failure to disclose financial interests should be considered an impeachable offense.

These rules should be enforced by an independent arbiter or agency with the power to order a president and top officials to comply. This could be accomplished by vesting the Office of Government Ethics with the power to subpoena records. The office’s director, who serves a five-year term, should no longer be subject to firing by the president, except for cause, which would be subject to judicial review.

The antinepotism law, passed in 1967, should be clarified to assert what was almost certainly its original intent: that a president can’t appoint a spouse or relative to the White House staff as well as to the cabinet.

Mr. Trump's excesses chip away at the integrity of the ethics program, and of the government itself. It's

time to strengthen the boundaries, and protect our democracy against

future presidents with so little respect for the office.

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : Samantha Power Unmasked

May 31, 2017
7:17 p.m. ET 208

COMMENTS

3-4 minutes

Barack Obama in 2014 made a large to-do about his reforms of U.S. surveillance programs to "protect the privacy" of Americans. We may soon learn how that squares with his Administration's unmasking of political opponents.

The House Intelligence Committee Wednesday issued seven subpoenas as part of its Russia probe. But the three most notable demanded that the National Security Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation turn over records related to the Obama Administration's "unmasking" of Trump transition members.

We know that U.S. intelligence agencies routinely eavesdropped on foreign officials who were talking about or meeting with Trump aides. Much less routine is for political appointees to override privacy protections to "unmask," or learn the identity of, U.S. citizens listed in a resulting intelligence report.

The new subpoenas seek details of all unmasking requests in 2016 by three people: former National Security Adviser Susan Rice, former CIA Director John Brennan, and former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power. Democrats claim Ms. Rice needed to unmask names to do her job, though this is questionable given that she wasn't running counterintelligence investigations. They have a better claim with Mr. Brennan.

But Ms. Power's job was diplomacy. Unmaskings are supposed to be rare, and if the mere ambassador to

the U.N. could demand them, what privacy protection was the Obama White House really offering U.S. citizens? The House subpoenas should provide fascinating details about how often Ms. Power and her mates requested unmaskings, on which Trump officials, and with what justification. The public deserves to know given that unmasked details have been leaked to the press in violation of the law and privacy.

Meantime, we learned from Circa News last week of a declassified document from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which excoriated the National Security Agency for an "institutional lack of candor." The court explained that Obama officials had often violated U.S. privacy protections while looking at foreign intelligence but did not disclose these incidents until the waning days of Mr. Obama's tenure.

"The Oct. 26, 2016 notice [by the Obama Administration] informed the Court that NSA analysts had been conducting [queries that identified U.S. citizens] in violation of [prohibitions] with much greater frequency than had been previously disclosed to the Court," read the unsealed document, dated April 26, 2017.

All of this matters because Congress will be asked by the end of this year to reauthorize programs such as Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which allows for spying on bad guys and is a vital terror-fighting tool. Even Mr. Obama endorsed 702's necessity. Congress needs to keep the program going, but it has every right to know first if Team Obama eavesdropped on political opponents.

Appeared in the June 1, 2017, print edition.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Rove: The President Is Home, but Not Home Free

Karl Rove

5-6 minutes

May 31, 2017 6:32 p.m. ET

After a comparatively good week abroad, President Trump has returned home to deteriorating poll numbers, even among the Republicans and independents vital to his standing. To turn the situation around, Mr. Trump must learn from his foreign trip's successes and get his promised White House shake-up right.

In the Feb. 13 Fox News poll, 48% of voters approved of the president's job performance, and 47% disapproved. By May 23 he had slipped to 40% approval, 53% disapproval. Voters who strongly approved dropped from 35% in February to 28% in May, while those who strongly disapproved rose from 41% to 46%. Mr. Trump's approval declined from 86% to 81% among Republicans during the same period and, alarmingly, from 52% to 34% among independents.

One thing Mr. Trump did right while overseas was to stay on message. During his trip the president had one powerful theme a day. He stuck to prepared remarks and generally did not create controversies or send tweets that would overshadow his agenda. Take his stop in Saudi Arabia. There the president called

on leaders of Muslim nations to "drive out" Islamist terrorists in their midst.

Mr. Trump's tone abroad was often "presidential," a quality that's difficult to describe but that you know when you see it. The first lady's dignified presence helped as well.

The trip had some problems. By publicly pummeling North Atlantic Treaty Organization partners for failing to spend the agreed 2% of gross domestic product on defense, Mr. Trump sent a signal of disunity—especially since he also failed to explicitly affirm NATO's Article 5 commitment, which holds that an attack on one ally is an attack on all. Adversaries might interpret this omission as weakness. A tough private lecture to NATO allies followed by a public explanation might have been better. Then when German Chancellor Angela Merkel took a swipe at Mr. Trump after he had departed, he responded with a petulant tweet.

Meanwhile, the talk of a West Wing shake-up continues. Communications director Mike Dubke has already resigned, and more departures are rumored. So is the establishment of a "war room" to deal with FBI and congressional investigations of Russian meddling in last year's election. Whether such an operation would be dominated

by lawyers or communicators is unclear. But that choice could determine if the controversy is compartmentalized and allowed to fade or inflamed to dominate all else.

Attorneys are typically cautious. They would express confidence in ultimate exoneration, while making certain White House aides didn't create problems with false or explosive statements. If communicators are in charge—especially the "killers" Mr. Trump admires—then scorched-earth tactics could prevail. It may make for great TV but would destroy the president's ability to rally public support for his agenda.

There's talk of setting up this operation outside the White House, but that could violate the Antideficiency Act and other laws that bar government workers from controlling or directing private groups in support of official duties.

There are also rumors that the daily White House press briefing may be canceled, leaving Mr. Trump's voice the only one heard from 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. That would be risky. Mr. Trump is volatile and prone to saying outrageous things. The press corps will keep reporting, whether it's given the administration's side of the story or not. The only thing canceling the daily briefing would accomplish is to

further antagonize Mr. Trump's relations with the media.

Holding more campaign-style rallies is a bad idea. Without a pending election, it would make Mr. Trump look like an office-seeker and not the Oval Office-holder. The public is tired of the perpetual campaign. It wants results.

Better for Team Trump to create events that show the president tackling problems people care about. One example: His policies have increased deportations of violent illegal immigrants. Why not showcase this by visiting Border Patrol agents and victims of the MS-13 gang?

And maybe the president should stop watching so many cable news shows. Obsessing over his coverage helps neither his state of mind nor West Wing morale. Remember what such habits did to Presidents Johnson and Nixon.

Nurturing a siege mentality, especially so early in a presidency, is a huge mistake. Mr. Trump may blame his poor standing on "fake news" and leaks by the "deep state," but he has been weakened principally by his self-destructive habits.

His overseas trip showed that dysfunction and ineptness need not characterize the whole of his presidency. But it still dominates far

too much. If that doesn't change, Mr. Trump's approval ratings will drop even lower and take down his governing agenda, too. Like so

many of his predecessors, he must now demonstrate he can grow in office.

Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of

"The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).



E. J. Dionne Jr. : The anti-Trump right is becoming a breed of its own

<http://www.facebook.com/ejdionne>

6-8 minutes

Most of the conservative Republicans opposed to President Trump are writers and policy specialists. Few are politicians — or, perhaps more precisely, few of the conservative politicians who see Trump as a danger to the nation are prepared to say so in public.

So does this mean that the writerly anti-Trump right is ineffectual? Not at all. But we may be approaching a time when the gutlessness of the GOP's leadership moves these restive conservatives to abandon their traditional loyalties altogether. It would not be the first time that a group of thinkers opened the way for political realignment.

History, it's said, sometimes rhymes. The anti-Trump distemper on the right has some of the rhythms and sounds of an earlier intellectual rebellion in the mid-1960s involving an uneasy group of liberals. They remained staunch supporters of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal but worried about what they saw as liberal excesses and the overreach of some Great Society policies.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Over time, this collection of magazine- and university-based rebels — among them Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, Daniel Patrick

Moynihan, Daniel Bell and Norman Podhoretz — came to be known as "neoconservatives." They were not party bosses, but they sure knew how to write essays.

The history of this movement, well-told in books by Peter Steinfels, Justin Vaisse and Gary Dorrien, is winding and complicated. Some of the neocons never abandoned liberalism or the Democrats. This category includes Bell and Moynihan, who eventually served with distinction as a Democratic senator from New York. Glazer's views have always been hard to pigeonhole. Others (notably Kristol and Podhoretz) moved steadily toward old-fashioned conservatism. By the beginning of this century, neoconservatism came to be associated more with a muscular foreign policy than with its initial focus on domestic issues.

Protesters broke out in chants against President Trump during his swearing-in ceremony on the U.S. Capitol. Protesters broke out in chants against President Trump during his swearing-in ceremony on the U.S. Capitol. (Claritza Jimenez/The Washington Post)

(Claritza Jimenez/The Washington Post)

What cannot be doubted is that the neocons helped prepare the ground for Ronald Reagan's political revolution. Will the anti-Trumpers (a fair number of them philosophical descendants of neoconservatism) have a comparable impact?

Much depends on whether their critique of Trump carries into a broader critique of contemporary

conservatism and the Republican Party. This is already starting to happen. My Post colleagues Michael Gerson and Jennifer Rubin are representative. Gerson recently wrote: "The conservative mind, in some very visible cases, has become diseased," while conservative institutions "with the blessings of a president ... have abandoned the normal constraints of reason and compassion."

Rubin charged Republicans with practicing "intellectual nihilism" and proposed that "center-right Americans ... look elsewhere for a political home."

David Frum of the Atlantic, another eloquent anti-Trump dissident, wrote about the "broken guardrails" of American democracy back in 2016 and argued that the conservative guardrail had "snapped because so much of the ideology itself had long since ceased to be relevant to the lives of so many Republican primary voters. Instead of a political program, conservatism had become an individual identity."

Conservative talk radio host Charlie Sykes criticized his side for indulging conspiracy theories going back to the Bill Clinton years and for "empowering the worst and most reckless voices on the right." He did not pull his punch: "This was not mere naivete. It was also a moral failure, one that now lies at the heart of the conservative movement."

Evan McMullin, who ran as an independent conservative against Trump in 2016, explicitly raised the

prospect of realignment in a tweet over the weekend: "In our Trumpian era, is there any longer a traditional right and left? Or are there only those who fight for liberty and those against it."

Another factor could push the anti-Trump conservatives out of their ideological home: attacks on them from one-time comrades. Writing recently on National Review's website, author and radio host Dennis Prager described the anti-Trump right as "a very refined group of people" who live in a "cultural milieu" in which "to support Trump is to render oneself contemptible at all elite dinner parties." Fighting words!

Like the intellectuals of a half-century ago who developed qualms about liberalism but insisted they were still in the liberal camp, conservatives standing against Trump today still see themselves as being true to their old loyalties.

But eventually, a large cadre of those liberal dissenters accepted that they were, in fact, neoconservatives. Something similar may be happening in the other direction as members of the anti-Trump right, battling against immoderation, irrationality and irresponsibility, become ever more distant from their old allies. Let's call them "neo-moderates." They, too, could emerge as a major force in our politics and make a difference in our history.

Read more from E.J. Dionne's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.



Warren: It's time to hold DeVos accountable

By Elizabeth Warren

Updated 5:19 PM ET, Wed May 31, 2017

Story highlights

- Elizabeth Warren: Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has proven she is not working in the interests of American students
- Warren is launching DeVos Watch, an online tracker to hold the Department of Education accountable for every decision it makes

Elizabeth Warren, a Democrat, is the senior senator from Massachusetts. She has just launched DeVos Watch, a new initiative to hold the Department of Education accountable. The views expressed are her own.

(CNN)Betsy DeVos recently completed her 100th day as Secretary of Education, and the resistance to her agenda has spread across this country like wildfire.

Last week, Secretary DeVos and President Trump's Department of Education released a budget that would upend the student aid program and make it much harder for students to afford college and

repay their student loans. At the same time, the head of the federal student aid office abruptly resigned amid reports of political meddling by DeVos.

Elizabeth Warren

With the educational and financial futures of millions of people hanging in the balance, here's a place to start scrutinizing Secretary DeVos.

Early in the Obama administration, Congress gave full ownership of the federal student loan portfolio to the Department of Education, removing middlemen from the program and cutting out the profits that private banks skimmed off the system. This was a brave move that required

standing up to some very powerful banks and private businesses that wanted to keep on skimming.

But now, years after the transition, the Department of Education often seems to ignore the original intent of this change and instead administers the trillion-dollar loan program for the financial benefit of nearly everyone except the students it is supposed to serve.

To the irritation of many in my own party, I regularly challenged the Democrat-led Department of Education to clean up its act on student loans. I pushed federal officials to tighten the spigot of federal funds that let fraudulent schools suck down billions in

taxpayer dollars. I also fought to persuade the Department to cancel the loans of defrauded students, including thousands in Massachusetts. We made real progress.

When the Department failed to hold giant student loan servicer Navient accountable after the company was fined nearly \$100 million by other federal law enforcement agencies for allegedly overcharging thousands of active-duty military personnel, I called them out and helped trigger an independent investigation. Those efforts ultimately helped push the secretary of education to begin refunding money to over 80,000 military borrowers and to commit to a complete overhaul of the federal contracts with student loan servicers. More progress.

These stories show that oversight matters -- and, with DeVos as secretary of education, oversight now matters even more. During her confirmation hearing, Secretary DeVos made it clear that she knew very little about running the federal student aid program. In her first weeks, she assembled a team that highlighted her plans to actively undermine efforts to protect students from being cheated.

Two of Secretary DeVos' first hires at the Department were Robert Eitel and Taylor Hansen, both with deep connections to institutions that make big money by abusing the student aid program and preying on students. Eitel was a top lawyer from a for-profit college that recently paid a more than \$30 million fine to the Consumer

Financial Protection Bureau for allegedly "deceiving students into taking out private student loans that cost more than advertised;" that for-profit college is currently under both state and federal investigation for breaking laws meant to protect students. Meanwhile, Hansen had been a top lobbyist for the entire for-profit college industry, which has paid out hundreds of millions in fines for defrauding students.

The revolving door that shuttles people between government jobs and the corporations they police is corrosive -- but it is rarely this brazen. One of Secretary DeVos' first actions on higher education was to delay a critical rule preventing fly-by-night colleges from loading students up with gigantic debts for worthless degrees, a move that directly benefited those same colleges that have paid Eitel and Hansen for years.

It also notably benefits these for-profit colleges that have been fined and have settled before, including Education Management Corp. (EDMC), which paid out \$95.5 million after allegations of illegal recruitment and consumer fraud in 2015. At the time of the settlement, EDMC was a member of the Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities, which Hansen represented.

Next, DeVos reversed a policy preventing student loan debt collectors from charging sky-high fees to students desperately trying to catch up on their student loans -- a policy whose loudest opponent was a major student loan debt

collector that was headed by Hansen's father.

As news stories exposed these relationships, I wrote to Secretary DeVos, citing Hansen's and Eitel's conflicts and the Department's recent actions, asking for information about their roles. The day my letter arrived, Hansen resigned.

Oversight still works, but we've only just started. Eitel is still at the Department -- now as senior counselor to the secretary. Secretary DeVos' destructive policies on debt collection remain in place. And she recently ripped up critical reform policies that protect student loan borrowers from loan servicing companies like Navient that have demonstrated over and over their lack of concern for students. Notably, industry stocks have risen pretty much every time she has touched federal student loan policy -- including her recent announcement letting servicing companies off the hook from requirements that they affirmatively reach out and try to help struggling borrowers.

Now that DeVos is responsible for appointing the next head of the trillion dollar federal student aid office, we should all be very concerned that she may pick another person who also prioritizes the student loan industry and predatory colleges above students.

That's why today I am announcing a new project to hold Secretary DeVos' Department of Education accountable. DeVos Watch will seek information about the

Department's actions and inactions around federal student loans and grants and highlight the findings. People can also participate directly by tracking the Department's actions, submitting oversight suggestions or filing whistleblower tips.

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Where there are reasonable answers to the issues raised, the public will benefit from hearing them. Where there are no reasonable answers, the public will see that as well. And where Secretary DeVos and her agency refuse to answer, additional tools are available to get to the truth, including Freedom of Information Act requests, public interest litigation by student advocates and state law enforcement officials and investigations by the Department's nonpartisan Inspector General. Oversight will be a joint effort.

Accountability is about making government work for everyone. Regardless of political party, I'm hopeful that other policymakers will join me in efforts to hold the Department of Education accountable for serving our students -- not the industries that make money off them. We all have an interest in a well-run, fiscally responsible, corruption-free student aid program that puts students first. That is Secretary DeVos' job -- and it is Congress' job to make sure she does it.



Henninger: Trump's Tweets vs. the World

Daniel Henninger
5-7 minutes

May 31, 2017 6:33 p.m. ET

Rumor has it—rumor being the lingua franca in Washington these days—that the dumping of White House communications director Mike Dubke is the first step in a White House reorganization. The goal is to elevate the administration's accomplishments, which the president believes, and rightly so, are being smothered in their cribs by a hostile media.

Against this relentless opposition, the president on Wednesday morning deployed a tweet about his agenda: "Hopefully Republican Senators, good people all, can quickly get together and pass a new (repeal & replace) HEALTHCARE bill. Add saved \$'s."

The Trump presidency is on three parallel tracks: the Trump tweet track, the Trump-Russia track and the Trump policy track. What lies beyond the horizon is either a successful presidency or a train wreck. As always, the choice of which track is in the hands of Engineer Trump.

Despite their often harsh content, I've come to discover an endearing political innocence in Mr. Trump's tweets. Underappreciated by the person behind @realDonaldTrump is how these new media formats have transformed the world of American politics in a way that is beyond the reach of any White House communications staff.

The cauldron of new media—which operates now on about a 10-minute news cycle—has boiled down Washington into pure political extract. The details of public policy, Mr. Trump's or anyone else's, disappear into the vapors. What's

left has become a kind of political crack, and the Trump tweets only feed the habit. Every "fake news" tweet does nothing but take the media's delirium higher.

A case study in the new anti-content politics was on display last week during Speaker Paul Ryan's press conference. Challenged on the fairness of the Republican health-care bill, Mr. Ryan gave several minutes of detail about the bill's provisions on state waivers, risk pools, catastrophic illnesses, pre-existing conditions and premiums as an alternative to ObamaCare. To which the next question was: But won't premiums go up? He replied, "I just answered that question." Maybe the press conference really should die.

In the new world of synthesized politics, policy substance exists only as a walk-on character in the melodrama. Would anyone notice if they reversed the White House

reporters sitting in front of Sean Spicer and the White House reporters in front of Melissa McCarthy on "Saturday Night Live"?

Somehow Mr. Trump holds the charming belief that he should get an exemption from this surrealism. He will not and never will. Washington's politics are becoming the politics of the campus. Argument is irrelevant, opposition is everything.

Exhibit A: the Paris climate accord. A Trump policy showing signs of success—if success means producing jobs inside a growing economy—is the effort by him and his EPA administrator, Scott Pruitt, to deregulate energy markets. But if Mr. Trump withdraws from the Paris accord because its goals conflict with his jobs goals, the dire headlines will be on a scale with the invasion of Pearl Harbor.

A Trump decision against Paris will exist only as a *political* catastrophe,

a break with “more than 190 countries” just as the details of the entire Trump trip to Europe last week were reduced to one thing—NATO’s Article 5.

It is conventional wisdom that Donald Trump is a unique political outsider, almost a loner who uses the new media of Twitter to rage against establishments everywhere.

The reality is that the substance of the Trump presidency on energy, education, taxes, regulation or America’s foreign role doesn’t square with the standard liberal

political model dominant since the Supreme Court decided *Bush v. Gore* in 2000. They’re giving him what they gave George Bush, which is credit for nothing. It is not new.

The danger for Donald Trump is that unless he reorients his energies—away from the fake-news obsession and toward executing his agenda—he becomes marginalized.

Swaths of the media do have a credibility problem with much of the public. But that no longer matters, because many media platforms have decided to set aside nominal standards of objectivity and turn

partisanship and resistance into a business model, pitching their coverage to half the electorate and ignoring the rest as commercially irrelevant.

Mr. Trump keeps saying they should thank him because he’s building their audiences. This misapprehends what is taking place now. They are turning the angry Trump tweets and indeed Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation into pure political entertainment for their customers. They will make Donald Trump their tweeting dancing bear, if he lets them.

If the goal of any conceivable White House reorganization is to defeat these forces on their own terms, that is not going to happen. This presidency will win on policy success or fall on wretched political excess. A rightly organized Trump White House would keep or hire people who understand the difference, and toss out the rest.

Write henninger@wsj.com.

The New York Times

4-5 minutes

Darned tootin’. Besides traveling the world to publicize Trump golf courses and hang out with potential investors, Eric and Donald Jr. are also working the political side of the street. The boys recently met with Republican leaders to discuss 2018 election plans. (Don Jr., by the way, is the one who was recently off shooting prairie dogs during their breeding season.)

Eric and Lara Trump leaving Air Force One, with beagles in tow, in April. Al Drago/The New York Times

Eric’s wife, Lara, was at the meeting, too. More relatives! When she’s not talking with Republican leaders, Lara is active in an animal rights group called the Beagle Freedom Project. It helps find homes for dogs that were used in scientific studies, which is commendable. On the other hand, one of its leaders spent six years in jail for harassing research workers.

Her father-in-law isn’t really into pets, which is now looking like a good thing. Given the way he operates, if

The New York Times

3-4 minutes

Scott Olson/Getty Images

Progress on gun control has been glacially slow, and on the federal level nonexistent. Even so, it’s worth noting and celebrating laws enacted in four states this year to deal with one of the grimmest aspects of the nation’s firearms carnage — the murders of about 50 women each month, shot to death by current or former intimate partners. Many had been the

Collins : Oh Dear. The Trumps Keep Multiplying.

Gail Collins

Trump had, say, a cocker spaniel it would probably now be deputy secretary of agriculture.

Lately, the Trump relatives we’ve been hearing most about are Ivanka, an official presidential adviser, and her husband, Jared, whose portfolio includes modernizing government and bringing peace to the Middle East. They recently accompanied the president on his overseas trip — the one that began in Saudi Arabia with fun festivities and the glowing orb.

While the Trumps were there, the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates announced they were honoring Ivanka by donating \$100 million to a World Bank fund for women entrepreneurs.

Perhaps you remember a presidential debate last fall in which Trump denounced the Clinton Foundation for accepting money from conservative Arab nations like, um, Saudi Arabia. (“You talk about women and women’s rights? So these are people who push gays off buildings. These are people that kill women and treat women horribly. And yet you take their money.”) Ah, well.

Jared’s current issue is the mysterious back channel he attempted to set up with the Russians. Like so very many things involving this administration, it’s a controversy in which the most positive interpretation is that he had no idea what the hell he was doing.

In December Kushner met with Sergey Gorkov, the head of a Russia bank, to talk about setting up a special communication system, apparently so he could talk without American intelligence overhearing.

It had to be disastrous in some way, since Mike Flynn was involved. Among the possible explanations:

A) The incoming administration had directed a 36-year-old real estate developer with no government experience to solve the Syrian crisis while keeping the whole thing secret from everybody except Vladimir Putin.

B) Jared was trying to do a favor for his sister-in-law Lara by setting up a channel to smuggle abused beagles out of Russia.

C) This is something about Russian money backing Trump businesses.

I am of course going for the beagles. But feel free to be cynical.

“We know Kushner’s business operations are in constant need of loans and investors. It’s highly suspicious,” said Fred Wertheimer of the good-government group Democracy 21. He used to specialize in campaign finance reform, but now Wertheimer lives in a world where a president’s daughter joins Dad at a dinner with the Chinese president the very same day she receives trademark rights for selling Ivanka Trump glitz in China.

And speaking of sleazy contacts with foreign investors, last week Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Chuck Grassley called for an investigation into “potentially fraudulent statements and misrepresentations” made by a Chinese company promoting deals that seemed to involve U.S. visas for financiers who made big investments in a luxury condo project in New Jersey.

The condos are being developed by Kushner Companies and were being marketed by Jared’s sister. Yes! There’s no end to them.

Stay the course, Tiffany.

Editorial : Disarming the Domestic Abuser

The Editorial Board

victims of repeated domestic abuse. Some had obtained court protection orders that proved no defense against the fury of an abuser who came armed.

The urgency for preventive action is obvious. Research shows the presence of a gun in a situation of domestic abuse makes it five times more likely that a woman will be killed.

While Congress ducks this life-and-death issue, laws that could disarm domestic abusers before they can kill have been enacted in New Jersey, North Dakota, Tennessee and Utah. Those states join 19

others that have shown a bipartisan resolve to keep guns from domestic abusers.

California’s law is particularly important because it gives standing to concerned family members, not just the police, to seek a court ruling against possession of a gun by a violent abuser. This is a key initiative; no one knows better than the family of a disturbed person the danger presented by a firearm in the home. A 1999 Connecticut law, allowing the police to pre-emptively take the guns of potentially violent or suicidal people, shows a considerable benefit, having

prevented up to 100 suicides, university researchers found.

The home-and-hearth slayings rooted in domestic abuse go largely unnoticed in the nation at large. Yet new research reveals how often these deadly encounters mushroom into the slayings of four or more people as a gunman runs amok. Of the 156 mass shootings from 2009 to 2016, more than half — 54 percent — were traceable to domestic or family violence, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun control research and advocacy group. Among 422 victims in these shooting sprees, 181 were children.

For all these casualties, few such mass shootings trigger the national alarm prompted by headlines about global terrorism. But they should. Entire families and other innocent bystanders are being ravaged by

known domestic abusers still able to keep their weapons.

Ideally, a concerned Congress would enact programs to help families and other intimates more

easily petition courts for the surrender of a known abuser's guns. Such a proposal exists, but it almost certainly won't pass muster in the current Republican-controlled Congress or with President Trump,

the ever grateful candidate of the gun lobby. This makes the issue an even more urgent priority for the states.



Mayor Wheeler: Portland, Ore., has seen enough

Ted Wheeler
Published 6:49
p.m. ET May 31, 2017 | Updated 14
hours ago

2-3 minutes

Ted Wheeler on May 27,
2016.(Photo: Gillian Flaccus, AP)

Portland has a proud history of protest. I am a firm supporter of the First Amendment. I asked the federal government to revoke the permit for an event scheduled Sunday in downtown Portland based on serious public safety concerns.

I respect the decision of the federal General Services Administration to allow the organizers to keep their permit, but I remain concerned about the safety of Portlanders, both in and around the protest.

While this planned demonstration is constitutional, it is highly irresponsible.

In the wake of a horrible act of racist violence, our community is still in shock. We are in mourning, and we are angry. There is never a good time to bring messages of hate to our city. There could be no worse time than now.

Yet, there will be protests and counterprotests this weekend in Portland. I have asked the organizers to use common sense and to help us keep the peace.

There will be local and federal law enforcement on the ground to ensure that everybody has the right to express their beliefs and to protect everyone's safety. I urge everyone participating to reject violence. Our city has seen enough.

I am inspired by the three men who stood up to hate last week. Two of them gave their lives. One was seriously injured. They faced horrific violence defending two people they didn't know, who were different from

them. Their courage and their sacrifice should set an example for all.

As we move forward, we need to reckon with the fact that racist attitudes lead to racist words, and that racist words lead to violence. And we need to decide what we're going to do about it.

Ted Wheeler is mayor of Portland, Ore.

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