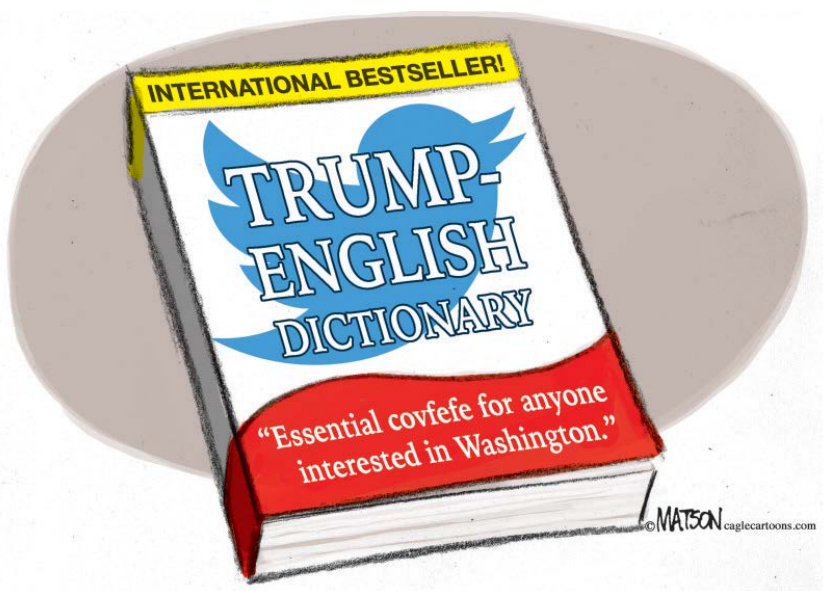


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FRANCE - EUROPE

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

French Prosecutor Opens Probe Into Macron Minister

William Horobin insurance reform.

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

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 comes 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," Razzy 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.

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

Trump Refuses to Affirm NATO's Article 5

Charles Krauthammer

So what if, in his speech last week to NATO, Donald Trump didn't explicitly reaffirm the provision that an attack on one is an attack on all?

What's the big deal? Didn't he affirm a general commitment to NATO during his visit? Hadn't he earlier sent his vice president and secretaries of state and defense to pledge allegiance to Article 5?

And anyway, who believes that the United States would really go to war with Russia — and risk nuclear annihilation — over Estonia?

Ah, but that's precisely the point. It is because deterrence is so delicate, so problematic, so literally unbelievable that it is not to be trifled with. And why for an American president to gratuitously undermine what little credibility deterrence already has, by ostentatiously refusing to recommit to Article 5, is so shocking.

Deterrence is inherently a barely believable bluff. Even at the height of the Cold War, when highly resolute presidents, such as Eisenhower and Kennedy, threatened Russia with "massive retaliation" (i.e., all-out nuclear war), would we really have sacrificed New York for Berlin?

No one knew for sure. Not Eisenhower, not Kennedy, not the Soviets, not anyone. Yet that very uncertainty was enough to stay the hand of any aggressor and keep the peace of the world for 70 years.

Deterrence does not depend on 100 percent certainty that the other guy will go to war if you cross a red line. Given the stakes, merely a chance of that happening can be enough. For 70 years, it was enough.

Leaders therefore do everything they can to bolster it. Install tripwires, for example. During the Cold War, we stationed troops in Germany to face the massive tank armies of Soviet Russia. Today we

have 28,000 troops in South Korea, 12,000 near the demilitarized zone.

Why? Not to repel invasion. They couldn't. They're not strong enough. To put it very coldly, they're there to die. They're a deliberate message to the enemy that if you invade our ally, you will have to kill a lot of Americans first. Which will galvanize us into full-scale war against you.

Tripwires are risky, dangerous, and cynical. Yet we resort to them because parchment promises are problematic and tripwires imply automaticity. We do what we can to strengthen deterrence.

Rhetorically as well. Which is why presidents from Truman on have regularly and powerfully reaffirmed our deterrent pledge to NATO. Until Trump.

His omission was all the more damaging because of his personal history. This is a man chronically disdainful of NATO. He campaigned on its obsolescence. His inaugural address denounced American allies

as cunning parasites living off American wealth and generosity. One of Trump's top outside advisers, Newt Gingrich, says that "Estonia is in the suburbs of St. Petersburg," as if Russian designs on the Baltic states are not at all unreasonable.

Deterrence does not depend on 100 percent certainty that the other guy will go to war if you cross a red line.

Moreover, Trump devoted much of that very same speech, the highlight of his first presidential trip to NATO, to berating the allies for not paying their fair share. Nothing particularly wrong with that, or new — half a century ago Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield was so offended by NATO free-riding that he called for major reductions of U.S. troops in Europe.

That's an American perennial. But if you're going to berate, at least reassure as well. Especially given rising Russian threats and aggression. Especially given that Trump's speech was teed up

precisely for such reassurance. An administration official had spread the word that he would use the speech to endorse Article 5. And it was delivered at a ceremony honoring the first and only invocation of Article 5 — ironically enough, by the allies in support of America after 9/11.

And yet Trump deliberately, defiantly refused to simply say it: *America will always honor its commitment under Article 5.*

It's not that, had Trump said the magic words, everyone would have 100 percent confidence we would strike back if Russia were to infiltrate little green men into Estonia, as it did in Crimea. But Trump's refusal to

utter those words does lower whatever probability Vladimir Putin might attach to America responding with any seriousness to Russian aggression against a NATO ally.

Angela Merkel said Sunday (without mentioning his name) that after Trump's visit it is clear that Europe can no longer rely on others. It's not that yesterday Europe could fully

rely — and today it cannot rely at all. It's simply that the American deterrent has been weakened. And deterrence weakened is an invitation to instability, miscalculation, provocation and worse.

And for what?

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Europe's Bid to Seize Moment Won't Be Easy

Marcus Walker

The European Union is back in vogue, as a recovering economic region and as a rallying cry for voters and politicians.

The question is whether the bloc can turn its new standing into action, or whether old differences will hobble plans to make the EU more effective at home and abroad.

Only a few months ago, Europe's political establishment feared the nationalist wave that helped to power Donald Trump into the White House and the U.K. toward Brexit might spread to the continent.

Instead, strongly pro-EU candidates did unexpectedly well in French and Dutch elections. Emmanuel Macron's triumph in the French presidential race has also changed the tone in Germany's election campaign, where establishment parties have gone from barely mentioning Europe to competing to praise it.

The French and German governments are talking of seizing the moment to strengthen the EU and its currency, the euro. Excited EU officials in Brussels are dusting off proposals for deeper union. Some Eurocrats even think the challenges from Mr. Trump and Brexit have created an opportunity to make Europe great again.

This week, the new mood peaked in a Munich beer tent, where German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for European self-help and voiced her voters' disillusion with the direction

of the U.S. under Mr. Trump. "We must fight for our future ourselves as Europeans, for our destiny," she said, while counting somewhat less on the U.S. to manage international order.

Ms. Merkel's terse, much-parsed comments drew three circles around Germany: a core EU family that must stick together; American and British friends who are less reliable than in the past; and other neighbors such as Russia, with which Europe should work where possible.

The chancellor has said before that Europe must do more to help itself. But her words on Sunday sounded like a break from the traditional view of Atlanticist Germans such as herself, who have long seen the alliance with Washington and the partnership with Paris as equally important. On Monday she reverted to a more familiar stance, calling the trans-Atlantic alliance "of paramount importance."

Her mixed messages reflect a dilemma for Germany and Europe as a whole. EU capitals may believe the U.S. is retreating from consistent global engagement—a long-term trend reflecting a more multipolar world and changing U.S. domestic politics. But that doesn't mean the EU is ready to fill the gaps, even in its own neighborhood.

Some problems, such as climate change, are inherently global and impossible to manage without the U.S., a point Ms. Merkel stressed last weekend at the Group of Seven summit in Sicily.

On other issues, such as trade, the EU is strong enough to negotiate pacts with countries in Asia or Latin America that expand its ties with world markets even if the U.S. turns against multilateralism. But the painstaking negotiation of trade agreements isn't the major political project that the EU is looking for to prove it is regaining its mojo.

"There is a clear sense that Germany and France must demonstrate to everybody that they are leading in Europe and investing in the EU," said Ulrich Speck, senior research fellow at the Elcano Royal Institute, a Spanish think tank. "But there are not many joint projects."

Many of the latest proposals focus on the euro. Europeans widely agree the currency union is incomplete, but they don't agree about what is missing. France and southern countries continue to believe the eurozone needs more common financial resources to boost growth and protect weaker countries against slumps. Germany and its northern allies think pacts on fiscal discipline and market-friendly overhauls need stricter enforcement.

Germans' deep-seated belief in a eurozone based on common rules and national self-reliance makes the country's elites nervous about Mr. Macron's demands for a eurozone budget funded by its own taxes and bonds. Berlin is eager to encourage Mr. Macron's domestic reforms, but German unease about his eurozone proposals was captured by news magazine Der Spiegel's recent cover declaring Mr. Macron to be Germany's "Costly Friend."

Given the differences, ambitions for a common eurozone treasury or collective bond issuance are probably "pie in the sky," says Mujtaba Rahman, head Europe analyst at Eurasia Group, a political-risk consulting firm. More likely than any grand bargain are modest overhauls, such as an incremental strengthening of the eurozone's banking union and bailout mechanism, Mr. Rahman says.

Some European politicians want to focus on defense instead. "The big problem here is Germany and France are not on the same page. Germany doesn't consider using military power as a political tool, whereas France does real fighting," said Mr. Speck. Germany might sometimes support French military operations overseas with logistics or reconnaissance—"the soft side of hard power," Mr. Speck said. "That's something, but it's far from common European defense."

The U.S. remains the only power that can credibly deter Russia from attacking members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Europe's security establishment agrees. For that reason, Europeans were upset that Mr. Trump refrained from explicitly affirming U.S. commitment to collective defense at last week's NATO summit in Brussels. For Europe, the Americans, however unpredictable, remain indispensable.

Bloomberg

Giugliano : A Realist's Guide to Euro Zone Integration

The European Commission is once again busy drafting plans for the future of the euro zone. This week's "Reflection Paper on the deepening of the economic and monetary union" follows a long string of reports, which have often promised much more than politicians and bureaucrats were then able to deliver.

Still, there is hope in Brussels that this time things may be different. European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis, is relatively optimistic that member states can be persuaded to integrate further. "We see there is determination from EU-27 to continue to move forward and we believe this momentum is there also to complete the monetary union," he tells me in his office in Brussels. "Certainly, with a clearly pro-

European president in France we see there can be more momentum behind this discussion on the future of EMU."

The politics has definitely shifted in the direction of more EU integration. Britain's departure has triggered a rethink over the future of the EU. The election of Emmanuel Macron, a fierce europhile, as French president, has shown voters are not necessarily afraid of the promise of greater economic integration. The

real question is what shape this new economic governance should take.

The most eye-catching proposal to come from the Commission's report is the creation of so-called "Sovereign Bond-Backed Securities" (SBBS), financial instruments which would bundle together government debt from across the euro area. The idea is to create a "safe asset" for European banks to invest in, like U.S. Treasuries, allowing them to diversify away from their own

government bonds. In doing so, the Commission hopes to break the "diabolic loop," as it is often referred to, between banks and sovereigns -- the perpetual purchasing of national government debt by their banks -- which can spread a fiscal crisis to the financial sector, as it did in Greece.

"These instruments are an answer to the problem of [not] having a safe asset," says Dombrovskis, whose clinical analysis of a problem is a clue to his previous life as a physicist in Latvia. "In securitizing euro area countries' sovereign debt you can actually weaken the bank-sovereign loop and diversify bank investment and move away from the situation where banks are heavily investing in their domestic sovereign bonds," he adds.

The new bonds, which mirror a proposal currently under discussion at the European Systemic Risk Board and called European Safe Bonds (ESBies), steer away from the two taboos which currently block the creation of a "true" safe asset in the monetary union. The first is debt mutualization, which is toxic for fiscally disciplined countries such as Germany. The proposed securities only bundle together existing bonds, leaving each government to take sole responsibility for honouring

them.

The second taboo is changing the regulatory treatment of sovereign bonds, so that they no longer have a zero risk-weight. This is deemed unacceptable in countries vulnerable to debt runs, such as Italy.

Dombrovskis believes these instruments can be a first step while politicians debate these much more controversial topics. What's needed is a change in the regulatory treatment of these instruments to ensure they too have zero risk-weight.

However, under the current structure it is unclear whether this would fly with investors: After all, banks can just diversify purchases by themselves if they wish to do so, or stick to domestic bonds which will still have zero risk-weight. There are also questions over the interaction between these securities and sovereign debt: The SBBs risk not having a "AAA" rating, as they dilute safer government bonds, as indicated by S&P Global, the rating agency.

The only way to increase demand for the new bonds is to give them better regulatory treatment compared to sovereign bonds: This means giving them a zero risk-weight compared to a higher risk-

weight for sovereign bonds. However, that's not for now, as one fear is that this could sharply increase the interest on sovereign bonds for countries with high debt.

Most likely, as a symbolic first step, SBBs will be issued in small quantities, while euro zone countries decide whether they want to go for more ambitious debt mutualization. This could be accompanied by a creation of a euro zone treasury, another proposal the Commission Paper discusses.

And there's the rub. For this to work, member states will all need to abide by the fiscal rules enshrined in the Stability and Growth Pact. Yet, these rules are less and less credible. Only hours after my meeting with Dombrovskis, Italy's finance minister Pier Carlo Padoa-Schioppa released a letter to the vice president saying that Italy aims for spending cuts and tax increases worth 0.3 per cent of gross domestic product in its 2018 budget, once the economic cycle is taken into account. This is at least half the deficit reduction the EU fiscal rules would request.

Dombrovskis believes it's unfair to suggest that the rules are no longer meaningful. "Fiscal rules are still there and are still being applied. If

you look at the overall result you see that the average budget deficit in the euro area and EU is clearly going down." As for Italy, he seemed open to granting some leeway in order to help the recovery, but was also clear that government debt should be on a downward trajectory to prepare for a world of higher interest rates.

"We have outlined...the need to balance the economic recovery with fiscal adjustment," he said. "The message we are sending to Italy and a number of other countries during this period of time is that it is important to put public debt on a clear downward trajectory."

The Commission is pursuing a delicate strategy here. It must convince countries such as Germany to accept greater risk-sharing. But this requires that countries such as Italy do not deviate from the existing rules -- on budgetary matters and on banks. The danger is that too much leniency today provides a perfect excuse not to make the steps needed to strengthen the resilience of the euro zone. For all the good intentions of the Commission, the battle for a stronger monetary union has just begun.



Luckhurst : A Bernie Sanders-esque socialist is shaking up the British election

Tim Luckhurst

When Britain's Conservative Prime Minister, Theresa May, called a snap general election on April 18, surprise was complete. This was precisely what she had promised she would not do. But shock soon dissipated. On all available evidence, the prime minister's *volte face* made sense. Her party was massively ahead in the polls. Opposition Labor politicians despised their leader, the 68-year-old socialist hardliner Jeremy Corbyn, at least as much as they disliked May. The stage appeared set for a landslide Conservative victory that would send May into Brexit negotiations with a personal mandate to prove she spoke for the British people. So certain did this outcome look that nine Labor MPs defied their leader to vote against the parliamentary motion required to authorize the election.

Spool forward six weeks and Britain's political landscape is transformed. Corbyn, for most of his career a scarecrow lookalike with the leadership talent of a lemming and terrorist-sympathizers for friends, has demonstrated formidable campaign skills. Polls have narrowed so sharply that one

projection—by pollsters YouGov—shows May's Conservatives could lose their majority. The pound, which soared to a post-Brexit high against the euro when May called the election, has tumbled as confidence in a Conservative victory wanes.

So, the big question being asked in the UK and European capitals is: Could May lose this election to a Labor Party whose manifesto is as socialist as the 1983 version, notorious as "the longest suicide note in history," which handed Margaret Thatcher an unassailable majority?

Corbyn has defied expectations. He appears calm, relaxed and, crucially, smart as he tours the country speaking to select audiences of enthusiastic, mostly young supporters. His shabby patched jackets have been replaced by a sharp blue suit. He has had his hair cut. He smiles a lot more than he used to. He is unfailingly polite to interviewers. His campaign, masterminded by the former Guardian columnist Seumas Milne, eschews all personal attacks. May might call the Labor leader a vile excrescence unfit to dig a sewer — she has come close — but Corbyn

does not retaliate. For him, politics is about policies, not personalities. He remains above the fray.

And on the left of British politics a hope that appeared too forlorn to contemplate has begun to be expressed. In the Guardian on Wednesday, Dan Roberts compared Corbyn to Bernie Sanders: "Despite the lower-budget feel of the British version," he wrote "this movie is getting a remake. Here too, a leader who was at first ignored, then ridiculed and now reviled by the establishment, has seen a last minute surge in the opinion polls that threatens to upset a complacent opponent." Everywhere Corbyn speaks, his slogan, "For the many, not the few," is held aloft by passionate student supporters. His pledges to tax the rich to fund better healthcare and to nationalize key industries appeal to a generation that does not remember how such policies fared in the past.

It turns out Labor's far-left manifesto has inspired rather than divided its natural supporters. Meanwhile, May has alarmed instinctive Conservatives by telling them hard truths about taxes and public services that her predecessor left unmentioned. Milne, condemned by

many as a Marxist zealot who prefers ideological purity to power, has proved as good a strategist as May's campaign guru, Lynton Crosby, "the Australian Karl Rove" who has delivered victory after victory for his clients.

But caution is essential. A crucial part of the story is simply that Labor under Corbyn has not collapsed in chaos. The party of the left has operated so much better than expected that its absence of failure has begun to look a little like success. So dramatically has its performance improved that Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's former Svengali and one of Corbyn's most vitriolic critics, has begun to pay the Labor leader compliments on Twitter. Strange days, indeed. Still, all the hard evidence suggests that the Conservatives will win.

An ICM poll published Wednesday put the Conservatives at 45% and Labor at 33%, a clear lead of 12 points. That's down 10% since April 18, but it would still give Labor one of its worst election results since 1945. And that assessment ignores "shy Tories," former Labor voters too timid to tell pollsters they have changed allegiance.

The astounding probability is that May will emerge from this election as a diminished prime minister less

trusted by her party than she was when the campaign began. She is lampooned as a leader lacking in

personality who has tried to create a cult of personality. Meanwhile her opponent, written off before he

started, will stand taller as the leader of a Labor Party he has reinvigorated against the odds.

Bloomberg

Raphael : Embers of Populism Shriveled May's Lead as U.K. Vote Nears

The U.K. election was supposed to be ho-hum. A popular prime minister at the head of a ruthless party machine was expected to crush an unloved and unelectable opposition leader.

But with one week remaining before the June 8 balloting, talk of a landslide is starting to recede. The pound tumbled to a five-week low on Wednesday after YouGov projected (using controversial methodology) that Prime Minister Theresa May could actually lose her Conservative Party parliamentary majority. A poll commissioned by The Times found the Conservative lead is now within the margin of error. A song about her called "Liar Liar GE2017" (for general election) is number two on the iTunes U.K. download chart this week, just after a Justin Bieber track.

It may still be a stretch to say that Britain is getting ready to defeat May, the reluctant Brexiteer. But her troubles speak both about the weakness of her leadership and more broadly about what happens when a populist revolution doesn't result in tangible policy change.

Whatever the polls say, it's foolish to underestimate the Tories. In local elections in May, the Conservatives gained over 550 seats, a resounding victory; it's hard to imagine that level of support just evaporating. The party has one of the most effective election machines anywhere. As Labour MP Dan Jarvis put it after the 2015 election, "It was a ruthless Tory machine that outfought us, outgamed us, outplayed us, outspent us at the general election."

Even so, the Conservative's 20-

point lead in earlier polls this year was probably unsustainable. British voters want a contest. They like longshots, much as Wimbledon tennis crowds will back an underdog against a big name if there's a chance of a third set (or a fifth, for the men). Theresa May's failure to show up for last night's debate smacked of a refusal to fight her corner.

But none of that can quite account for the dramatic change in recent polls. Those suggest that something bigger is happening here. The first rebellion against an established order is the most difficult; but after that each successive rebellion becomes easier to bring about. Political change that's not followed by new policies will be punished.

Wobbles dented May's carefully crafted (and now often mocked) image as the "strong and stable" leader. One was a budgetary U-turn that involved a broken pledge not to raise taxes; another came over May's proposal in the Conservative "manifesto" to shift costs of social care onto taxpayers; a third was her retreat from a pledge not to hold another election before this parliamentary term.

Even more damaging than the policy flip-flops was May's stubborn insistence in a television interview that "nothing has changed." Taken together, May began to look a little less like a principled decision-maker and a bit more like the kind of finger-to-the-wind politician her party has produced for decades. For voters who wanted change, this is starting to look too familiar.

Her Labour Party opponent, Jeremy Corbyn, has committed more than his own share of howlers, but

Labour has played a bad hand decently. It accepted the vote last June to leave the European Union and simply promised to push for a softer exit. It rolled out a typically left-wing manifesto, but with more attempt at balance and cost-accounting than in the past. Labour has focused on local issues and those close to voters; local Labour volunteers in my district hardly mention the unpopular Corbyn at all. And at a time when smaller parties such as the U.K. Independence Party have lost support, the Labour Party, divided and hapless with an eccentric leader, has become a convenient receptacle for protest votes.

May's big mistake was not realizing that while the mood of protest that produced Brexit lingers, its target has changed. Once a Remainer in David Cameron's cabinet, May has lost sight of the fact that people have moved on already. She called this the Brexit election and claimed that a big victory would give her a mandate to negotiate more successfully with the EU.

But while there will be battles over the Brexit terms, for most people those matters amount to technocratic details. More politically compelling are jobs, healthcare, education and security, issues people deal with daily.

When she called the election, May suggested disingenuously that a clear mandate would "remove the risk of uncertainty and instability." That was unwise, if not ridiculous. Uncertainty about how well the U.K. will handle its exit from Europe is going to be here for a while. It's visible in the depreciated pound, rising food prices, a softening

housing market and creeping corporate job moves. May has no choice but to focus a huge part of the government's resources and energies on the Brexit negotiations. Whatever she does, she can't make a success of Brexit overnight. She's tied to a long and arduous timetable and, as she keeps repeating, there may not be a deal at the end of it.

The challenge for May -- assuming she still wins -- is to figure out how to stop talking only about the Brexit negotiations, an obsession for the political class that is boring the rest of the nation, and start delivering policies that people feel will make a difference in their lives. The danger is that May doesn't have a plan.

Writing in Prospect magazine, the journalist Geoffrey Wheatcroft recounted the Tories' long history of adaptability and electoral triumph but said that the problem for May is that it's no longer clear what the Conservatives stand for:

The truth is that the Tories enjoy their present success not because of their merits, or even their traditional ability to change course, but by default: there is no credible opposition, and no one is offering an alternative that appeals to a cynical, disillusioned electorate. It's not so much that today's Tories are an empty vessel into which anything can be poured -- that was New Labour. They are themselves filling a vacuum.

May's honeymoon, which arrived before she was even elected, is certainly over, even if the marriage is not.

Bloomberg

Bershidsky : The Most Interesting Poll in Britain Right Now

The current mistrust for polls started in the U.K. when pollsters got the 2015 general election and the 2016 Brexit referendum wrong. Now, it might appear that, despite intensive soul-searching, British pollsters are still unreliable: Their numbers are all over the place, with Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative Party commanding a lead of anywhere between 3 and 12 percentage points. It's possible, however, that at least one polling organization has figured out how to capture voting intentions in a way that best fits the election system of the U.K. And this

organization's model produces the least favorable results for May.

In YouGov's model, an unusually large number of respondents are polled: At least 5,000 are surveyed every day to produce daily results. On Thursday, May's Conservative Party stood to receive 42 percent of the vote and 317 of the 650 parliamentary seats, and Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party was at 38 percent and 253 seats. But the YouGov model is more than a poll. It's a hybrid of a traditional opinion survey and an exercise in big data analysis.

"We use the individual responses in each constituency to build a model of how voting is related to individual characteristics and the types of constituencies people live in," Benjamin Lauderdale, the London School of Economics professor who designed the YouGov model, told me via email. "We then use that model to calculate an estimate for each constituency based on the kinds of people who live there and how they have voted in the past."

Poll accuracy depends a lot on the methods used by sociologists -- for instance, on the relevance of their samples. But there's another reason

why French polls were strikingly accurate ahead of the recent presidential election, while similar precision has proved elusive in the U.K. and the U.S. For the purposes of the presidential vote, France is a single national constituency. The U.K. and the U.S. don't work that way: The winning party in the U.K. must win the most constituencies, not the biggest share of the national vote, and a U.S. presidential candidate must win the most electoral votes rather than garner a national majority. That makes things difficult for polling organizations: Doing local polls everywhere is

expensive, and a lack of resources often makes such polling unreliable.

YouGov's approach helps overcome that problem. While the number of respondents in each constituency is rather small -- fewer than a 100 over the duration of the project -- the use of geographical, demographic and voting data makes it possible to estimate the outcome in each constituency and each party's number of seats.

Lauderdale started working on the method after the 2015 election, trying to nowcast their results from existing polls and local trend data. The results were off. Further efforts, though, proved more accurate. YouGov tested an iteration of Lauderdale's model on the Brexit referendum, and it predicted a victory for the "Leave" side, though by a thinner margin than it actually achieved.

The current snap election, called by Theresa May in the hope of destroying the opposition and taking a commanding majority, is the first one for which YouGov is officially using the model. Traditional polls still show May might get what she

was after, though her lead has recently shrunk. Financial Times' polling average -- which contains results from the YouGov model -- on Thursday gave the Conservatives 44 percent of the vote and Labour 35 percent. Pollsters talk about the predicted youth turnout determining the difference: According to their conventional wisdom, if one believes that more young people than usual vote on June 8, he or she will predict a better Labour performance. Lauderdale, too, told me that different assumptions about who will turn out to vote drive the difference in poll results.

He also said, however, that the model he designed did not predict a higher than usual youth turnout. "The estimates assume a similar turnout by age distribution to 2010 and 2015 (which were very similar)," he wrote in response to my question. "We use the 2010 and 2015 British Election Study to determine how strong this relationship is."

Obviously, Lauderdale and YouGov are not necessarily right about Britons' voter preferences: They could be mistaken about their voter

typology and other assumptions. But election systems in the U.K. -- and the U.S. -- demand that researchers make an effort to go beyond the national vote, to the local level. YouGov's approach to that problem is clever and innovative; if it works on June 8, pollsters dealing with inconvenient election systems could take a giant step toward greater accuracy.

In any case, it's worth keeping a closer eye on the YouGov model's results than on traditional polls, if only because it worked well for Brexit. As my Bloomberg View colleague Therese Raphael has pointed out, the protest mood that splashed out in that vote isn't gone, and the election shares certain features with Brexit.

For example, though bookmaker Betfair on Thursday put the chances of a Conservative majority at 80 percent, Betfair spokesperson Katie Baylis told me this was because the big bets were being made on it -- while a greater number of bettors placed their money on Labor.

"On our Most Seats market (our biggest market in this election) we

have seen more than 90 percent of volume or money on the Tories, but more bets on Labour (about 40 percent compared to 30 percent for the Tories)," she said.

That's how things stood before the Brexit vote, too: A greater number of (mostly working class) bettors placed their money on "Leave," while the wealthier bettors followed the polls and went for "Remain."

Robert Barnes, the U.S. lawyer who made hundreds of thousands of dollars betting on Brexit and Donald Trump's victory, has told me his money is on Labour outperforming projections because it's harvesting the anti-establishment vote. That's exactly what the YouGov model is showing, too. The likelihood of a hung parliament, in which no party has a majority, is not negligible. May is in danger of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Even if she does get a majority, it appears highly unlikely that it will be strong enough to give her a free hand, both in Brexit negotiations and in domestic politics.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

May's U.K. Election Gamble Imperiled

Jason Douglas

For British Prime Minister Theresa May, what looked like a sure thing is starting to look more like a gamble.

When she called an election on April 18, some opinion polls showed her Conservative Party leading the main opposition Labour Party by more than 20 percentage points. That would have expanded her working majority in the House of Commons from 17 seats to as many as 150.

Just a week before the vote, many of those polls show that lead has shrunk to single digits--though none point to an outright Labour win. On Thursday, pollster firm YouGov PLC said her advantage had dwindled to 3 percentage points and suggested her party could lose seats. That would deprive her of the solid majority she says is essential in looming Brexit talks with the European Union.

Failing to win big would be a blow for the prime minister, who led her party into this election hoping to exploit the apparent unpopularity of Labour and its leader Jeremy Corbyn, a veteran left-winger beloved by young activists but less popular than Mrs. May among most voters.

"If it looks like it was in the bag and it was mishandled, then that's not going to give her the same authority

within the party," said Anthony Wells, director of political and social research at YouGov.

Mrs. May's failure to maintain her lead in the polls is the result of Conservative missteps and a better-than-expected public reception for Labour, analysts say.

The prime minister began her campaign with a focus on leadership, contrasting her experience in government with Mr. Corbyn's lack of it. But her party's manifesto, published in the week before a suicide bomber killed 22 in Manchester, was poorly received. The slip was blamed on a complex plan to finance elderly care, a proposal that bombed with graying voters.

Labour's manifesto was packed with clear policies with broad appeal, especially to those who had voted Labour in the past but hadn't made up their minds. The party said it would nationalize railways and pay for college tuition and child care.

At campaign stops and on television debates, Mr. Corbyn's avuncular style contrasted with Mrs. May's stilted performances and her repetition of her mantra of "strong and stable government."

Her opponents have seized opportunities to turn Mrs. May's emphasis on leadership against her. "The first rule of leadership is to

show up," said Caroline Lucas, co-leader of Britain's Green Party, at a television debate Wednesday night attended by all party leaders except Mrs. May.

YouGov's poll was accompanied by an analysis projecting the makeup of the next Parliament based on a separate and ongoing survey of as many as 50,000 voters. Its modeling suggested the Conservatives are on course to win 317 seats at the election June 8. That is 13 fewer than the party currently holds and short of the 326 needed to secure a majority in the 650-seat House of Commons.

YouGov cautioned that the projection is a median estimate and the same modeling yielded a range of gains and losses for the Conservatives, from a low of 285 seats to a high of 353.

The election will also be seen as a fresh test for pollsters in Britain, who have been revamping their methods after Mrs. May's predecessor, David Cameron, defied expectations to win a comfortable victory in 2015. Polls also underestimated the strength of voters' support for Brexit ahead of last year's referendum.

A multitude of other surveys published by rival polling firms show a wide variation, with a Panelbase survey Thursday giving the Conservatives an eight-point lead.

Analysts say the variation reflects differences in how results are weighed to reflect factors including voter turnout among different groups.

With her poll lead slipping, Mrs. May has tried to wrest the election debate back to Brexit, perceived as her strongest card, and to play down the surveys. At a recent campaign event, she fielded questions from factory workers, a format that contrasted with her more stage-managed appearances before party loyalists and media.

"There's only one poll that matters and that's the poll that's going to take place next Thursday," Mrs. May said Thursday at a speech deep in Labour territory in northeast England.

Some Conservative candidates say the narrowing in the polls is helping encourage supporters and wavering voters to cast ballots rather than stay home.

Jacob Rees-Mogg, a Conservative lawmaker, said that with the prospect of a Labour government negotiating Brexit there has been a shift back to the party and Mrs. May.

"Corbyn and Brexit remain absolutely at the heart of the campaign," Mr. Rees-Mogg said. "That is why I think the Conservatives will win--Corbyn is ultimately very unpopular and

POLITICO Trump's right about Germany

By Danny Vinik

President Donald Trump had harsh words for Germany at a NATO meeting in Belgium this week, where he reportedly referred to the Germans as "bad, very bad." Gary Cohn, the president's top economic adviser, later clarified that Trump was referring to Germany's trade practices.

The criticism of a close U.S. ally at a typically pre-programmed diplomatic conference raised eyebrows across Europe, as world leaders sought to understand the new, unpredictable American president. But to many economists, such criticism was long overdue. They believe Germany's economic policies really have hurt global economic growth, especially in Europe whose recovery from the 2008 financial crisis has been very slow — much slower than in the United States.

"They are valid criticisms, certainly of the German macroeconomic policies," said Gary Hufbauer, a trade expert who worked in the Treasury Department in the 1970s.

The U.S.-German relationship is one of the strongest in the world and was especially close over the past eight years, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and former U.S. President Barack Obama formed a tight personal bond that led to increased cooperation on national security issues. But Obama also was reticent to publicly criticize Merkel, even as many economists warned that Germany was holding back European growth and dragging down the global economy.

Trump and Merkel have no such close personal ties and the president has shown little hesitancy to break long-held diplomatic norms, especially on trade policy, one of his top campaign issues. Already, Trump has pulled the U.S. out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, given Congress official notice of his intent to renegotiate

NAFTA and promised to eliminate the U.S. trade deficit. He has criticized South Korea's trade practices, targeted cheap Chinese steel, and slapped a large tariff on Canadian lumber.

It's a protectionist trade agenda the likes of which the U.S. has not seen for decades and it has left many economists, who generally oppose tariffs for restricting the free flow of goods, scratching their heads. But when it comes to Germany and its economic policies, they say, Trump is aiming in the right direction, although his diagnosis still misses the mark.

At the NATO summit on Thursday, Trump focused on Washington's \$65 billion trade deficit in goods with Berlin, the U.S.'s fifth largest with any country, and German tariffs on American-made cars and trucks. Trump has a point when he criticizes the U.S.-Germany trade deficit: German exports really are artificially inflated. Contrary to Trump's focus on automobile tariffs, though, this isn't because of any specific German trade policy. In fact, Germany doesn't even have its own trade policy. Instead, the European Union sets trade policy for its members and Germany is a part of it. "The European Union is a full customs union — lock, stock and barrel," said Brad Setser, a former senior official in the Treasury Department under Obama. "Germany is one voice amongst many in setting the common European tariff policy."

How are German exports inflated then? It has to do with Germany's fiscal policy and the European Union's currency. For years, German rules and regulations have held down wage growth. With productivity growing faster than workers' pay, German manufacturers have developed a competitive advantage against their international counterparts. Furthermore, this slow wage growth,

in combination with tight fiscal policy, has led to less German consumer demand, an especially large problem for countries like Spain, Greece and Italy that have suffered because of lower consumer demand since the financial crisis. In other words, German citizens could be buying Greek wines and Italian pastas, providing an influx of money into those countries. But German economic policies have choked off such consumer spending, holding back both the recovery of their weaker neighbors as well as the global economy.

"By not encouraging a stronger domestic demand, Germany continues to be reliant on trade and exports to maintain their economic strength," said Bruce Hirsh, a former assistant U.S. trade representative. "They would, of course, claim that's just good economics. Whether that's the case or not, it's certainly having that impact."

Germany has also benefited from the euro. The value of the euro is based on international trade and capital flows of the 18 countries that use the currency. Because Germany has a relatively stronger, more productive economy than its EU counterparts, the euro is effectively undervalued for Germany. In other words, if Germany was still using the deutschmark, the currency would be stronger, reducing exports and increasing imports. Germany would be less competitive internationally if it had a national currency. According to an International Monetary Fund report from last year, German's inflation-adjusted exchange rate is undervalued by 10 percent to 20 percent, up from 5 percent to 15 percent in 2014. And in 2016, Germany's dollar-denominated current account surplus — the amount savings exceed investment — was \$300 billion, the largest in the world.

"When the euro is weak, Germany will be exceptionally competitive

globally," said Setser. "That's a byproduct of participation in the euro."

The Germans have also exported these macroeconomic policies to the rest of the Eurozone by forcing nations like Greece to adopt tight fiscal policy in exchange for bailouts. Such policies have benefited German manufacturers which have maintained their economic competitiveness, but it has led to a very slow recovery across Europe, which has weighed on the global economy.

The Obama administration pressured Germany to ease its fiscal policy and support looser monetary policy at the ECB, including through semi-annual Treasury Department reports on foreign exchange rate policies and privately during international forums. It's tough to tell how much those entreaties actually accomplished; economists still hold that German economic policy is too tight, although the European economic recovery appears to be accelerating.

Will Trump's blunt language have a stronger effect? Economists are skeptical. After all, Trump in targeting German carmakers is missing the true problems with German economic policies and by focusing on German tariffs, he is getting basic facts wrong about European trade policy. In addition, his broader protectionist stance on trade has not engendered much goodwill with European leaders and the fate of the U.S.-EU trade deal, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, remains unknown. None of this gives Merkel, who is up for reelection later this year, any reason to change course.

Said Hufbauer, "The Germans are quite happy with their surplus with Europe and surplus with the U.S. So what can really be done?"

POLITICO Macron trolls Trump, again

Saim Saeed

French President Emmanuel Macron used Donald Trump's own catchphrase to take a dig at the U.S. president's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement.

In a statement late Thursday and a visual tweet on Friday, Macron

urged the world to "Make our planet great again."

The French president also repeated a call he made during his election campaign inviting American scientists to move to France to work on climate change.

"This evening, the United States turned its back on the world,"

Macron said on Thursday. "But France will not turn its back on the Americans."

Macron is building a reputation as a global strongman, and it's not the first time Trump has fallen foul of his macho antics.

During last week's NATO meeting, Macron squeezed the U.S.

president's hand so tightly, media reported the men's "knuckles turned white." He then refused to let go even when Trump tried to pull back. At the same meeting, Macron appeared to deliberately snub Trump, swerving away from him to embrace German Chancellor Angela Merkel instead.

VOX // French President Emmanuel Macron responds to Trump: “Make our planet great again”

Alex Ward

After President Trump told the world the United States was going to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement, many foreign leaders came out to show their displeasure.

But it looks like we have a winner for the best response to Trump. After putting out a joint statement with Germany and Italy, French President Emmanuel Macron went out and gave a pretty epic three-minute statement — *in English*.

Let’s unpack a few things he did in that little ditty.

Knowing an American audience would be watching and listening, he

went straight for the national security implications of climate change. “If we do nothing, our children will know a world of migrations, of wars, of shortage. A dangerous world,” the French leader said.

In other words: This ain’t just a science-y thing. This a real security problem, as even the Pentagon noted in a major report.

Macron called Trump’s decision not to honor the agreement a “mistake.” Just by the fact that he felt compelled to give an address in English, that seemed obvious. And it’s not the only time Trump and Macron have publicly battled in recent days.

Perhaps showing that he believes in American exceptionalism more than the president — who thinks America needs to be made great again — Macron said “the world believes in you. I know that you are a great nation.” That line was ... not subtle.

He also made a plea for entrepreneurs, scientists, and engineers who want to work on climate issues to leave the United States and move to France (it is the *Paris* agreement, after all). That’s bold: an active call for America’s top innovative minds to move to France. Which, it should be said, is a direct challenge to Trump’s entire argument that pulling out of the

agreement is in America’s economic interest.

And last — but *definitely* not least — Macron caps off his little speech by calling on Americans, the French, and other allies to “make our planet great again.”

Subtle. Or ... maybe not.

As my colleague Sarah Wildman recently noted, the “baby-faced new French president” has clearly “got swagger befitting a man with twice as much experience, and a country with twice as much military power.”

Macron may be new to the politics game, but boy does he know how to play it.



Macron to Trump: ‘Make Our Planet Great Again’

In response to President Trump’s decision to pull the United States out of the Paris climate accord, French President Emmanuel Macron issued a blistering televised address in French and English. “I tell you firmly

tonight: We will not renegotiate a less ambitious accord. There is no way,” Macron said. He also co-opted Trump’s campaign phrase for a new message saying: “Make our planet great again.” Macron proceeded to call on American researchers and scientists to come to France and

work on climate change there. “France will put forward a concrete action plan to increase its attractiveness for researchers and companies in the ecological-transition sector and will take initiatives notably in Europe and Africa on this subject,” Macron said.

“Tonight the United States has turned its back on the world, but France will not turn its back on Americans,” he added.



Paris Agreement: Macron Says ‘Make Our Planet Great Again’

Abigail Abrams

French President Emmanuel Macron was disappointed with President Donald Trump’s announcement on Thursday that the United States would withdraw from the Paris climate agreement— but he had some fun too.

In a speech and on Twitter, Macron adopted Trump’s signature slogan — “Make America Great Again” — but changed it slightly to invert the U.S. president’s agenda. “Make Our Planet Great Again,” Macron said.

Like many other world leaders, Macron reiterated

his commitment to the international climate agreement and to finding new ways to protect the planet from global warming.

“To all scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, responsible citizens who were disappointed by the decision of the United States, I want to say that they will find in France a second homeland,” Macron said in his response to Trump. “I call on them: Come and work here with us — to work together on concrete solutions for our climate, our environment. I can assure you, France will not give up the fight.”

While America’s exit from the 2015 accord is not expected to doom the deal, it will weaken the agreement and could hurt U.S. businesses, the very thing Trump says his decision will help. The decision also isolates the U.S. on an important issue as the international community aims to continue efforts to curb climate change. Only two other countries — Syria and Nicaragua — did not sign the agreement in 2015. Nicaragua didn’t sign on because the nation felt the agreement would not go far enough to fight climate change.

Macron, for his part, was not deterred by America’s withdrawal.

He called on all people to continue working to help the planet, and broadcast his remarks in English, helping promote his joke on Trump’s slogan.

“I call on you to remain confident. We will succeed,” the French leader said. “Because we are fully committed, because wherever we live, whoever we are, we all share the same responsibility: Make our planet great again.”



Juncker to Trump: You can’t leave Paris climate deal ‘overnight’

BERLIN — Ahead of President Donald Trump’s announcement on whether the U.S. will pull out of the Paris climate deal, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker warned that leaving the agreement would be a slow process, taking up to three or four years.

“It’s not possible that one leaves this climate agreement overnight, as some people in the United States think,” Juncker told a conference at the German foreign ministry on

Thursday. “This takes three, four years — which is laid down in the agreement itself.”

Trump tweeted overnight that he would announce a final decision on whether the U.S. will withdraw from the agreement Thursday at 3 p.m. Washington time (9 p.m. in Brussels).

“The vacuum that would be created [by the U.S. dropping out of the Paris agreement] has to be filled, and Europe has aspirations for a

natural leadership in this whole process,” said Juncker.

“I’m meeting tonight and tomorrow the Chinese prime minister in Brussels and we need to talk about this with the Chinese. We have explained to [President] Trump in Taormina it wouldn’t be good for the world and the U.S. if the U.S. took a step back from the world stage because vacuum will be replaced and the Chinese are pushing to take over the lead,” he said. “I’m in favor of concluding tasks together with our

American partners instead of changing the setup.”

On Wednesday evening, Juncker said that the deal, which is backed by nearly 200 other countries, is “not only about the future of Europeans but, above all, the future of people elsewhere. Eighty-three countries run into the danger of disappearing from the surface of the earth if we don’t resolutely start the fight against climate change.”

POLITICO From left to right, European leaders bash Donald Trump

Saim Saeed

U.S. President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement united European politicians from across the political spectrum, eliciting disappointment, anger and pledges to stick with the effort to combat global warming.

Expected indignation poured in from French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

But even far-right French leader Marine Le Pen, who supports Trump, said the move was "of course regrettable."

Macron trolled Trump, riffing on the American president's own catchphrase — Make America Great Again — by saying it was time to "Make our planet great again." Merkel said the world will continue dealing with climate change without Trump.

The German foreign office also took a swipe at the U.S. president, who in his speech Thursday said he represented the people of

Pittsburgh, not Paris. It tweeted a link about German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel's visit to Pittsburgh two weeks ago, in which the article said: "Here, the burning of coal and oil seems nothing less than prehistoric, and a return to the days before the Paris climate agreement is inconceivable."

"The right time to look back at our visit to #Pittsburgh 2 weeks ago," the foreign office said.

Martin Schulz, the German Social Democratic contender for chancellor, said, "You can withdraw from a climate agreement but not from climate change, Mr. Trump."

He also referenced Trump's recent visit to Brussels, during which Trump pushed the Montenegrin prime minister aside to get to the front of a NATO photo op.

"Reality isn't just another statesman you shove away," Schulz said.

In the U.K., a spokesperson said Prime Minister Theresa May spoke to Trump about his decision to

withdraw in a phone call, saying she "expressed her disappointment."

However, May didn't join with the leaders of France, Germany and Italy, who together condemned Trump's decision. Instead, she said that after talking to Trump, the two "agreed on the importance of continued cooperation on wider energy issues."

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn called Trump's move "reckless and regressive." It was unclear however whether he was criticizing Trump or May when he said in a tweet: "Instead of handholding, I'll work for a sustainable future for our planet," to which he attached a picture of May and Trump holding hands at the White House.

Russia used the Trump announcement to cast doubt on the climate pact's viability. Trump criticized the deal as largely meaningless for climate change as it was set up.

Kremlin aide Andrej Belousov said the agreement would be

"unworkable" without the U.S., according to state-run news agency RIA.

On Thursday, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, who was Luxembourg's prime minister, told POLITICO that "A Luxembourger is not afraid of an American," referring to Trump. He tweeted on Friday that he was "deeply disappointed" by the U.S. The decision was "against what we stand for, contrary to what the world expects."

Former French President François Hollande, under whose watch the Paris agreement was signed in 2015, singled out Trump for the policy reversal. "Donald Trump renounced the future, not the United States!" Hollande tweeted.

And Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy reaffirmed Spain's commitment to the Paris accords.

"The EU will continue to lead the fight against climate change in the right direction," he tweeted.

INTERNATIONAL

the Atlantic

World Leaders Disappointed With Trump After Climate-Change Announcement

Aria Bendix

President Trump's announcement that he will withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the first international treaty to combat climate change, has left many world leaders unhappy with the U.S. While the decision was all but confirmed Wednesday following insider reports from White House officials, foreign governments continued to hope the president would have a last-minute change of heart in response to mounting international pressure. When Trump revealed Thursday at the White House Rose Garden that the U.S. would be "getting out" of the Paris Agreement, leaders were quick to condemn the United States's decision and reiterate their own commitment to the pact.

According to Trump, the Paris Agreement "would undermine [the U.S.] economy, hamstring our workers, weaken our sovereignty, impose unacceptable legal risk, and put us at a permanent disadvantage to the other countries of the world." Trump did, however, express a willingness to negotiate the agreement, saying the U.S. would

"see if we can make a deal that's fair ... If we can, that's great. And if we can't, that's fine." Trump seemed particularly concerned about kowtowing to the requests of foreign leaders, arguing that nations calling for the U.S. to stay in the pact are "countries that have collectively cost America trillions of dollars through tough trade practices and, in many cases, lax contributions to our critical military alliance." He added, "We don't want other leaders and other countries laughing at us anymore."

Thursday's reaction from foreign leaders was certainly the opposite of laughter. Soon after Trump's announcement, the European Union expressed its deep regret that the U.S. would no longer be party to the Paris Agreement, adding that it would continue to fight climate change alongside other nations. "The EU will strengthen its existing partnerships and seek new alliances from the world's largest economies to the most vulnerable island states," the European Commission said Thursday.

Indeed, Trump's decision prompted Germany, Italy, and France to issue a joint statement expressing their mutual regret. "We deem the momentum generated in Paris in December 2015 irreversible and we firmly believe that the Paris Agreement cannot be renegotiated," they added. The U.K. was noticeably absent from the joint statement, making Prime Minister Theresa May the only European G7 leader not to sign. A senior White House official told Reuters that President Trump had explained his decision to May, along with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, on Thursday over the phone.

Following Trump's announcement, each of these foreign leaders took the opportunity to express their personal disapproval. In a statement that was broadcasted live, Macron said he respected Trump's decision, but called it "an actual mistake both for the U.S. and for our planet." During his phone call with Trump, Macron reportedly

told the president that France and the U.S. could continue to work together, but would no longer discuss climate issues. Macron also stressed that no part of the Paris Agreement was negotiable. Despite his firm stance, Macron seemed optimistic about future relations with the U.S. "Tonight I wish to tell the United States: France believes in you. The world believes in you," he said. In a pointed reference to Trump's campaign slogan, Macron added: "We all share the same responsibility: [to] make our planet great again."

In a Thursday statement, Trudeau displayed a similar mix of disapproval and optimism. Canada is "deeply disappointed that the United States federal government has decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement," Trudeau said, calling the decision "disheartening." Unlike Macron, he added that Canada would "continue to reach out to the U.S. federal government to discuss this matter of critical importance for all humankind, and to identify areas of shared interest

for collaboration, including on emissions reductions."

A spokesman for Merkel issued a shorter response Thursday via Twitter, saying the German Chancellor had recently informed Trump of her disappointment. Seven Social Democratic ministers from Merkel's government also said Thursday that the U.S. "is harming itself ... and all the people of the world" by removing itself from the

Paris Agreement. Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto took this sentiment a step further, arguing on Twitter that "efforts to slow climate change are a moral imperative."

In Australia, the nation's energy and environment minister, Josh Frydenberg, called Trump's announcement "very significant," but said that Australia would honor its commitment to the pact. "As our

prime minister has made very clear, when we sign up to international agreements ... we will follow through," Frydenberg said. On the same day, Italian Prime Minister Gentiloni urged nations via Twitter not to "go backwards from the Paris Agreement."

Russia has remained mum on the subject since Trump's decision became public. Earlier on Thursday, amid speculation that Trump would

withdraw, a spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin told journalists that "the effectiveness and realization of [the Paris Agreement] will be hampered without key participants." While many foreign leaders fear the same, the majority seem determined to carry on in the absence of the U.S.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Eli Stokols

President Donald Trump said Thursday he will withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate accord in an effort to boost the nation's industry and independence, making a dramatic shift in policy despite intense lobbying from business leaders and close allies.

"I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris," Mr. Trump said, calling the decision a "reassertion of our sovereignty."

Mr. Trump said he would begin negotiations to either re-enter the Paris agreement under new terms or craft a new deal that he judges fair to the U.S. and its workers.

Several countries immediately rejected that idea. During a phone call Thursday, President Emmanuel Macron of France told Mr. Trump that the Paris agreement can't be changed, and he issued a joint statement with the leaders of Germany and Italy that the accord "cannot be renegotiated."

Mr. Trump, framing his decision mostly in economic and political terms, pointed to the agreement's lesser requirements for the world's other leading carbon emitters, China and India. He voiced his concern for protecting the environment and eschewed any reiteration of his past claims that climate change isn't real, but he said his decision is rooted in protecting the country's interests.

"This agreement is less about the climate and more about other countries gaining a financial advantage" over the U.S., the GOP president said.

Mr. Trump's action represents a 180-degree turn from the environmental agenda of his Democratic predecessor, former President Barack Obama, whose administration helped orchestrate the agreement, which pledged the U.S. to reduce carbon emissions. Mr. Trump's decision was cheered by some domestic industries,

notably coal and oil-and-gas companies, including Murray Energy Corp., the country's largest privately held coal miner.

But some large U.S. corporations opposed the move, including Exxon Mobil Corp., General Electric Co. and Apple Inc., whose chief executives all publicly argued in favor of remaining in the pact. After Mr. Trump's announcement, Tesla Inc. Chief Executive Elon Musk and Walt Disney Co. CEO Robert Iger said they would withdraw from the president's advisory councils.

Some big companies said exiting the deal would have little immediate impact on their investments and strategies because they are facing customer and shareholder demands to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. They also operate in other countries, and in U.S. states, where climate rules remain a fact of life, so they continue to face government pressure.

The decision on the climate deal came after months of tense debates within a divided West Wing and intense speculation in the 48 hours leading up to the announcement.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson pressed the president to keep the U.S. in the Paris accord, as did Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and leaders at the Pentagon, who have long viewed combating climate change as a matter of national security.

Senior adviser Steve Bannon and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt led the internal push to persuade Mr. Trump to follow through on his campaign promise to withdraw from the Paris accord. Following the president's speech, Mr. Pruitt closed out the ceremony by praising Mr. Trump for his "unflinching commitment to put America first" and he characterized the withdrawal as a "historic restoration of American economic independence."

Lawmakers' reactions split largely along party lines, with many

Republicans saying Mr. Trump's decision would unshackle domestic industry and create jobs.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) said Mr. Trump's decision dealt "another significant blow to the Obama administration's assault on domestic energy production and jobs."

But many Democrats criticized the Paris exit, saying Mr. Trump was relinquishing leadership on an important global issue.

Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, the chamber's Democratic leader, said the decision to withdraw was a "devastating failure of historic proportions."

Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, a Democrat, wrote on Twitter that despite Mr. Trump saying he represented the people of his city, most voters there supported Hillary Clinton in the presidential election. "I can assure you that we will follow the guidelines of the Paris Agreement for our people, our economy & future," he wrote.

Democratic governors from three of the country's larger states, California's Jerry Brown, New York's Andrew Cuomo and Washington's Jay Inslee, pledged to form a "climate alliance" in joint pursuit of achieving the emissions-reduction goals outlined in the Paris agreement.

A Democrat, Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who has often sparred with his party on energy policy, offered the president support.

"I do not believe that the Paris agreement ensures a balance between our environment and the economy," he said. The U.S. "should seek agreements that prioritize the protection of the American consumer as well as energy-producing states like West Virginia, while also incentivizing the development of advanced fossil-energy technologies," he said.

Although the final decision remained in doubt right up until the president's emphatic statement Thursday afternoon, Mr. Trump had drafted the resolution to withdraw from the Paris agreement two weeks ago, according to a person familiar with the internal deliberations that pitted Messrs. Bannon and Pruitt against much of Mr. Trump's economic and national-security advisers, as well as his own family.

The president's elder daughter, Ivanka Trump, was among those who had advised him to stay in the Paris agreement. She had succeeded in getting her father to delay his decision until after last month's foreign trip so he would avoid antagonizing U.S. allies ahead of the G-7 summit and be open to their pro-accord arguments.

Ms. Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, skipped the Rose Garden event. Ms. Trump was at home because of the Jewish holiday Shavuot, while Mr. Kushner had a "longstanding meeting with someone from out of town that was scheduled before the remarks were on the calendar," a White House official said.

But the president was resolute, telling his team that there were too many costs and that the U.S. would no longer be laughed at for participating in such deals, a person familiar with the matter said.

He said he wanted to deliver a campaign promise to "my people," meaning his base of voters, this person said. "He looked at this like it was a union deal—slap them in the face, and then renegotiate," the person said.

Mr. Obama issued a statement Thursday standing by the Paris accord and the U.S. role in forging it. With Mr. Trump's action, Mr. Obama said, "this administration joins a handful of nations that reject the future."

But Mr. Obama said he remained hopeful that "our states, cities and

UNE - Donald Trump Withdraws From Paris Climate Deal Despite Allies' Opposition

businesses will step up and do even more to lead the way, and help protect for future generations the one planet we've got."

Renegotiating the agreement or entering under new terms could be extremely difficult in practice, since nearly all nations agreed on the deal in 2015, and leading economies have said they would continue with the original deal if the U.S. leaves.

Other countries—led by European nations—place a much higher importance on cooperation to curb climate change, so Mr. Trump's move could reduce his flexibility in working with world leaders, especially if the withdrawal from the Paris agreement affects public attitude toward the U.S.

"It will undercut the trust that other countries have in the U.S. in entering into agreements—trade

agreements, agreements on security issues, you name it," said David Waskow, director of the international climate initiative at the World Resources Institute, an environmental think tank.

Backing away from climate commitments could also shift some investments in potentially lucrative green-energy technology away from the U.S. and toward economic rivals, including China, which pledged massive investment in renewable energy through the pact.

"It is going to lead to major corporations and nations partnering with China," said Paul Bledsoe, a former climate official in the Clinton administration and lecturer at American University in Washington.

A Trump administration official said Thursday the president is sincere in supporting a possible renegotiation of the deal or a process for the U.S.

to re-enter under different terms, which could include less ambitious emissions targets, but offered little additional clarity on what concessions might satisfy the administration and how it planned to engage the nearly 200 countries involved in a renegotiation.

"There's no question that other countries are going to want to sit down with us and talk about the potential way forward," one official said.

The battle over the Paris agreement pitted backers of traditional energy—including coal and petroleum—against investors and companies seeking to benefit from carbon regulations by taking the lead on newer technologies, such as solar and wind energy.

Many environmentalists had hoped the U.S. would remain in the pact as an example to growing economies,

even if Mr. Trump pushed to roll back domestic Obama-era rules on coal-power plants and vehicle emissions.

The Paris accord allowed participating countries to determine their own set of emissions targets and plans to reach them with the broader goal of keeping average global temperatures from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius, or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit, above preindustrial levels. That level is considered by climate scientists to be the danger threshold, beyond which damage to the planet would become irreversible.

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.



UNE - Trump announces U.S. will exit Paris climate deal, sparking criticism at home and abroad

President Trump announced Thursday afternoon that he is withdrawing the United States from the landmark Paris climate agreement, an extraordinary move that dismayed America's allies and set back the global effort to address the warming planet.

Trump's decision set off alarms worldwide, drawing swift and sharp condemnation from foreign leaders as well as top environmentalists and corporate titans, who decried the U.S. exit from the Paris accord as an irresponsible abdication of American leadership in the face of irrefutable scientific evidence.

Trump, who has labeled climate change a "hoax," made good on a campaign promise to "cancel" the Paris agreement and Obama-era regulations that he said were decimating industries and killing jobs. The president cast his decision as a "reassertion of America's sovereignty," arguing that the climate pact as negotiated under President Barack Obama was grossly unfair to the U.S. workers he had vowed to protect with his populist "America First" platform.

"I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris," Trump proclaimed in a forceful, lengthy and at times rambling speech from the Rose Garden of the White House. He added, "As of today, the United States will cease all implementation of the nonbinding Paris accord and the draconian financial and economic burdens the agreement imposes on our country."

The United States joins only two countries — Nicaragua and Syria — in opposing a climate agreement reached by all other nations in 2015. A signature diplomatic achievement for Obama, the Paris accord was celebrated at the time as a universal response to the global warming crisis.

The U.S. withdrawal from the Paris agreement cannot actually be finalized until near the end of Trump's term because of the accord's legal structure and language.

With the world's second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases walking away from the pact, scientists said it would be nearly impossible for the world to realize its agreed goal of limiting global warming to below a 2-degree Celsius (3.6-degree Fahrenheit) rise above preindustrial temperatures.

Still, many U.S. states and private companies announced Thursday that despite Trump's decision, they would continue their own existing policies, such as restricting greenhouse gas emissions, as well as pursue new ones to demonstrate urgency in addressing the climate threat.

Citing a litany of statistics disputed by environmentalists, Trump argued Thursday that the pact would hurt domestic manufacturing and other industries and would put the United States at a "permanent disadvantage" with China, India and other rising powers. Staying in the accord, he said, would cost the United States as many as 2.7

million jobs by 2025 and as much as \$3 trillion in lost gross domestic product.

"We're going to have the cleanest air," Trump said. "We're going to have the cleanest water. We will be environmentally friendly. But we're not going to put our businesses out of work. We're not going to lose our jobs."

In a gesture to those who had encouraged him to remain in the accord, Trump said he was open to negotiating a new climate deal that, in his assessment, would be more fair to U.S. interests.

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

"We're getting out," he added, "but we will start to negotiate and we will see if we can make a deal that's fair. If we can, that's great. And if we can't, that's fine."

The leaders of France, Germany and Italy issued a joint statement voicing "regret" about Trump's move, promising to redouble their efforts to implement the Paris agreement and asserting that it cannot be renegotiated.

"We deem the momentum generated in Paris in December 2015 irreversible and we firmly believe that the Paris Agreement cannot be renegotiated, since it is a vital instrument for our planet, societies and economies," read the statement from French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and

Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni.

Trump spoke by phone with Merkel and Macron, as well as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and British Prime Minister Theresa May — who led a chorus of world leaders urging Trump to keep the United States in the Paris agreement.

"He is making a mistake for the future of his country and his people and a mistake for the future of the planet," Macron said.

Erik Solheim, executive director of the United Nations Environment Program, said in an interview that "the biggest losers will be the American people."

"It's obviously regrettable," he said. "The world needs American leadership. However, the impact is less than most people would believe, because China, India and Europe will provide leadership."

Central to Trump's rationale was his feeling that the United States had been taken advantage of. Trump argued the Paris accord was so unfavorable to U.S. interests that other countries were laughing at America.

"The rest of the world applauded when we signed the Paris agreement," Trump said. "They went wild. They were so happy. For the simple reason that it put our country, the United States of America, which we all love, at a very, very big economic disadvantage."

The president, who recently returned from his maiden foreign trip, added, "We don't want other leaders and other countries laughing at us anymore — and they won't be."

Obama strongly defended the Paris agreement as a measure to "protect the world we leave to our children." In a statement released Thursday, he said the pact was the product of "steady, principled American leadership on the world stage," pointing out that it had broad support from the private sector.

"I believe the United States of America should be at the front of the pack," Obama said. "But even in the absence of American leadership; even as this administration joins a small handful of nations that reject the future; I'm confident that our states, cities, and businesses will step up and do even more to lead the way, and help protect for future generations the one planet we've got."

A divide in Trump's camp

The atmosphere in the Rose Garden was celebratory, with a military band performing "Summertime" and other jazz hits as Cabinet members, White House staffers, conservative activists and other Trump supporters took their seats in the garden under a bright sun.

The scene was a reflection of the deep divide within the Trump administration over Paris. The president took 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 urged him to stay in the deal, arguing 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. Neither attended Thursday's ceremony.

White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt pushed for a withdrawal. When Trump announced that he would pull out, there was a burst of applause and some whoops from the assembled crowd in the Rose Garden — and Bannon held his hands up in the air, clapping enthusiastically.

Introducing Trump, Vice President Pence said the climate decision was an example of the president putting what he sees as the interests of the United States above all else.

"Our president is choosing to put American jobs and American consumers first," Pence said. "Our president is choosing to put American energy and American industry first. And by his action today, President Trump is choosing to put the forgotten men and women first."

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.

It's also heavily backed by U.S. and global corporations, including oil giants Royal Dutch Shell, ExxonMobil and BP. Large corporations, especially those operating in international markets,

have had years to get used to the idea of reductions on carbon emissions, and they have been adapting their businesses accordingly for some time.

Withdrawing the United States from the agreement could take years because of the accord's legal structure and language, but such a move would weaken its goals almost immediately. The United States is the world's second-largest greenhouse gas emitter and would otherwise have accounted for 21 percent of the total emissions reductions achieved by the accord through 2030.

'Reckless and indefensible'

Condemnations of Trump's decision were immediate and strongly worded. Former vice president Al Gore, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for his work raising awareness about global warming and personally tried to persuade Trump, said the president's decision was "reckless and indefensible."

"It undermines America's standing in the world and threatens to damage humanity's ability to solve the climate crisis in time," Gore said in a statement.

Jeff Immelt, the chief executive of General Electric, tweeted: "Disappointed with today's decision on the Paris Agreement. Climate change is real. Industry must now lead and not depend on government."

Meanwhile, Goldman Sachs chief executive Lloyd Blankfein issued his first tweet Thursday, saying: "Today's decision is a setback for the environment and for the U.S.'s leadership position in the world."

Tesla chief executive Elon Musk and Disney chief executive Robert Iger both announced Thursday that they were leaving Trump's business advisory council over his decision to withdraw from the Paris deal.

In Europe, a top German politician slammed Trump's decision, mocking him for his brusque brush-aside of a Balkan leader last week at a NATO meeting in Brussels. "You can withdraw from a climate agreement but not from climate change, Mr. Trump," Social Democratic leader Martin Schulz wrote on Twitter. "Reality isn't just another statesman you shove away."

But on Capitol Hill, Republican leaders praised Trump's move. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said in a statement, "I applaud President Trump and his administration for dealing yet another significant blow to the Obama Administration's assault on domestic energy production and jobs."

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) said, "The Paris climate agreement was simply a raw deal for America ... I commend President Trump for fulfilling his commitment to the American people and withdrawing from this bad deal."

There was some Republican dissent, however. Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) tweeted: "Climate change requires a global approach. I'm disappointed in the President's decision."

The New York Times

UNE - Trump Will Withdraw U.S. From Paris Climate Agreement

Michael D. Shear

Mr. Trump said he wanted to negotiate a better deal for the United States, and the administration said he had placed calls to the leaders of Britain, France, Germany and Canada to personally explain his decision. A statement from the White House press secretary said the president "reassured the leaders that America remains committed to the trans-Atlantic alliance and to robust efforts to protect the environment."

But within minutes of the president's remarks, the leaders of France, Germany and Italy issued a joint statement saying that the Paris climate accord was "irreversible" and could not be renegotiated.

The decision was a victory for Stephen K. Bannon, Mr. Trump's chief strategist, and Scott Pruitt, the Environmental Protection Agency administrator, who spent months quietly making their case to the president about the dangers of the agreement. Inside the West Wing, the pair overcame intense opposition from other top aides, including Gary D. Cohn, the director of the National Economic Council, the president's daughter Ivanka Trump, and his secretary of state, Rex Tillerson.

Ms. Trump, in particular, fought to make sure that her father heard from people supportive of the agreement, setting up calls and meetings with world leaders, corporate executives and others. But by Thursday, aides who pushed to remain part of the agreement

were disconsolate, and it was Mr. Pruitt whom the president brought up for victory remarks at the Rose Garden event.

The president's speech was his boldest and most sweeping assertion of an "America first" foreign policy doctrine since he assumed office four months ago. He vowed to turn the country's empathy inward, rejecting financial assistance for pollution controls in developing nations in favor of providing help to American cities struggling to hire police officers.

"It would once have been unthinkable that an international agreement could prevent the United States from conducting its own domestic affairs," Mr. Trump said.

In Mr. Trump's view, the Paris accord represents an attack on the sovereignty of the United States and a threat to the ability of his administration to reshape the nation's environmental laws in ways that benefit everyday Americans.

"At what point does America get demeaned? At what point do they start laughing at us as a country?" Mr. Trump said. "We don't want other leaders and other countries laughing at us anymore. And they won't be."

But business leaders like Elon Musk of Tesla, Jeffrey R. Immelt of General Electric and Lloyd C. Blankfein of Goldman Sachs said the decision would ultimately harm the economy by ceding the jobs of the future in clean energy and technology to overseas competitors.

Mr. Musk, who had agreed to be a member of a two business-related councils that Mr. Trump set up this year, wrote on Twitter that he would leave those panels.

"Climate change is real. Leaving Paris is not good for America or the world," he said.

Under the accord, the United States had pledged to cut its greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 and commit up to \$3 billion in aid for poorer countries by 2020.

By stepping away from the Paris agreement, the president made good on a campaign promise to "cancel" an agreement he repeatedly mocked at rallies. As president, he has moved rapidly to reverse Obama-era policies aimed at allowing the United States to meet its pollution-reduction targets as set under the agreement.

"We are getting out," Mr. Trump said Thursday. "But we will start to negotiate, and we will see if we can make a deal that's fair. And if we can, that's great."

President Trump railed against China, India and other international polluters at an address in which he announced the United States' withdrawal from the Paris climate accord.

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS.
Photo by Doug Mills/The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

In his remarks, Mr. Trump listed sectors of the United States economy that would lose revenue and jobs if the country remained part of the accord, citing a study —

vigorously disputed by environmental groups — asserting that the agreement would cost 2.7 million jobs by 2025.

But he will stick to the withdrawal process laid out in the Paris agreement, which President Barack Obama joined and most of the world has already ratified. That could take nearly four years to complete, meaning a final decision would be up to the American voters in the next presidential election.

Republican lawmakers hailed Mr. Trump's decision, calling it a necessary antidote to the overreach of Mr. Obama's policies aimed at reducing planet-warming carbon emissions.

"I applaud President Trump and his administration for dealing yet another significant blow to the Obama administration's assault on domestic energy production and jobs," said Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader.

But Mr. Trump's call for new global negotiations about the planet's climate drew derision from Democrats in the United States and other heads of state.

President Emmanuel Macron of France and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada each issued rebukes to Mr. Trump. "Make our planet great again," Mr. Macron said.

On Twitter, Miguel Arias Cañete, the European Union's commissioner for climate, said that "today's announcement has galvanized us rather than weakened us, and this vacuum will be filled by new broad committed leadership."

Mr. Obama, in a rare assertion of his political views as a former president, said, "The nations that remain in the Paris agreement will be the nations that reap the benefits in jobs and industries created."

"Even in the absence of American leadership; even as this administration joins a small handful of nations that reject the future; I'm confident that our states, cities, and businesses will step up and do even more to lead the way, and help protect for future generations the one planet we've got," Mr. Obama said.

In recent days, Mr. Trump withstood withering criticism from European counterparts who accused him of shirking America's role as a global leader and America's responsibility as history's largest emitter of planet-warming greenhouse gasses.

After a fierce debate inside the administration, the White House on Thursday took on the trappings of a celebration. The Rose Garden was packed with reporters, activists and members of Mr. Trump's administration. Scores of staff members lined the sides of the Rose Garden as a military band played soft jazz.

Supporters of the Paris agreements reacted with pent-up alarm, condemning the administration for shortsightedness about the planet and a reckless willingness to shatter longstanding diplomatic relationships.

"Removing the United States from the Paris agreement is a reckless and indefensible action," said Al Gore, the former vice president who

has become an evangelist for fighting climate change. "It undermines America's standing in the world and threatens to damage humanity's ability to solve the climate crisis in time."

Corporate leaders also condemned Mr. Trump's action.

On its website, I.B.M. reaffirmed its support for the Paris agreement and took issue with the president's contention that it was a bad deal for American workers and the American economy.

"This agreement requires all participating countries to put forward their best efforts on climate change as determined by each country," the company said. "I.B.M. believes that it is easier to lead outcomes by being at the table, as a participant in the agreement, rather than from outside it."

Mr. Immelt, the chairman and chief executive of General Electric, took to Twitter to say he was "disappointed" with the decision. "Climate change is real," he said. "Industry must now lead and not depend on government."

But Mr. Trump was resolute.

"It is time to put Youngstown, Ohio; Detroit, Mich.; and Pittsburgh, Pa., along with many, many other locations within our great country, before Paris, France," he said. "It is time to make America great again."

The mayor of Pittsburgh, Bill Peduto, responded on Twitter, "I can assure you that we will follow the guidelines of the Paris Agreement for our people, our economy & future."



Collectif : Why Abandoning Paris Is a Disaster for America

Ever the showman, President Donald Trump tweeted Wednesday about his soon-to-be-announced decision on whether or not to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement with the air of a 1950s Las Vegas emcee building up his audience's anticipation for an upcoming act. But the decision to remove the United States from the long-negotiated, hard-fought, international agreement is no sideshow. This is about what's in the best interests of American prosperity and security.

As promised, Trump stepped to the podium in the Rose Garden on Thursday afternoon, announcing that the United States would leave the Paris accord. The decision will have serious, irreversible

repercussions for the United States and the world.

The president's justifications for leaving the agreement are also just plain wrong.

First, contrary to the president's assertions, America's hands are not tied and its sovereignty is not compromised by the Paris climate pact. The Paris agreement is an accord, not a treaty, which means it's voluntary. The genius (and reality) of the Paris agreement is that it requires no particular policies at all — nor are the emissions targets that countries committed to legally binding. Trump admitted as much in the Rose Garden, referring to the accord's "nonbinding" nature. If the president genuinely thinks America's targets are too onerous, he can simply adjust them (although we believe it would be shortsighted for the administration to do so).

There is no need to exit the Paris accord in search of a "better deal." Given the voluntary nature of the agreement, pulling out of the Paris deal in a fit of pique is an empty gesture, unless that gesture is meant to be a slap in the face to every single U.S. ally and partner in the world.

The second big lie is that the Paris agreement will be a job killer. In fact, it will help the United States capture more 21st-century jobs. That is why dozens of U.S. corporate leaders, including many on the president's own advisory council, urged him not to quit the agreement. As a letter sent to the White House by ExxonMobil put it, the agreement represents an "effective framework for addressing the risk of climate change," and the United States is "well positioned to compete" under the terms of the deal.

Action on climate and economic growth go hand in hand, and are mutually reinforcing. That is why twice as much money was invested worldwide in renewables last year as in fossil fuels, and why China is pouring in billions to try to win this market of the future. A bipartisan group of retired admirals and generals on the CNA Military Advisory Board is about to release a report that will also spell out the importance of competitiveness in advanced energy technologies — not just to the economy, but also to the country's standing in the world. Pulling out of climate will result in a loss of U.S. jobs and knock the United States off its perch as a global leader in innovation in a quickly changing global economic climate.

The rationale for ditching America's commitment to the Paris accord just doesn't hold up. Moreover, Trump's

decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement comes with several serious and lasting consequences for the United States and the world:

The Trump administration is hastening catastrophic effects of climate change. Scientists and economists now state with confidence that the failure to act to arrest and mitigate global climate change will have devastating global consequences, including for young Americans alive today and for their children and grandchildren. Donald Trump himself may well live to see more climate-related catastrophes hit the homeland. His children and grandchildren certainly will.

Americans all over this country are already seeing the changes — storms are more severe, big floods come more often, and in the most extreme case, Arctic waters are melting and opening up sea lanes for the first time in recorded history. Trump saw the damage from Hurricane Sandy firsthand, a preview of what climate change has in store for his children and grandchildren. Scientists and economists now state with confidence that the failure to act now to arrest and mitigate global climate change will have devastating global consequences,

Heading off the worst effects of climate change requires global action: Action by one country alone, no matter how powerful, cannot address the threat. But our country, one of the world's two largest carbon emitters, does have significant power to improve not just our own climate, but the world's — and Trump's decision takes us in the wrong direction. That's especially tragic in light of the signature achievement of the Paris Agreement, which was to get every country on board; now China and India have made the same commitments the United States and other highly developed countries have. It binds us all together through a political agreement — but the strength of that agreement depends on all of us meeting our nationally determined responsibilities.

Put simply, the U.S. decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement will have impacts on the global climate that a future U.S. administration will not be able to undo. It will undermine the most significant and comprehensive coordinating mechanism for global action to combat climate change that we have. It will weaken an existing asset to defend present and future generations of Americans against a significant threat; it will undermine our security. Indeed, leading military experts, including Secretary of Defense James Mattis,

have warned that the impact of climate change will lead to more refugee flows, more famine, more conflict, and more terrorism. As Mattis said, "Climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today." By withdrawing from this agreement, Trump would be ignoring an issue his own secretary of defense has said is a national security threat.

Trump is abdicating U.S. leadership and inviting China to fill the void. During his Rose Garden address, the president asserted that the Paris agreement disproportionately benefits American competitors, such as China. Yet pulling out of the accord redounds to Beijing's benefit even more.

The Paris agreement was forged in part on the backbone of a preliminary understanding between the United States and China—the two largest carbon-emitting nations. In recent days, as Trump dithered about whether or not to stay in, the Chinese quickly seized the opportunity to claim the mantle of global leadership and have made clear that they will stay in, even as the United States pulls out. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang is riding the wake of Trump's disastrous visit to Europe, where China and the European Union are expected to release a joint statement on Friday reaffirming their commitment to combatting climate change. This follows Xi Jinping's defense of globalization and the importance of countries' looking beyond their own national interests at Davos earlier this year. Beijing will win an Olympics-sized soft-power boost by staying in while the Washington reneges.

Ceding U.S. leadership to the Chinese on this issue is likely to have political and economic costs. China, like Russia, sees value in any division between the United States and Europe — as a rising power it would rather negotiate with us separately rather than collectively. Europeans grateful to China for its continued partnership on climate will be less concerned to take account of U.S. interests with respect to, say, China's harmful industrial policy, human rights violations, or economic and military coercion expansionism in Asia. European deals with China for the production of infrastructure and equipment related to renewable energy will surely follow. Pulling out of Paris will weaken our geopolitical standing — and complicate our efforts to work with our partners and allies to manage a rising China. Other nations that see themselves as bearing the brunt of climate change, including those of strategic

importance to the United States — such as Vietnam, the Philippines, or much of Africa — will now see China as part of the solution to their problem.

Pulling out of Paris will likely result in creating jobs in China that could have been created here in the United States. It will give Chinese and other countries' companies a leg up in the growing and competitive green economy, putting U.S. companies at a serious disadvantage. The industry and the jobs of the future are in renewables — why would we cede any of that ground to Chinese, Indian, and European companies? The United States will be relegated from a global leader, economically and otherwise, to a member of a lonely camp of pariah countries that haven't signed this global pact, together with only Syria and Nicaragua. America First? Hardly.

Withdrawing from Paris will damage U.S. standing in the world. Pulling out of Paris will call into question the word of the United States and weaken our ability to call on other countries to work with us on other global threats, such as global terrorism and global pandemics. International agreements are not irrevocable; indeed this one, which the United States had a heavy hand in creating, was crafted carefully as a series of nationally determined, voluntary commitments precisely in order to gain worldwide support, and with the understanding that countries can adjust their commitments as needed. Walking away from that agreement sends a clear — and foolhardy — message to all other countries around the world: Don't trust the United States.

And why should they, if we so evidently signal that U.S. foreign policy is utterly politicized, and that agreements signed with one administration will not be honored by the next. It is firmly in the U.S. interest to have others' trust — and for us to be able to demand in return — the durability of agreements, even when governments change. As a chief architect and moral leader of the post-World War II order, our own behavior with respect to agreements and international law sets the example. If the most powerful country in the world has suddenly decided that signing and living up to an agreement no longer matters, why should it matter to other states?

Why should Russia, for example, fear any sanction for invading the sovereign territory of another country, or North Korea fear any reaction to flouting U.N. Security Council resolutions? Why would

other countries look to the United States to lead — or choose willingly to follow our lead — when we come asking for commitments, to counter the Islamic State or to address the next global pandemic?

In the wake of the president's disastrous first foreign trip, National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and Director for the National Economic Council Gary Cohn were dispatched to attempt to reframe the trip on the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed page. There they gave perhaps the clearest and most alarming explanation of what America First means as a foreign policy and how it applies to the Paris Agreement. A key passage reads:

The president embarked on his first foreign trip with a clear-eyed outlook that the world is not a "global community" but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors, and businesses compete for advantage. We bring to this forum unmatched military, political, economic, cultural, and moral strength. Rather than deny this elemental nature of international affairs, we embrace it.

McMaster and Cohn are wrong. To be sure, the world is a competitive arena that has at times throughout history turned into bloody conflict and ruin. That is precisely the reason the United States has always looked for alliances and partnerships grounded not only in common interests, but common values and commitments. It is also why wise presidents have long recognized that even as the most powerful nation on Earth — and in many cases precisely because of our global reach — the United States has an interest in a rules-based system. That system protects our citizens living overseas, our businesses operating overseas, and our military operations around the world. We threaten the underpinnings of that system at our peril.

Pulling out of Paris means Republicans own climate catastrophes. Just as President Barack Obama bequeathed to the Trump/Paul Ryan/Mitch McConnell team a workable framework for ensuring health care coverage, President Trump inherited a workable framework for global climate action. The Republicans have chosen to pour sand in the gas tank of Obamacare, using the levers of government to attempt to make the Affordable Care Act fail even as they themselves fail to deliver a real alternative. Polls show that Americans — even Republicans — understand that the GOP now owns health care as an issue. They will similarly own whatever disasters befall the United

States if they do nothing to be part of the solution. They are ignoring the scientific evidence and turning their backs on the best chance to address this global challenge. In fact, the majority of the population of every state in the United States supports staying in this agreement. The president and his Republican allies are flouting the will of the American people as our country walks away.

This week, there was news that this year's peach crop in South Carolina and Georgia was ruined by the extreme temperature swings — unseasonably hot in late winter, and a cold snap in late spring. As extreme weather events like this and other phenomena associated with climate change accelerate,

when we confront our next Katrina or Sandy, people will remember that it was Trump and the Republicans who did nothing. Make that worse than nothing: They lost ground and put their party ahead of the country.

Trump's pulling out of Paris means that the rest of us are called upon to do more — and we will. Even as the White House abandons the pact, there are plenty of ways for Americans to advance its goals. Many state and local governments are already tackling energy efficiency and emissions reductions. California, the sixth-largest economy in the world, will not abandon its emission standards. And many U.S. cities are a locus of both great innovation and high-impact investments. That is why

Mayor Bill de Blasio announced this week that he will sign an executive order for New York City to uphold climate commitments even if the United States pulls out. Major corporations across this country have recognized the opportunities in clean energy and energy storage, and see the risks of inaction to their long-term profitability. ExxonMobil's shareholders even voted this week in support of more open and detailed analysis of the threats posed by climate change to the oil business. Entrepreneurs, investors, and researchers will continue to press forward with the next generation of innovations that can reduce carbon emissions. And we can all continue to pressure our political leaders to take serious action to confront this threat. If

Trump ditches Paris, there's no time for despair — it's a time for action.

There are many reasons why pulling out of Paris is a bad idea. (In addition to those above, there's the fact that, like most divorces, this is a yearslong legal process that requires more than a tweet or a speech.) Trump can bluster that he's putting America first, but climate change is real and will become far more dire in the coming years. The need for action to address it will remain urgent. The rest of the world won't be standing still and neither should we if we want to advance American security and prosperity.

Bloomberg

Editors : Trump's Big Paris Mistake

Any rational, responsible business leader, faced with an existential threat to his enterprise, would take steps to manage the risk. With his decision to leave the Paris climate accord, President Donald Trump is putting the lie to one of his central claims: that he would run the country like a business.

The Earth is threatened with rising seas, violent weather and punishingly high temperatures. Rather than remain part of the world's cooperative plan to address this danger, Trump is working to undermine it.

The 2015 Paris agreement established a global target for lowering greenhouse-gas emissions -- aimed at keeping the atmosphere

from warming by 2 degrees Celsius. Nearly all the world's countries agreed to create a system to measure their progress, and to continually strengthen their efforts. By backing out, the U.S. not only diminishes its own influence in these vital diplomatic negotiations, but worse, grants other countries license to neglect their responsibility.

In explaining his decision to leave the Paris accord, Trump said it would cost the U.S. millions of jobs and trillions of dollars in lost GDP over the next decade. In truth, America's burgeoning solar and wind power industries are creating jobs. The solar industry, in particular added workers almost 17 times as fast as the overall economy last year. Leaving the climate deal, in

any event, does nothing to advance jobs in fossil fuels or any other industry.

Under Trump, the U.S. has already become an irresponsible role model. The administration is working to dismantle former President Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan, which is meant to regulate electricity plants and help the U.S. meet its promise to cut emissions by more than a quarter from 2005 levels. That is more than one-fifth of the total emissions reductions promised in the entire Paris agreement.

Thankfully, as cities, states and businesses take action -- and as coal is increasingly priced out of the energy market -- emissions in the U.S. are falling steadily (though not as much as they would with the

Clean Power Plan). And India and China are likely to reduce global carbon emissions by 2 to 3 billion tons *more* than they'd anticipated just last year.

So all is not lost, at least when it comes to taking action to address climate change. When it comes to leadership on climate change, however, Trump has abdicated Washington's role. Now more than ever, cities, states and private companies will need to redouble their own efforts, to demonstrate to the world that Trump's action does not reflect the views of most Americans and to ensure that the U.S. is ready to rejoin the global effort to prevent climate change at the first opportunity.

The New York Times

Editorial Board : Our Disgraceful Exit From the Paris Accord

The Editorial Board

Paris did not, in short, legally constrain Mr. Trump from doing the dumb things he wanted to do. Which he already has. In the last few months, and without consulting a single foreign leader, he has ordered rollbacks of every one of the policies on which President Barack Obama based his ambitious pledge to reduce America's greenhouse gas emissions by 26 percent to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 — most prominently, policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gases from coal-fired power plants, automobiles and oil and gas wells.

But if withdrawing from the agreement will not make Mr. Trump's domestic policies any worse than they are, it is still a terrible decision that could have enormous consequences globally.

In huge neon letters, it sends a clear message that this president knows nothing or cares little about the science underlying the stark warnings of environmental disruption. That he knows or cares little about the problems that disruption could bring, especially in poor countries. That he is unmindful that America, historically the world's biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, has a special obligation to help the rest of the world address these issues. That he is oblivious to the further damage this will cause to his already tattered relationship with the European allies. That his malfeasance might now prompt other countries that signed the accord to withdraw from the agreement, or rethink their emissions pledges.

Perhaps most astonishing of all, a chief executive who touts himself as a shrewd businessman, and who

ran on a promise of jobs for the middle class and making America great again, seems blind to the damage this will do to America's own economic interests. The world's gradual transition from fossil fuels has opened up a huge global market, estimated to be \$6 trillion by 2030, for renewable fuels like wind and solar, for electric cars, for advanced batteries and other technologies.

America's private sector clearly understands this opportunity, which is why, in January, 630 businesses and investors — with names like DuPont, Hewlett Packard and Pacific Gas and Electric — signed an open letter to then-President-elect Trump and Congress, calling on them to continue supporting low-carbon policies, investment in a low-carbon economy and American participation in the Paris agreement. It is also why Elon Musk, chief

executive of the electric vehicle maker Tesla, was resigning from two presidential advisory councils after Mr. Trump announced the withdrawal from Paris.

Yet Mr. Trump clings to the same false narrative that congressional Republicans have been peddling for years and that Mr. Trump's minions, like Mr. Pruitt at the E.P.A. and Ryan Zinke at the Interior Department, are peddling now (Mr. Pruitt to the coal miners, Mr. Zinke to Alaskans) — that environmental regulations are job killers, that efforts to curb carbon dioxide emissions will hurt the economy, that the way forward lies in fossil fuels, in digging still more coal and punching still more holes in the ground in the search for more oil.

As alternative realities and fake facts go, that argument is something to behold. For one thing, it fails to account for the significant

economic benefits of reducing greenhouse gases, avoiding damage to human health and the environment. And it ignores extensive research showing that reducing carbon emissions can in fact drive economic growth. Partly because of investments in cleaner fuels, partly because of revolutionary improvements in efficiency standards for appliances and buildings, carbon dioxide emissions in this country actually fell nearly 12 percent in the last decade, even as the overall economy kept growing. Under Mr. Obama's supposedly job-killing

regulations, more than 11.3 million jobs were created, compared with two million-plus under Mr. Bush's antiregulatory regime.

It's true that the coal industry is losing jobs, largely a result of competition from cheaper natural gas, but the renewable fuels industry is going gangbusters: Employment in the solar industry, for instance, is more than 10 times what it was a decade ago, 260,000 jobs as opposed to 24,000.

Therein lies one ray of hope that the United States, whatever Mr. Trump does, will continue to do its part in

controlling greenhouse gas emissions. Market forces all seem to be headed in the right direction. Technologies are improving. The business community is angry. A Gallup poll found that nearly two-thirds of Americans are worried about climate change, and the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication found that almost 70 percent of Americans wanted to stay in the agreement, including half of Trump voters.

And some states are moving aggressively, including New York. On Wednesday, the State Senate in California, always a leader in

environmental matters, passed a bill that seeks to put California on a path to 100 percent renewable energy by midcentury. On the same day, Exxon Mobil stockholders won a crucial vote requiring the company to start accounting for the impact of climate change policies on its business.

These messages might be lost on Mr. Trump. Hopefully, not on the world.



Editorial Board : Trump endanger the planet by pulling the U.S. out of Paris agreement

Decades from now — if sea levels continue rising, polar ice caps keep melting and weather patterns grow ever more extreme — people might well look back at the spring of 2017 as a key turning point in the failed effort to stave off catastrophic, human-induced climate change.

President Trump's decision Thursday to withdraw the United States, the world's second largest emitter of heat-trapping carbon dioxide, from the Paris climate agreement deals a body blow to one of the best hopes for slowing a ruinous rise in global temperatures.

By breaking ranks with nearly 200 nations, the United States joins only Syria (which is riven by civil war) and Nicaragua (which thinks the Paris agreement isn't ambitious enough) as the odd countries out. The Trump administration's action abdicates America's moral leadership and makes it easier for other nations to renege on their own pledges to curb greenhouse-gas emissions.

In making his reckless decision, Trump defied the advice of the

world's leading climate scientists. Of Pope Francis and other religious leaders. Of the leaders of the seven wealthiest democracies. Of major corporations, including Chevron, Google, Facebook and Apple. Of members of his own inner circle, including son-in-law Jared Kushner and daughter Ivanka. Of his own secretary of State, a former ExxonMobil CEO.

And Trump ignored the wishes of most Americans, seven out of 10 of whom favor the Paris agreement.

But the president — prodded by chief strategist Steve Bannon, Environmental Protection Agency administrator Scott Pruitt and coal-state Republicans in Congress — thinks he knows better. At Thursday's Rose Garden announcement, Trump argued that the 2015 agreement "handicaps the United States economy," even though there is no binding deal, only voluntary pledges by each nation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

He expressed concern about job-killing restrictions. Yet the Paris agreement restricts nothing. Instead, it relies on peer pressure and transparency to limit global warming to a more tolerable level.

Trump could have revised President Obama's pledges without ending U.S. participation.

Trump made a nod toward renegotiating the Paris agreement, or crafting an entirely new pact that would be "fair" to the United States. But it's hard to imagine the other nations rushing back to the bargaining table after Trump blew up an agreement that grew out of decades of arduous climate talks.

How much damage Trump leaves behind by his decision remains unclear. Market forces have already helped the U.S. bend the curve of greenhouse emissions by driving a transition from coal to cheaper, cleaner-burning natural gas and promoting renewable wind and solar.

Initial goals under the Paris agreement are modest. The heavy lifting comes within 10 to 15 years as the agreement urges governments to increase emission reduction targets to meet the goal of limiting global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels. Even a degree or two increase worldwide can

dramatically effect weather, sea levels and crop production.

Trump's abandonment of the Paris agreement, along with his other plans to roll back President Obama's vehicle efficiency standards and dismantle his Clean Power Plan to cut power plant emissions, will most likely make it impossible for the U.S. to reach even half the 26% reduction from 2005 levels that Obama promised America would reach by 2025.

Other governments, notably in the European Union and China, vow to forge ahead developing the clean-energy technologies that will be the drivers of economic growth in the 21st century. But the margin for tilting the planet away from catastrophic climate change in the future is slim at best, and no matter the slack picked up by other nations in the absence of U.S. leadership, it might not be enough.

The 45th president dreams of a legacy where America is great again. There was no greatness in the decision he rendered Thursday, just the heightened prospect of a climate-stricken globe left behind for future generations.



Brooks : Donald Trump Poisons the World

David Brooks

In the essay, McMaster and Cohn make explicit the great act of moral decoupling woven through this presidency. In this worldview, morality has nothing to do with anything. Altruism, trust, cooperation and virtue are unaffordable luxuries in the struggle of all against all. Everything is about self-interest.

We've seen this philosophy before, of course. Powerful, selfish people have always adopted this dirty-

minded realism to justify their own selfishness. The problem is that this philosophy is based on an error about human beings and it leads to self-destructive behavior in all cases.

The error is that it misunderstands what drives human action. Of course people are driven by selfish motivations — for individual status, wealth and power. But they are also motivated by another set of drives — for solidarity, love and moral fulfillment — that are equally and sometimes more powerful.

People are wired to cooperate. Far from being a flimsy thing, the desire for cooperation is the primary human evolutionary advantage we have over the other animals.

People have a moral sense. They have a set of universal intuitions that help establish harmony between peoples. From their first moments, children are wired to feel each other's pain. You don't have to teach a child about what fairness is; they already know. There's no society on earth where people are

admired for running away in battle or for lying to their friends.

People have moral emotions. They feel rage at injustice, disgust toward greed, reverence for excellence, awe before the sacred and elevation in the face of goodness.

People yearn for righteousness. They want to feel meaning and purpose in their lives, that their lives are oriented toward the good.

People are attracted by goodness and repelled by selfishness. N.Y.U. social psychologist Jonathan Haidt

has studied the surges of elevation we feel when we see somebody performing a selfless action. Haidt describes the time a guy spontaneously leapt out of a car to help an old lady shovel snow from her driveway.

One of his friends, who witnessed this small act, later wrote: "I felt like jumping out of the car and hugging this guy. I felt like singing and running, or skipping and laughing. Just being active. I felt like saying nice things about people. Writing a beautiful poem or love song. Playing in the snow like a child. Telling everybody about his deed."

Good leaders like Lincoln, Churchill, Roosevelt and Reagan understand the selfish elements that drive human behavior, but they have another foot in the realm of the moral motivations. They seek to inspire faithfulness by showing good character. They try to motivate action by pointing toward great ideals.

Realist leaders like Trump, McMaster and Cohn seek to dismiss this whole moral realm. By behaving with naked selfishness toward others, they poison the common realm and they force others to behave with naked selfishness toward them.

By treating the world simply as an arena for competitive advantage, Trump, McMaster and Cohn sever relationships, destroy reciprocity, erode trust and eviscerate the sense of sympathy, friendship and loyalty that all nations need when times get tough.

By looking at nothing but immediate material interest, Trump, McMaster and Cohn turn America into a nation that affronts everybody else's moral emotions. They make our country seem disgusting in the eyes of the world.

George Marshall was no idealistic patsy. He understood that America

extends its power when it offers a cooperative hand and volunteers for common service toward a great ideal. Realists reverse that formula. They assume strife and so arouse a volley of strife against themselves.

I wish H. R. McMaster was a better student of Thucydides. He'd know that the Athenians adopted the same amoral tone he embraces: "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." The Athenians ended up making endless enemies and destroying their own empire.

**The
New York
Times**

McKibben : Trump's Stupid and Reckless Climate Decision

People say, if all you have is a hammer, then every problem looks like a nail. We should be so lucky. President Trump has a hammer, but all he'll use it for is to smash things that others have built, as the world looks on in wonder and in fear. The latest, most troubling example is his decision to obliterate the Paris climate accord: After nearly 200 years of scientific inquiry and over 20 years of patient diplomacy that united every nation save Syria and Nicaragua, we had this afternoon's big game-show Rose Garden reveal: Count us out.

It's a stupid and reckless decision — our nation's dumbest act since launching the war in Iraq. But it's not stupid and reckless in the normal way. Instead, it amounts to a thorough repudiation of two of the civilizing forces on our planet: diplomacy and science. It undercuts our civilization's chances of surviving global warming, but it also undercuts our civilization itself, since that civilization rests in large measure on those two forces.

Science first. Since the early 1800s we've been slowly but surely figuring out the mystery of how our climate operates — why our planet is warmer than it should be, given its distance from the sun. From Fourier to Foote and Tyndall, from Arrhenius to Revelle and Suess and Keeling, researchers have worked out the role that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases play in regulating temperature. By the 1980s, as supercomputers let us model the climate with ever greater power, we came to understand our possible fate. Those big brains, just

in time, gave us the warning we required.

And now, in this millennium, we've watched the warning start to play out. We've seen 2014 set a new global temperature record, which was smashed in 2015 and smashed again in 2016. We've watched Arctic sea ice vanish at a record pace and measured the early disintegration of Antarctica's great ice sheets. We've been able to record alarming increases in drought and flood and wildfire, and we've been able to link them directly to the greenhouse gases we've poured into the atmosphere. This is the largest-scale example in the planet's history of the scientific method in operation, the continuing dialectic between hypothesis and skepticism that arrived eventually at a strong consensus about the most critical aspects of our planet's maintenance. Rational people the world around understand. As Bloomberg Businessweek blazoned across its cover the week after Hurricane Sandy smashed into Wall Street, "It's Global Warming, Stupid."

But now President Trump (and 22 Republican senators who wrote a letter asking him to take the step) is betting that all of that is wrong. Mr. Trump famously called global warming a hoax during the campaign, and with this decision he's wagering that he was actually right — he's calling his own bluff. No line of argument in the physical world supports his claim, and no credible authority backs him, not here and not abroad. It's telling that he simultaneously wants to cut the funding for the satellites and ocean

buoys that monitor our degrading climate. Every piece of data they collect makes clear his foolishness. He's simply insisting that physics isn't real.

But it's not just science that he's blowing up. The Paris accord was a high achievement of the diplomatic art, a process much messier than science, and inevitably involving compromise and unseemly concession. Still, after decades of work, the world's negotiators managed to bring along virtually every nation: the Saudis and the low-lying Marshall Islanders, the Chinese and the Indians. One hundred and ninety-five nations negotiated the Paris accord, including the United States.

The dysfunctional American political process had already warped the process, of course. The reason Paris is a series of voluntary agreements and not a real treaty is because the world had long since understood that no binding document would ever get two-thirds of the vote in our oil-soaked Senate. And that's despite the fact that the agreement asks very little of us: President Barack Obama's mild shift away from coal-fired power and toward higher-mileage cars would have satisfied our obligations.

Those changes, and similar ones agreed to by other nations, would not have ended global warming. They were too small. But the hope of Paris was that the treaty would send such a strong signal to the world's governments, and its capital markets, that the targets would become a floor and not a ceiling; that shaken into action by the

accord, we would start moving much faster toward renewable energy, maybe even fast enough to begin catching up with the physics of global warming. There are signs that this has been happening: The plummeting price of solar energy just this spring persuaded India to forgo a huge planned expansion of coal plants in favor of more solar panel arrays to catch the sun. China is shutting coal mines as fast as it can build wind turbines.

And that's precisely the moment President Trump chose to make his move, a bid to undercut our best hope for a workable future in a bizarre attempt to restore the past. A few fossil-fuel barons may be pleased (Vladimir Putin likely among them, since his reign rests on the unobstructed development of Russia's hydrocarbons), but most of the country and the world see this for the disaster it is. Majorities in every single state, red and blue alike, wanted America to stay in the accord.

And so we will resist. As the federal government reneges on its commitments, the rest of us will double down on ours. Already cities and states are committing to 100 percent renewable energy. Atlanta was the latest to take the step. We will make sure that every leader who hesitates and waffles on climate will be seen as another Donald Trump, and we will make sure that history will judge that name with the contempt it deserves. Not just because he didn't take climate change seriously, but also because he didn't take civilization seriously.

**Los
Angeles
Times**

Martin : By withdrawing from the Paris Accord, Trump will make America sicker, poorer and much less secure

Keith Martin

President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the

Paris climate change accord flies in the face of his rallying cry to "Make

America Great Again." It will make America sicker, poorer and much less secure.

Trump has already begun dismantling many of the climate policies created under President Obama, including rules to phase out coal-fired power plants, increase restrictions on vehicle emissions and limit methane leaks from natural gas production. His recently released budget eliminates funding for research on climate change by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and the development of clean energy innovations at the Environmental Protection Agency. He's engaged in a full assault on any effort to address the existential threat of climate change.

By denying the reality of the catastrophe ahead, Trump isn't just ignoring the scientific community and the vast trove of evidence that clearly shows the impact carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses are having on our planet.

He's also ignoring his Defense Department.

On July 23, 2015, the Department of Defense released a report requested by the Senate Appropriations Committee titled, "National Security Implications of Climate Related Risks and a Changing Climate." The document was crystal clear: "DOD recognizes the reality of climate change and the significant risk it poses to US interests globally." It stated that "climate change is an urgent and growing threat to our national security, contributing to increased natural disasters, refugee flows, and conflicts over basic resources such as food and water."

Those serving in the military know better than anyone the effect that poverty, social tensions, environmental degradation, poor leadership and weak political institutions can have on nations. On their own these problems are major causes of instability. Compounded by climate change, they will only be

exacerbated, creating conflict and humanitarian disasters.

Rich nations such as the United States are not immune from the ravages of climate change. Flooding, drought, changing disease patterns (Zika, West Nile Virus, etc.) higher temperatures, more frequent and more severe extreme weather events, rising sea levels and warming oceans will hurt us just as they hurt poor nations.

Trump's cabinet members understand the threat outlined by the Department of Defense. Defense Secretary General James N. Mattis stated in his January confirmation hearings that "climate change can be a driver of instability and the Department of Defense must pay attention to potential adverse impacts generated by this phenomena."

On May 11, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, former CEO of Exxon Mobil, signed the Fairbanks Declaration in Alaska with foreign ministers from the other seven

nations in the Arctic Council. The declaration recognized the Paris accord and stated "that activities taking place outside the Arctic region... are the main contributors to climate change effects and pollution in the Arctic, underlining the need for action at all levels".

America's Defense Department, cabinet members, thousands of scientists and our G7 allies all support the Paris accord. They are all saying: Climate change is real; it's an enormous threat to our health, economics and security; and we must act now.

At his Rose Garden news conference announcing he was withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris accord, Trump said he was "elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris." Perhaps he doesn't realize it, or perhaps he simply doesn't care, but the citizens of Pittsburgh will suffer for this mistake along with everyone else on the planet.



Paris Climate Deal's Demise Means Steve Bannon Wins—and the Planet Loses

Lachlan Markay
& Asawin Suebsaeng

The United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord, President Donald Trump announced from the White House Rose Garden on Wednesday, capping an Apprentice-like internal struggle between the nationalist and the globalist factions of White House aides.

Trump cited the "draconian financial and economic burdens the agreement poses on our country" and his "solemn duty to protect America and its citizens" as his reasoning for triggering the U.S. exit from the deal.

The U.S. will "begin negotiations to re-enter either the Paris accord or an entirely new transaction on terms that are fair to the United States," Trump added. "We're getting out, but we're starting to negotiate to see if we can get a deal that's fair. If we can, that's great. If we can't, that's fine."

As Trump prepared to take the podium, chief White House strategist Steve Bannon, the man credited with keeping Trump on a path to Paris withdrawal, stood in the shade with a coterie of senior staff, surveying the scene. For Bannon, the United States' exit from the deal wasn't just a policy victory, it was personal vindication.

White House officials previewed the decision ahead of Trump's speech,

and noted that the process for fully withdrawing from the accord could be time-consuming, but that the U.S. will decline to adhere to terms of the deal negotiated by President Obama in the meantime.

"The president is going to follow the [withdrawal] procedures as required under the Paris agreement," White House energy policy adviser Michael Catanzaro told Republican Capitol Hill staffers on Wednesday afternoon. "We will initiate the process, which, all told, takes four years in total. But we're going to make very clear to the world that we're not going to be abiding by what the previous administration agreed to."

That four-year timeline means that the U.S. will be officially eligible to exit the Paris accord on November 4, 2020—a day after the next presidential election.

Trump's decision to withdraw from the deal—which the U.S. signed onto during the Obama presidency as an international measure to combat climate change, but which the Senate never officially ratified as a treaty—is set to have broad policy and environmental consequences on the global stage.

On a separate conference call on Wednesday, White House deputy communications director Raj Shah encouraged conservative pundits and representatives from free market think tanks to incorporate White House talking points into

statements, op-eds, and tweets supporting the president's decision.

"I can't explicitly state what the president is going to announce in an hour and a half, but I can say that I doubt folks on this call will be disappointed," Shah said. "I think he's going to make an announcement you're all going to be supportive and appreciative of."

Shah's assurances to those present on the call—including representatives from the American Enterprise Institute, the Heartland Institute, and the Competitive Enterprise Institute, all conservative or climate-skeptical think tanks—indicated the degree to which Trump's decision appealed to more ideological segments of the right-wing political world.

In the White House, that meant a victory for Trump's chief strategist Steve Bannon and his nationalist allies. The president's nixing of American participation in the Paris accord is the clearest sign yet that Bannon and his cohort are prevailing in an internal power struggle for the president's ear.

Ever since April—when West Wing feuding and infighting appeared to have temporarily back-benched Bannon—the nationalist crew on Trump's team have found ways behind-the-scenes to carefully reassert their policy and rhetorical influence over the president, and to gain back ground after many were

speculating that Bannon was on his way out.

For months, Bannon, Environmental Protection Agency administrator Scott Pruitt, senior policy adviser Stephen Miller, and others have been waging a cold war of ideas against a pro-Paris-deal faction within Trump's inner circle, which includes Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Trump's daughter and adviser Ivanka Trump.

Pruitt and Bannon in particular have helped coral conservative activists and leaders who have been more than happy to privately reinforce Trump's instinct and talking point that the U.S., coal miners, and the American worker are getting cheated by the Paris deal.

It's a uncompromising view of the Paris climate deal—which has among its other holdouts only Syria and Nicaragua—that Bannon has been advocating since before the Trump era began.

"Steve wants the Paris deal dead, gone, and buried, and the president is on his side on this one," an administration official close to Bannon told The Daily Beast. Officials spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to speak freely.

It's a high-profile policy victory for Bannon-world, and a defeat for those who Bannon and his camp derisively call the "globalists" and the centrist Democrats trying to steer Trump's administration to a

more moderate plateau. These centrist-leaning advisers include Ivanka, senior adviser and Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner, and economic adviser Gary Cohn, who were supposed to act as a stabilizing, moderating force within Trump's immediate orbit, on issues ranging from healthcare to global warming to social issues.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute's Myron Ebell, who led Trump's EPA transition team, called the internal battle between the White House's globalist and nationalist factions "a straightforward fight between the establishment and the conservative movement."

"But a more dramatic way of putting it," he added, "would be this is the latest example of the deplorables versus the swamp, and there are a number of representatives of the swamp in the administration."

Ebell singled out White House energy policy adviser George David Banks in particular, saying he had "ginned up" opposition to Paris

withdrawal among groups of business executives and foreign leaders who had reached out to the president to express their support for continued U.S. involvement in the accord.

But so far all attempts at supposed moderation have amounted to hype. Additionally, Kushner is now under federal scrutiny as a player in the expanding Trump-Russia fallout and controversy, and the all the stories and relentless leaking about how Bannon's days are numbered have all but evaporated in recent weeks.

"[Bannon and his allies are] back in full force," a senior Trump administration official told The Daily Beast this week. "But he never really went away. He strongly believes and says that Trump is a nationalist...at heart and will be with [him] when cards are on the table."

Other administration officials, however, are not happy that the narrative of internal White House squabbling has colored news of Trump's Paris Accord withdrawal. Pruitt wants to present a united

front. In his preferred narrative, withdrawing from Paris isn't good for one White House faction or another, it's good for America.

Privately, some officials are conceding that divisions do exist. But they say that's expected, even good, and not without recent precedent.

"The divide within the Trump Administration over the Paris accord is normal and healthy," another senior administration official insisted in an email, pointing to similar divisions in the George W. Bush administration.

Internally, officials are comparing infighting over Paris to similar Bush administration squabbling over the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, the last major international environmental agreement, to which the U.S. was not a party. Kyoto pit an administration faction led by then-vice president Dick Cheney, who opposed U.S. accession to Kyoto, against EPA administrator Christine Todd Whitman and Secretary of State Colin Powell.

As Cheney prevailed, so too has Bannon. Trump's retreat from the Paris accord is a fulfillment of a major campaign-trail promise to "cancel" U.S. involvement—and critics of the deal largely have Bannon to thank for it.

"He kept the president from going wobbly," one White House official added.

Almost immediately after Trump wrapped his remarks, protesters began to gather in front of the White House to rail against the president's latest policy move. Speakers denounced Trump's decision as not only a thumb in the eye of international action on climate change, but as a threat to national security, the economy, and generations to come.

Protesters and the rally leaders alike promised more mass protests to come, in the district and elsewhere.



Andelman : Trump to planet: Drop dead

(CNN)"America First" is becoming increasingly America alone. Somehow, Donald Trump has managed, with a single, desperate and ill-conceived stroke, to sever the United States from the rest of the world.

I was astonished 18 months ago to witness at the Le Bourget conference center outside Paris the extraordinary spectacle of nearly 200 countries actually agreeing on one central aspect of life on our planet -- the need to control the pollutants that are wreaking havoc on our decaying atmosphere and our climate.

Suddenly, now, it's the United States against everyone else on Earth.

It didn't have to be that way. Short of a total withdrawal -- an in-your-face slap to every world leader who signed the COP21 climate accord -- were any number of half-measures. Indeed, Trump had already taken several of them.

He effectively neutered the Paris Agreement through a series of executive orders, including his March 28 order that directed the Environmental Protection Agency to begin the process of withdrawing the Obama-era Clean Power Plan and reviving the nation's coal industry. "C'mon fellas," Trump beamed triumphantly to a group of coal miners at the signing ceremony. "You know what this is?

You know what this says? You're going back to work."

This assumed there'd be many customers for the coal these workers would now be authorized to mine. But, according to a CNN report this week, there has been no boom in coal jobs since the signing of the executive order.

Notably, the climate pact did not require formal national ratification as a treaty. It might not have gotten through the Senate, even back then. But it would have been more difficult to abrogate unilaterally, as the President has now done, since only Congress would have the power to retire from a formal treaty it had ratified.

Indeed, there are no formal penalties for nations that violate COP21. Even so, it would be impossible for the United States to formally withdraw from the pact before November 2019 unless it also withdrew from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change -- effectively thumbing our noses at not only climate change but the entire UN process, sadly not an impossible eventuality.

We might have been able to survive a hostile NATO, even a skeptical G7. But consider the consequences of our reneging on our commitments to COP21. Let's start with boycotts of goods from America produced in climate-denying factories, even tariffs against all such products; denials of American companies

seeking to acquire or partner with foreign firms in virtually every industry. There would be considerable motivation to have World Trade Organization rules restructured to make certain that no companies from the United States would ever again be able to do business in the international marketplace. To date, more than 300 American companies have already gone on the record opposing withdrawal, including Tesla's Elon Musk pledging to withdraw from all Trump advisory councils.

None of this is likely to happen immediately. Seas will not begin to rise uncontrollably. We can manage our sharply increased intensity of dramatic weather events. We can even -- as millions of Chinese must do -- breathe through masks when pollution become heavy enough to cut.

But when might we really begin to worry about our position on the planet? Just hours before the President's Rose Garden speech, the European Union and China announced they'd be teaming up: "Our successful cooperation on issues like emissions trading and clean technologies are bearing fruit. Now is the time to further strengthen these ties to keep the wheels turning for ambitious global climate action." Still, in the wake of the Trump decision, the United States risks being labeled "America the Ugly," while scientists, motivated by their own desire to

preserve the deteriorating environment, will be accumulating any possible evidence of our contributions to the global environmental crisis.

Recall, for a moment, Chernobyl. When the atomic cloud from the catastrophic meltdown of that Soviet nuclear plant in Ukraine began drifting westward across Europe and the entire Northern Hemisphere, the Kremlin remained unresponsive. The Soviet Union suffered an international ostracism that took years to repair. And that was a single cloud from a single event.

H.R. McMaster, the White House national security adviser who has morphed almost overnight from a respected general and global thinker to a Trump apologist, observed with fellow White House adviser Gary D. Cohn after the President's first trip across Western Europe that "America first does not mean America alone." Clearly both had little understanding of what awaits our country on the global scene once it sinks in what Trump's actions are doing to the rest of the global population -- the air and water we all breathe and consume.

For there is a far broader and deeper issue at stake here. The question now is one that even German Chancellor Angela Merkel danced around after Trump's comments at NATO. How can any nation ever trust America again? If America's elected President has

such profound powers to wreak havoc on the world in this fashion all but unilaterally and with a stroke of a pen or a poorly worded tweet, how can any nation take our word

on any international agreement we might sign?

Trump now risks plunging America into the position of the lone bully in

the lunchroom -- sitting all by himself as the world passes him by, lashing out sporadically in a fit of pique or violence (59 Tomahawks in Syria). Our paramount fear should

be that "Trump World" will last an irreversibly long time for the planet.



Did Donald Trump Just Make the Planet Hotter?

Robinson Meyer

The politics of climate change requires constantly comparing the very small and the very massive.

On the one hand, the carbon-dioxide molecule: three atoms, bound together by electromagnetism, that in sufficient quantities can reflect heat energy back to its source. On the other, the whole planet, our island in the sky, *Earth*: a medium-sized rock orbiting a medium-sized star, veiled in a thin layer of gas that determines when it rains, when it snows, whether it is a good home.

Between these two extremes hangs the entire phenomenon of climate change: a planetwide convulsion in the normal functioning of Earth's ocean currents and weather patterns. An excess of carbon dioxide in that narrow atmosphere has trapped a century of extra heat—pushing global temperatures higher and higher, reducing the polar ice caps to their lowest levels ever recorded, bleaching the Great Barrier Reef and cooking cities and towns in sweltering summer heatwaves.

Too many of those little molecules, it has become clear, risks subjecting Earth to the fastest climate change in 50 million years.

On Thursday in the Rose Garden, President Donald Trump made little note of that problem as he announced that he will withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, the first international treaty to combat climate change.

"I am fighting every day for the great people of this country. Therefore, in order to fulfill my solemn duty to protect America and its citizens, the United States will withdraw from the Paris climate accord," said Trump. He also said he would "begin negotiations to re-enter either the Paris accord or a really entirely new transaction on terms that are fair to the United States, its businesses, its workers, its people, its taxpayers."

"And if we can't, that's fine," he added.

Despite his decision to withdraw, the president will cohere to the legal terms of Paris. This means that the United States will not be able to give notice of its departure from the agreement until November 4, 2019, three years after the accord entered into force. And the country will not

technically leave Paris until November 4, 2020—one day after that year's presidential election.

What will this actually do to the Earth's climate? For those of us who have to live with the consequences of global warming—who plan on seeing 2060, or at least expect our children to see it—will this make their lives worse? Or will it have no effect at all?

To fully answer that question, it requires stepping back and looking at other big things: how the Paris agreement works, and how the rest of the international community plans to avoid the worst of global warming.

As I wrote earlier this week, the Paris Agreement works by a delicate consensus mechanism: Instead of mandating restrictions from the top down, it asks every country to submit a nonbinding, voluntary plan to reduce its own emissions. Starting in 2020, and every five years after that, countries will issue new plans describing how they will further decrease emissions.

The nonbinding nature of the treaty allowed powerful but rapidly developing countries like India and China to sign on. Their participation sets the agreement apart from the Kyoto Protocol, an earlier attempt at an international climate-change treaty. Kyoto, whose negotiations were led in part by then-Vice President Al Gore in 1997, faltered after George W. Bush abandoned it during his first months in office.

The Paris Agreement's voluntary nature also permitted the Obama administration to join the agreement through executive fiat. A Republican-controlled U.S. Senate would never have ratified a climate treaty, much less a binding one. From the U.S. legal perspective, Paris is essentially a UN resolution. Almost every clause describing U.S. involvement says that this country "should," not that it "will"—a meaningful legal difference.

Now, however, there is a different president, and the international politics of climate change have shifted. More than 140 countries have now ratified the Paris accord, meaning that it will stay in legal force even if the United States leaves. And China, sensing an opportunity, has taken up the mantle of diplomatic leadership on

this issue. It has joined with the European Union and promised to uphold the promises they made under the agreement. (Apart from the U.S., China and the EU are the two other major historical emitters of heat-trapping gases.)

Before this week, only two countries worldwide have exempted themselves from the agreement: Syria, which has been engaged in a hideous civil war since 2011; and Nicaragua, which argues the treaty is too weak and ineffective to combat climate change. Uzbekistan, previously the third holdout, joined the treaty in April.

Experts worry, though, that more countries could join them. Many developing countries—including Malaysia, the Philippines, and India, the fastest-growing country in the world—may abandon their promises if the United States strips the treaty of its diplomatic oomph. If they join Trump in renege—India especially—then the world could keep increasing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere for decades to come, and it would miss the last opportunity to hold an increase in global temperature below 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

That number—equal to 2 degrees Celsius—is considered the threshold at which changes to the global climate system would become dangerous and irreversible.

In important ways, however, the Trump administration had backed away from its Paris commitments long before Thursday.

When it signed on to Paris in 2015, the United States promised to cut its greenhouse-gas emissions 25 percent below where they stood in 2005. To meet these goals, the Obama administration advanced a slew of new executive policies, including the Clean Power Plan for the electricity sector, fuel-economy standards for cars, and a rule limiting how much methane could be freely vented from public lands.

In less than six months in office, the Trump administration has systematically rolled back these rules, ceded to court challenges against them, or signaled that it will not strictly enforce them. He has also asked Congress to cancel the subsidies for renewable energy, and his Department of Energy is pursuing policies that Chuck Grassley, a Republican senator

from Iowa, has decried as "anti-wind."

With those policy changes already taking effect, it seems unlikely that—even if the United States remained in Paris—it could still meet its commitments under the treaty.

And that raises a broader question about the health—and ultimate fate—of the U.S. renewable-energy industry. Without support from the government, or access to the developing market through UN climate talks, American firms may be at a disadvantage negotiating with developing countries. It will make it far easier for China and Germany's manufacturing sectors to dominate the renewable-energy industry, a trillion-dollar industry expected to more than quadruple in size.

Germany and China both aggressively subsidize their own clean-energy firms. And the EU and China have already planned to work closer with each other on climate-related research and technological development.

This possibility dominated a rare statement from Barack Obama, released as Trump was speaking. "The nations that remain in the Paris Agreement will be the nations that reap the benefits in jobs and industries. I believe the United States of America should be at the front of the pack," he said. "For the nations that committed themselves to that future, the Paris Agreement opened the floodgates for businesses, scientists, and engineers to unleash high-tech, low-carbon investment and innovation on an unprecedented scale."

If solar and wind companies in the United States falter—and if this country hunkers down into a fossil-fuel-dominated economy in the 2020s—then it may permanently deprive the American economy of a massive global opportunity. It could also undercut the U.S. claim to a century of global leadership on scientific research and technological development.

And perhaps most importantly, it will allow Germany and China to lead the world diplomatically on other issues, as well. At best, a Democratic president negotiating an international agreement which a Republican president then abandons will be interpreted as

instability; at worst, it will throw other U.S. diplomatic commitments into doubt.

"Global statecraft relies on trust, reputation and credibility, which can be all too easily squandered," has

warned George P. Shultz, the U.S. secretary of state under President Ronald Reagan. "If America fails to honor a global agreement that it helped forge, the repercussions will undercut our diplomatic priorities across the globe."

Which is to say: Trump's decision to withdraw from Paris matters insofar as it causes other systems—Indian participation in the treaty, the American solar and wind business, and U.S. diplomatic leadership in the world—to collapse. And it lets

us glimpse what this spinning world will look like in the decades ahead: hotter, more erratic, politically fractured, and facing toward Beijing.

**The
New York
Times**

Krugman : Trump Gratuitously Rejects the Paris Climate Accord

Paul Krugman

What would life in an economy that made such an energy transition be like? Almost indistinguishable from life in the economy we have now.

People would still drive cars, live in houses that were heated in the winter and cooled in the summer, and watch videos about superheroes and funny cats. There would be a lot of wind turbines and solar panels, but most of us would ignore them the same way we currently ignore the smokestacks of conventional power plants.

Wouldn't energy be more expensive in this alternative economy? Probably, but not by much: Technological progress in solar and wind has drastically reduced their cost, and it looks as if the same thing is starting to happen with energy storage.

Meanwhile, there would be compensating benefits. Notably, the adverse health effects of air pollution would be greatly reduced,

and it's quite possible that lower health care costs would all by themselves make up for the costs of energy transition, even ignoring the whole saving-civilization-from-catastrophic-climate-change thing.

The point is that while tackling climate change in the way envisaged by the Paris accord used to look like a hard engineering and economic problem, these days it looks fairly easy. We have almost all the technology we need, and can be quite confident of developing the rest. Obviously the transition to a low-emissions economy, the phasing out of fossil fuels, would take time, but that would be O.K. as long as the path was clear.

Why, then, are so many people on the right determined to block climate action, and even trying to sabotage the progress we've been making on new energy sources?

Don't tell me that they're honestly worried about the inherent uncertainty of climate projections. All long-term policy choices must be

made in the face of an uncertain future (duh); there's as much scientific consensus here as you're ever likely to see on any issue. And in this case, uncertainty arguably strengthens the case for action, because the costs of getting it wrong are asymmetric: Do too much, and we've wasted some money; do too little, and we've doomed civilization.

Don't tell me that it's about coal miners. Anyone who really cared about those miners would be crusading to protect their health, disability and pension benefits, and trying to provide alternative employment opportunities — not pretending that environmental irresponsibility will somehow bring back jobs lost to strip mining and mountaintop removal.

While it isn't about coal jobs, right-wing anti-environmentalism is in part about protecting the profits of the coal industry, which in 2016 gave 97 percent of its political contributions to Republicans.

As I said, however, these days the fight against climate action is largely driven by sheer spite.

Pay any attention to modern right-wing discourse — including op-ed articles by top Trump officials — and you find deep hostility to any notion that some problems require collective action beyond shooting people and blowing things up.

Beyond this, much of today's right seems driven above all by animus toward liberals rather than specific issues. If liberals are for it, they're against it. If liberals hate it, it's good. Add to this the anti-intellectualism of the G.O.P. base, for whom scientific consensus on an issue is a minus, not a plus, with extra bonus points for undermining anything associated with President Barack Obama.

And if all this sounds too petty and vindictive to be the basis for momentous policy decisions, consider the character of the man in the White House. Need I say more?

**The
Washington
Post**

Editorial Board : Trump turns his back on the world

ON MONDAY, the journal Nature Climate

Change published a study finding that global warming's effects on major world cities could be far more devastating than previously understood. Some cities, it found, could be a staggering 14.4 degrees warmer on average by the end of the century, causing a 10.9 percent decline in gross domestic product as people work less, air and water quality declined, and more energy was needed to cool buildings.

On Thursday, President Trump took a major step toward making this dystopia a reality.

In announcing that he will pull the United States out of the Paris climate agreement, Mr. Trump dealt a blow to the effort to slow climate change — but not only that. By joining Syria and Nicaragua as the only nonparticipants in the most consequential diplomatic effort of this century, he also dealt a blow to the U.S. leadership that has helped

promote peace and prosperity for the past seven decades under Republican and Democratic presidents alike. Under their guidance, the United States acted with selflessness and enlightened self-interest. The traits reflected in Mr. Trump's decision are self-defeating selfishness, insecurity and myopia.

A variety of factors contributed to the nation's post-World War II economic boom, but prominent among them was energetic internationalism. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which obliged countries to meet regularly and discuss improving the atmosphere for global trade, was one of the spectacularly successful U.S.-backed institutions that helped gradually remove barriers to economic exchange and innovation.

President Trump has decided to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement. Here's what you need to know. President Trump has decided to pull

the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement. Here's what you need to know.

The Paris agreement had the promise to be the 21st century's GATT, providing a framework in which countries would regularly convene and in which each nation would be expected to offer what more it could do to advance an essential global goal that no country could achieve alone — not freer trade, in this case, but heading off climate change's worst effects. The agreement bore an American stamp. It was fairer and more flexible than previous attempts to strike a global climate deal, with particular sensitivity to U.S. concerns that emissions limits not be imposed on any country.

The agreement was the world's best hope to ensure that big developing nations such as China and India did their share, addressing GOP concerns that these countries would refuse to sacrifice along with the United States. It did not lock in exactly how the United States and

other nations would help. Rather, it created an international expectation of voluntary commitments from every nation, enforced by diplomatic pressure. All of Mr. Trump's arguments for withdrawing, in other words, are unfounded. He could have adjusted, even minimized, the U.S. commitment without trashing the framework.

The president said Thursday that the United States might rejoin the Paris agreement after a period of renegotiation. But given the extent to which other nations already accommodated American demands, the prospect of a radically different treaty is fanciful. So what tangible benefit does this irrational decision bring to Americans? None. None at all.

Editorial Board : The clearest evidence yet that Trump is turning the U.S. into a force for bad in the world

With his announcement Thursday that he will pull the United States out of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, our petulant president has put the world on a path — potentially, but increasingly inevitably — to irreversible catastrophe. The decision fulfills Donald J. Trump's misguided campaign promise to withdraw from the pact under which nearly 200 nations (led, at the time, by the U.S.) pledged to try to reduce global warming by curtailing greenhouse gas emissions.

Trump's decision, while expected, is nonetheless stunning in its shortsightedness, its rejection of clear science, and its utter disregard for the nation's long-standing role as a world leader. To their credit, China and the European Union are greeting Trump's announcement with a pledge of their own to continue the fight against climate change, a move that places them in a prime position to reap the economic benefits of the future of renewable energy. And although the accord has no formal enforcement mechanism, the U.S. could find itself facing carbon-related tariffs on exports to the EU and countries that keep their commitments. That's a bad deal for American businesses and their workers.

The fight to counter global warming will be all the more difficult without the U.S., which pumped more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than any other nation — growing rich in the process — and continues to be the second-highest annual emitter behind China. This page has argued since shortly after Trump emerged as a serious contender for the Republican nomination that he is unfit in demeanor and background to be president, and much to the nation's detriment, he keeps proving us right. In fact, what better proof that Trump is irresponsible and reckless, and that his policies are depressing, demoralizing and scary, than this embrace of foolish isolationism — and this doubling down on an energy source that is in all likelihood going to cause massive disruptions in how humans inhabit the planet. Withdrawing from the Paris accord may be the clearest sign that Trump is not just retreating from decades of American leadership on the global stage, but that he is actually making the United States a force for bad and for wrong in the world.

Trump's rejection of the agreement — over the objections of not just global political leaders and the pope but even of Exxon Mobil, for God's sake — means this country will not

just cease to be part of the solution to the problem, but will put itself squarely on the other side, bolstering the credibility of the climate-change deniers, the anti-science hucksters and the irresponsible corporate cynics. It will strike a powerful blow against the common good from the coast of California to the melting permafrost of northern Alaska to the flood-prone lowlands along America's rivers to the hurricane-ravaged communities along the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. Globally, it could set us on track to what climate scientists agree will be intensified floods, famines and storms, rising seas and mass migrations fueling strife over water scarcity, declining food production and epidemics.

Further, the decision causes enormous injury to this country's reputation and to its role in the world. It's notable that only two nations didn't sign on to the Paris agreement. Nicaragua, to its credit, said no because the agreement is nonbinding, and the goal of capping emissions at 2 degree Celsius over pre-industrial levels is too low. It didn't sign because the deal wasn't good enough, compared with Trump's claim that it's a "bad deal" for the U.S. The other nonsigner is

war-ravaged Syria. And now Trump's America.

Getting out of the agreement will take time. The agreement went into effect Nov. 4, 2016, and Trump said he will follow the pact's procedures for dropping out, which include a ban on withdrawal by any nation for the first three years. So Trump can't take the first formal step until November 2019, and can't withdraw the U.S. until a year later — just after he presumably stands for reelection.

That might seem like political breathing room, but Trump also said he would immediately renege on Obama administration pledges to reduce emissions, and would cancel a promised \$3-billion contribution to help poor nations develop sustainable, rather than carbon-based, energy sources. And yet, bizarrely, Trump held out the possibility of negotiating a new climate agreement — as if the rest of the world might be waiting, breathlessly, to see what new ideas he could bring to the table.

But Trump has lost his moment. The world already has a global agreement and more reality-based and responsible leaders to show the way. Let's hope it's not too late.

Robinson : Trump is abdicating all the country's moral power

With his backward policies and his tiresome antics, President Trump seems to be trying his best to do something that ought to be impossible: make the U.S. presidency irrelevant to world progress.

Climate change offers one example. Trump tried hard to build suspense for Thursday's announcement about whether he would honor or trash the landmark Paris accord; doubtless he'd rather have attention focused on greenhouse gases than on the snowballing Russia investigations. At this point, however, I have to wonder what difference the decision to leave the agreement actually makes.

Trump's pro-coal program of deregulation — a quixotic attempt to revive an industry being strangled by global market forces, not politicians — and his boosterish advocacy of oil and gas mean the United States has little chance of meeting its Paris emissions targets anyway. The real-world impact of

Trump's choice is more diplomatic than environmental.

More important are his domestic policies. And even if Trump succeeds in weakening federal fuel-economy standards, automakers will be unable to ignore California's tougher requirements, which are also imposed by about a dozen other states — making up more than one-third of the U.S. vehicle market. The administration can seek to override the California standards, but such a move would lead to a lengthy court battle. George W. Bush filed such a challenge in 2007, but California sued, and the case was still pending when Barack Obama took office in 2009 and abandoned it.

The only other nations that have rejected the Paris pact are Syria and Nicaragua — not the kind of company the United States usually keeps. The rest of the world is going about the business of making big investments in clean-energy technology. The next breakthrough in solar power is likely to be made in China or Germany, not here.

Energy policy is just one area where Trump is encouraging the rest of the world to go on without us. Much more urgently, Trump has called into question the U.S. commitment to the transatlantic alliance, which for seven decades has been the world's most important guarantor of peace and engine of prosperity.

Following Trump's first overseas trip as president, which included NATO and Group of Seven summit meetings, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that Europe "really must take our fate into our own hands." She said the time when the continent could rely on others, meaning the United States, was "over to a certain extent."

Merkel is a cautious politician who carefully measures her words. There have been many times over the years when Europe and the United States were not on the same page, but this moment feels different. Trump has raised doubts about the relationship in a way none of his predecessors did even at moments of sharp disagreement.

Trump scolded European leaders for not spending more on defense, saying that they have failed to meet their "financial obligations" and that the status quo is "not fair to the people and taxpayers of the United States." He failed to offer an unconditional guarantee of European security. In private talks, he harshly complained about Germany's trade surplus with the United States.

Britain's Brexit vote and Trump's "America first" rhetoric appear to have ironically brought the continental members of the European Union closer together. Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the other nations in the bloc have the wherewithal to provide for their own defense — and surely will do so if they don't believe they can rely on the United States. Someone tell me how this would make the world safer.

Part of the problem is that the Europeans see Trump as going out of his way to forge a friendlier and more cooperative relationship with Russian strongman Vladimir Putin, whom E.U. members such as

Poland and the Baltic states rightly consider a threat.

Trump got a warmer welcome, and did less to give offense, during the Middle East leg of the trip. The speech in which he sought to address the Muslim world could

have been better but also could have been worse, given his previous antipathy toward the 1.6 billion followers of Islam.

But Trump has given responsibility for forging peace between Israelis and Palestinians to a total amateur,

his son-in-law, Jared Kushner. The president declines to adopt the customary U.S. stance in favor of democracy and human rights, instead offering autocratic leaders such as Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdul Aziz and Egypt's Abdel Fatah al-Sissi his uncritical

embrace. Such realpolitik has come back to haunt the United States in the past, and it will again.

Trump is abdicating all moral power. The world has no choice but to move on.



McCallion : Donald Trump's decision to pulling out of Paris climate agreement undermines U.S. leadership

If Russia's goal in meddling with our 2016 election in order to support the election of Donald Trump was to isolate the U.S. from the rest of the international community of nations and to weaken the NATO alliance standing in the way of Russia's ambitions to recover parts of eastern Europe that it had "lost" after the collapse of the Soviet Union, then it has succeeded beyond its wildest imagination.

Every one of the U.S.'s allies and trading partners has signed onto the Paris climate agreement, which has the goal of reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and slow the alarming rise in global temperatures. There are now 194 countries that have joined the agreement, with only two holdouts (Syria and Nicaragua).

The Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the agreement, not only jeopardizes this historic effort

to address the serious perils of climate change, but it marks the death knell of America's position for the past 70 years as the leader of the free world.

Since the end of World War II, the U.S. has — with limited exceptions — provided the leadership as well as the economic and military might to ensure that global and regional alliances promoting peace and stability can work effectively. In 1945, the international conference establishing the United Nations was sponsored by the U.S. in San Francisco, and it has been headquartered in New York City since then. The World Bank and the IMF are headquartered in Washington, D.C., and have helped contribute to global economic and financial stability for decades. In Western Europe, U.S. leadership of the NATO alliance has kept the peace in Europe and deterred the Soviet Union and its Communist

allies from engulfing our democratic allies in Western Europe.

When George W. Bush pulled the U.S. out of the Kyoto Protocol — an international treaty acknowledging that global warming exists and that that human-made CO2 emissions have caused it — the U.S.'s standing in the world was severely damaged and took years to repair. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell has recently acknowledged that the international and diplomatic "blowback" from this last attempt by a Republican administration to undermine international efforts to combat climate change was far greater than anticipated.

A similar blunder by the Trump administration with regard to the Paris accord would be likely to have even more severe consequences, given the fact that our allies are already questioning the U.S.'s willingness and ability to lead the Western democratic alliance. The

Trump White House has already caused consternation among our NATO allies by raising doubts as to whether the U.S. can continue to be relied upon to come to the defense of another NATO country that is attacked, and his suggestion that climate change is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese has made us the laughing stock of the rest of the world. Trump also could not resist picking a fight with German Chancellor Angela Merkel over trade and other issues during his recent overseas trip, and his ham-handed attempt to shove another leader out of the way during a photo-op did little to repair the damage that he has already caused to our standing among our European allies. Merkel has already started publicly talking about the necessity for Europe to forge its own destiny without the U.S., and this kind of thinking will only accelerate if the U.S. pulls out of the Paris accord.



El-Erian : Game Theory and Trump's Climate Negotiations

The run-up to the announcement by President Donald Trump on Thursday that the U.S. was withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement illustrated the inconsistent approaches being taken by America and other major countries. The longer this persists, the greater the possibility that America's pursuit of short-term benefits in certain areas would come not just at the risk of longer-term damage, but would also undermine an overall global construct that has served it well and could still do so over time.

After earlier threats to dismantle the North American Free Trade Agreement and impose punishing tariffs on China and Mexico, Trump alerted the other 194 signatories of the 2015 Paris accord that the U.S. was thinking about withdrawing from this laboriously negotiated agreement. This was met with dismay from several leaders of U.S. industry, countries, the United Nations and the Catholic Church, among others. It also led other systemically-important countries to

announce a commitment to abide by the terms of the agreement, regardless of what the U.S. ended up doing.

In this case, unlike with international trade, Trump made good on his warning. He announced that the U.S. would no longer be part of the accord, stop meeting financial and other requirements, and only rejoin if terms were renegotiated in his nation's favor.

Also, in contrast to existing trade arrangements where America's major trading partners (Canada, China and Mexico) signalled openness to negotiation before the U.S. took unilateral action, the rest of the world's positioning on the Paris accord issue failed to be sufficiently enlightened by the insights of game theory. As a result, it was ineffective in the short-run and will likely prove unsustainable over the longer-term.

To best understand this in simplified game theoretic, and using its terms, think of the U.S. as now having decided to play what used to be a cooperative global game in an

uncooperative manner. Given that it is the most powerful country in the world, it is a credible approach for the U.S. and one that, in certain circumstances, could even deliver immediate gains in the short-term.

In the particular case of the Paris accord, for example, the possible short-term benefits come from the notion that the U.S. can free-ride on the climate commitments of others, while minimizing its own financial contributions and retaining wide flexibility on how it promotes and uses its energy resources. Over the longer-term, however, the absence of the U.S. would severely undermine the beneficial impact of the agreement. And since the U.S. cannot insulate itself from the effects of global climate change, it would also face an array of environmental and environment-related threats.

This situation also puts other participants in a tough position.

While other nations can collude and try to go it alone, their collective action is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the objectives of the accord,

which was meant to be a building block rather than a destination. They would find themselves locked with the U.S. in a "prisoner's dilemma" -- that is, a scenario in which both parties end up in a worse situation than they would have otherwise realistically attained had they cooperated in a credible fashion. If they care about environmental sustainability, and they must, they would then have no choice but to try and come together with the U.S. in pursuit of a new collective solution to a common problem and a shared responsibility.

In the interim, the potential damage would not be limited to the environment. Given the deep nature of cross-border interconnections and interdependencies, such episodes erode the integrity and effectiveness of the global system, threatening costly fragmentation that reduces win-win outcomes, undermines collective action and forces a greater need for self-insurance by individual countries.

Had they been more open to insights from game theory, leaders of other systemically -important

countries might have been able to reduce the potential damage by pursuing an approach similar to the one U.S. trading partners adopted in response to American rhetoric on dismantling existing trade

agreements and imposing large tariffs: by preemptively signaling their willingness to negotiate and, thereby, giving the U.S. more incentives to retain a cooperative approach.

Many countries find distasteful the unilateral transactional approach that the U.S. is now willing to adopt on important cross-border interactions. Yet, as long as America is dominant in certain

areas and pursues tactical gains at the risk of longer-term strategic harm, they have few choices but to realign themselves for now to this new reality.



Bernstein : Trump's Paris Exit: Big Now, Not in 2020

Donald Trump's re-election chances are not about to tick this way or that because of his decision to exit the Paris climate accord.

Yes, environmentalism of all kinds polls very well among the population at large, while mainstream conservative Republicans are strongly opposed to this particular treaty. But it seems unlikely that this issue has the power to shift votes from one side to another. Few issues do. As political scientist Phil Klinkner tweets, most voters will evaluate Trump's decision based on what they think of Trump, rather than evaluate Trump based on this decision.

Purely in terms of domestic electoral politics, this action feels a lot like President George W. Bush's announcement to institute a moratorium on funding stem cell research. Commanding a primetime audience in his first year as president, it was covered as a major presidential moment. Yet no one would call it a factor in any major election since.

There are two potential exceptions to that prediction.

In the very short run, Trump's polling numbers could move in a way that influences political actors from Congressional Republicans to executive branch bureaucrats to governors. Currently around 40 percent approval, Trump's close to the lowest he's been at so far. It's anyone's guess as to whether a mainstream Republican position on an issue where the Democratic position is more popular will drag a few conservative and moderate Republicans back to him (because he's taking the Republican position) or whether it will push a few more independents and moderate Republicans away (because they tend to register approval for strong environmental policies). 1 Small changes in the president's approval level over the next month at least theoretically could affect such things as continuing recruitment for the 2018 election cycle and the degree to which Republicans stick with him on the Russia-Trump scandal. Then again, even a real short-term effect, if there is one, could fade within days.

In the long run, it turns out that November 4, 2020 -- the day after the next presidential election -- is the day the U.S. would formally exit, according to the rules of the agreement. That could mean more

coverage for the issue in the final days to that election, which could end up priming some voters to care more about that issue. Even if it doesn't affect votes, it could elevate climate on the candidates' agenda, which could have real governing effects going forward.

But that's about it. As far as substantive effects of this decision, good or bad, they are likely to be far too incremental and long-term to make any electoral difference at all. Trump will, of course, say that various job gains are a direct result of his policies -- but he would say that anyway, regardless of the connections between his policies and those jobs (or, for that matter, even regardless of whether there are any job gains to crow about). So I wouldn't count that as an effect.

Given all that, it was interesting that Trump's Rose Garden speech mostly avoided any anti-environmental rhetoric. Instead of withdrawing because climate change is (supposedly) a hoax, Trump asserted ("argued") would be too strong for his string of claims, many of which were not at all grounded in fact) that leaving Paris was necessary because the agreement was poorly negotiated, leading to both unfair treatment of

the U.S. and insufficient environmental gains.

In real life, Trump's claims that he would attempt to renegotiate Paris or negotiate a new, better agreement from scratch is preposterous. But it's a plausible-sounding way of getting out from an agreement the president and his party dislike for other reasons. After all, it always sounds reasonable at first thought that any deal could have been negotiated at least a little bit better. It's unclear as usual, however, whether Trump really believes that he is a brilliant bargainer or just knows that it's useful rhetoric or simply likes saying those words. At any rate, while it's possible other nations could offer him a fig leaf to re-enter the agreement and claim victory, there's no reason to believe either that the rest of the world would capitulate in any substantive way or that the Trump administration will put in any significant effort on attempting to renegotiate.

At any rate, I suspect the real effects of today's decision will be on international politics and on the actual substance of climate policy. Not on U.S. elections.



UNE - Why Paris Matters Less Than It Seems

Spencer Jakob

Investors will feel the impact of the U.S.'s pullout from the Paris climate agreement in surprising and, in some cases, counterintuitive ways.

Energy giants such as Exxon Mobil XOM 0.25% and ConocoPhillips, both of which supported the agreement, may get hit on the margin, even though the conventional wisdom has it that they would be big winners.

Meanwhile, actual U.S. greenhouse gas emissions may not be too different from what they might have been under a Hillary Clinton administration, though probably not what were pledged under former President Barack Obama. Market forces, such as cheap natural gas, will have a bigger effect on greenhouse gas emissions than the agreement would have.

Meanwhile, U.S. regulations aimed at meeting Paris goals weren't a burden for all. Exxon Mobil, for example, stood to benefit from at least three elements.

One was that stricter U.S. climate rules may have produced a slight drag on the demand for oil, a global commodity of which Exxon is only the sixth largest producer and far from the largest owner of reserves. But it would have been a definite boon to U.S. natural gas, a mostly landlocked market where Exxon was the No. 1 producer in 2015.

Another reason is that rules mandating the capture of methane, a potent greenhouse gas that escapes or is flared at some U.S. oil wells, hurts smaller competitors far more than it does Exxon or its peers. Big oil's wells are in large fields near pipelines where the methane already can be captured and turned into valuable fuels.

Third, Exxon clearly sought to placate shareholders, a majority of whom voted this week on a nonbinding proposal calling for it to reveal the impact of complying with climate change rules. Exxon faces state-level lawsuits alleging that it played down these risks.

The trajectory of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions under President Donald Trump's policies, even if they continue through the next presidential term, may be less than expected. Under the auspices of the Paris agreement, the Obama administration pledged to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by between 26% and 28% below the 2005 level by 2025. Much of that change already is well under way, though, as a result of factors outside of any president's control: slower economic growth following the financial crisis, the shale gas revolution that has replaced a third of coal use and shifting driving habits.

The Rhodium Group calculates that the U.S. still will come close to a 17% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as soon as 2020, though it predicts no more significant progress in the remaining five years. The U.S. Energy Information Administration projected shortly before Mr. Obama took office that greenhouse gas emissions would rise by about 1% a year in the next several years, but they fell sharply. Very little of that had to do with Mr. Obama's decisions.

Other policies will do relatively little to meet climate goals compared with the amount of media attention they receive. For example, state and federal tax breaks encourage sales of electric vehicle, but they are just 1% of all passenger vehicles sold today and on their current pace would reach 5% in 2025. Even if they were to do much better and reach 5% of all vehicles on the road by 2025, the reduction in total U.S. greenhouse gas

emissions would be about half of 1%, holding all else equal.

Other Obama policies curtailing power plant emissions and raising fuel economy standards for the auto industry may not have been all they

seemed to be. For example, natural gas should continue to replace older coal plants as long as the relative prices of the fuels remain at around today's levels, though perhaps more slowly. And auto makers would

likely have negotiated loopholes in fuel efficiency rules.

There is little doubt that some U.S. industries can celebrate the pullout. But governments around the world, and even in U.S. states such as

California, may force U.S. companies to adhere to stricter environmental rules anyway.

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

We'll Never Have Paris

The Editors

President Donald Trump has decided to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accord. The United States never should have been in it in the first place, and it's not even entirely clear that it ever was. In choosing American interests over Davos pieties — in the face of resistance from some within his own administration — the president here has made good on his promise to put America first. The Paris Agreement is a treaty in all but name: The European signatories put it through their usual treaty-ratification protocols, but the United States did not. President Obama went to great lengths to pretend that the treaty was something other than a treaty because he did not wish to submit it for ratification by the Senate, which was almost sure to reject it — as, indeed, the Senate would likely reject it today. In a government of laws, process matters. Substance matters, too, and here the Paris Agreement is deficient. Even if one accepts, for the sake of argument, the alarmist interpretation of climate-change data, the Paris Agreement is unlikely to produce the desired result — and may not produce any result at all. Two countries that are responsible for a large share of greenhouse-gas emissions — China and India, the world largest and fourth-largest carbon dioxide

emitters, respectively — have made only modest commitments under the agreement, which puts most of the onus on the more developed nations of North America and Western Europe. Both would continue to emit more carbon dioxide through at least 2030, and both have chosen, as their major commitment, not reductions in total emissions but reductions in “carbon intensity” — meaning emissions per unit of GDP. But these improvements are likely to happen anyway, irrespective of treaties or public policy, due to ordinary economic changes, such as the growth of the low-impact services sector relative to heavy industry, the aging-out of high-emissions vehicles, and the replacement of antiquated infrastructure. There may be a certain humanitarian appeal in asking the richer nations to pay the higher price, but the developed world already is far more efficient in its use of energy. If you measure greenhouse-gas emissions relative to economic output, the United States already is more than twice as green as China, and it is a middling performer on that metric: France is five times as efficient, Norway and Sweden six times. The real cost of marginal emissions reductions is necessarily going to be much higher in Switzerland than it is in Mongolia. The Paris Agreement fails to take that economic reality into account,

and it does so in ways that could end up making emissions worse rather than improving them. For example, limiting the amount of coal consumed by North American power plants would not necessarily reduce the amount of coal consumed on Earth — and climate change is, famously, a planetary issue — but would instead most likely result in shifting coal consumption from relatively clean North American facilities to relatively dirty ones in China — the U.S. already is a net exporter of coal, and China is the world's largest importer of it. Global energy markets are no great respecters of idealism, and the gentlemen in Beijing and New Delhi (and elsewhere) cannot reasonably be expected to adopt policies that will materially lower the standards of living of their respective peoples in order to satisfy the moral longings of Western elites. We don't expect the powers that be in Washington to do so, either, and Trump here has chosen the right course. The total costs of climate change to the United States would run less than 2 percent of GDP a century from now. If you consider climate change a moral issue — and acting on it a moral imperative — then the Paris Agreement might look attractive: The desire to do something, anything at all, is very strong in environmental circles. But the question is more intelligently viewed

as a question of risk assessment and cost-benefit trade-offs, in which case planning for future adaptation programs is the more intelligent course of action. As the Natural Resources Defense Council estimates the costs (and NRDC is not exactly the Heritage Foundation), the total costs of climate change to the United States — expansively defined to include everything from hurricane damage to higher food costs — would run less than 2 percent of GDP a century from now. Other studies have produced similar findings. Taking radical and expensive action in the present to avoid the possibility of a 1.8 percent hit to a GDP that will be much larger in the year 2100 than it is today is a losing proposition — especially given that the Paris Agreement is far from guaranteed to produce any meaningful results. Climate change presents the world with genuine risks, and there is of course room for international action in addressing them. But the Paris Agreement takes the wrong approach, committing the United States to a high-cost/low-return program that secures neither our national interests nor global environmental interests. It is part of the Obama administration's legacy of putting sentiment over substance, and the United States is better off without it.



Paris Can Wait—It Was a Bad Deal

Matt Lewis

During a Rose Garden speech on Thursday, President Trump announced that the United States would “withdraw from the Paris climate accord, but begin negotiations to re-enter either the Paris accord or an entirely new transaction on terms that are fair to the United States.”

This was greeted with predictable scorn. Supporters of the Paris climate deal present a false choice. You either (a) believe in the scientific consensus about climate change (in which case, you support Paris), or (b) you are a denier. But they are missing a third option, which is that (c) this is simply a bad deal in terms of the cost-benefit analysis.

Why is it a bad deal? There are no consistent standards for participation. Countries unilaterally decided what voluntary and non-binding commitment they wanted to pledge. The United States will cut emissions 26-28 percent by 2025—a pledge that is much more rigorous than other nations. “They can do whatever they want for 13 years,” Trump said of China. “Not us.” (Note: Technically, China has obligations that must be fulfilled by 2030.)

Calling the agreement a “massive redistribution of United States wealth to other countries,” Trump said, “The rest of the world applauded when we signed the Paris agreement [because] it put the United States in a very big economic disadvantage.”

According to one report commissioned by the American Council for Capital Formation with support from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institute for 21st Century Energy, “the Paris climate accord could cost the U.S. economy \$3 trillion and 6.5 million industrial sector jobs by 2040...”

One might argue that this is a matter of life or death, so the sacrifice is justified if it saves humanity. Here's where the deal really falls apart. According to another study, the Paris deal would shave about 0.2 degrees off warming by 2100. You heard me right. Assuming everything works perfectly according to plan, we could plausibly be trading 6.5 million jobs for a 0.2-degree payoff.

But remember, there is no enforcement mechanism. These pledges are not binding. So even if you assume the best case scenario regarding predictive models, there's no guarantee other countries will follow through.

“Tiny, tiny, amount,” Trump said—speaking of the amount of warming that would be mitigated. He has a point: Even if we assume global warming is a serious problem, is the payoff worth the tradeoff in terms of lost jobs and higher energy costs? This is a legitimate public policy debate.

Of course, there are always political considerations. For a president who promised to put America first—and who won election on the support of working-class Americans in the Rust Belt—this was perfectly on-

message and on-brand. The issue transcends the environment, extending to jobs and the economy—and even to national identity. As Trump said, “our withdrawal from the agreement represents a reassertion of America’s sovereignty.”

American liberals are up in arms, claiming this signals the end of American leadership. Some are going so far as to suggest what he is doing is “traitorous” (Tom Steyer) and a “crime against humanity” (Michael Moore). This sounds like harsh rhetoric aimed at a president who is pulling out of a non-binding

and voluntary agreement—and keeping the door open to renegotiating entry.

Just as this issue divides a nation, the Trump administration was divided over this decision, with Jared Kushner, Ivanka Trump, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, and Energy Secretary Rick Perry all in the stay camp. EPA Director Scott Pruitt and Trump’s chief strategist Steve Bannon were reportedly in the withdraw camp. These individuals represent different interests. This issue pits cosmopolitan interests against more

populist and nationalist sympathies.

But maybe there is a third way? The notion that Trump had to either abide by President Obama’s bad deal or withdraw was yet another false choice. If we are to take him at his word, he is leaving open the possibility of negotiating a new deal, making it more favorable.

This won’t be easy. Already, France and Germany are saying they “firmly believe that the Paris Agreement cannot be renegotiated.” But the goal should be to find a solution that would allow America to

maintain a leadership position in the world—both morally, and in terms of clean energy—that would simultaneously limit the jobs losses.

Elections have consequences. Donald Trump would never have cut this lopsided deal, and there shouldn’t be any expectation he will abide by it today. “I cannot in good conscience support a deal that punishes the United States,” he said. “I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris.”

In other words, America comes first. Paris can wait.



Inhofe : Paris Agreement held back U.S. energy leadership

In light of his recent travels abroad and ensuing affirmations of America’s partnership moving forward, President Trump is now set to make a decision as to whether he will withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement.

The Paris Agreement was a false promise from the start, committing the United States to an unattainable 26-28% reduction by 2025. This commitment, and remaining in the Paris Agreement, not only threatens Trump’s goals abroad, but it threatens our energy producers at home as well.

Remaining in the Paris Agreement could force the Trump administration to unnecessarily regulate greenhouse gases, in turn limiting his and EPA Administrator

Scott Pruitt’s ability to rescind the Clean Power Plan.

This is because the United States is required under Section 115 of the Clean Air Act to take regulatory action in order to limit any international pollutant after two tests are met. First, a finding must establish that a pollutant from the United States is endangering the public health or welfare of another country; and second, the endangered country gives the United States reciprocal rights to prevent or control pollution from them in turn.

Environmentalists believe that the Paris Agreement meets that reciprocal test.

Absent withdrawal from the agreement, these environmental extremists will have a heyday

working to block the rollback of the Clean Power Plan or even to compel further regulation under Section 115. If we stay in the Paris Agreement, we can rest assured Democrats will use every legal tool available to keep greenhouse gas regulations in place — and they could be successful.

This is not a secret. David Bookbinder, formerly chief counsel of the Sierra Club, stated that together the Paris Agreement and Section 115 are the “silver bullet de jour of the enviros.” And their intent to use it is real. New York and Vermont Attorneys General recently wrote to their colleagues “states must still play a critical role in ensuring that the promises made in Paris become a reality.”

Further, by pulling out of the Paris Agreement, Trump is further

demonstrating his prioritization of American energy dominance. We must do everything in our power to advance the development of domestic energy to lead the world away from dependence on energy-rich regimes like Iran and Russia.

Since electing Trump, U.S. exports of natural gas and oil are up 32% and 9.2%, respectively. As each shipment reaches the banks of Europe and Asia, the oppressive grips of Putin and the Ayatollah on our closest friends lighten. Our abundance is a competitive advantage that we can share freely with our allies.

Remaining in the Paris Agreement could hinder Trump’s energy dominance agenda. This risk is not worth taking.



Wicker : Trump was right in pulling the U.S. out of Paris agreement

Last month, I signed a letter with 21 of my Senate colleagues urging President Trump to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement. The 2015 deal made by the Obama administration runs counter to the actions President Trump has taken to deliver regulatory relief to American families and workers since he took office.

Chief among those actions is an executive order to end President Obama’s so-called Clean Power Plan. The carbon dioxide rules at the center of the Clean Power Plan

amount to an intrusive overreach, and the Supreme Court has halted their implementation.

The Paris agreement stood in the way of President Trump’s efforts to eliminate these costly carbon dioxide rules. But this would be the least of its harm. A report released in March by NERA Economic Consulting suggests that the climate deal could cost the U.S. economy nearly \$3 trillion and more than 6 million industrial sector jobs by 2040.

Like many Americans, I questioned what this hefty price tag would

actually buy. There is little evidence that the Paris agreement would significantly reduce the growth of global temperatures — or that it would substantially change the level of the seas. In other words, why should we put American livelihoods at risk and subject U.S. sovereignty to international litigation when the climate change agreement offers little return on its investment?

Americans who are concerned about carbon dioxide should be pleased with recent developments. Market-driven solutions helped reduce CO2 emissions by 12% in the past decade. Besides, the

United States already engages with other countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a treaty adopted by the Senate in 1992. Under the Constitution, legally binding treaties require a two-thirds majority of the Senate.

The Paris deal would have threatened our country’s prosperity. Because job creation is one of President Trump’s principal goals, I am glad he has initiated what our letter suggested: “Make a clean break from the Paris agreement.”



Boot : Why did Trump withdraw from Paris? To appease his base

Why did President Trump decide to withdraw from the 2015 Paris climate agreement? It is, after all, a nonbinding accord dependent on voluntary commitments to reduce

greenhouse emissions. President Obama pledged fairly aggressive action by the U.S., including significant reductions in emissions from power plants that run on fossil fuels. But it would be easy to undo his proposed cutbacks without

leaving the Paris agreement. In fact Trump has *already* done that. In March, he signed an executive order “aimed,” in CNBC’s words, “at rolling back a number of Obama-era climate policies.”

This action sparked criticism from environmentalists, but was not big news to the world at large. So why provoke a global firestorm of criticism? Why join Syria and Nicaragua as the only nations to renounce the Paris agreement? For

Trump, the criticism is precisely the point. It's an easy way for him to signal to his base that he is implementing his campaign rhetoric of "nationalism" over "globalism."

It's the same reason he pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a proposed free trade zone among 12 Pacific nations. And the reason he almost pulled out of NAFTA before reluctantly promising to renegotiate it. And why on his recent jaunt to Europe he refused to affirm Article V, the mutual defense provision of NATO.

Trump, married three times, is allergic to binding commitments. He has always been "me first" in his private life — his foundation notoriously invested in Trump portraits, not in actual charitable works — and predictably his foreign policy is "America First." Give Trump points for consistency: It turns out he has not been tamed by the "grown-ups" in his administration, such as chief economic advisor Gary Cohn, national security advisor H.R. McMaster, and Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis. But in pursuing a radical, quasi-isolationist

foreign policy, he is putting America's *true* interests last.

The U.S. does not benefit when the law of the jungle prevails, as it did in 1914 and 1939. The U.S. has experienced an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity in the post-World War II era precisely because the Greatest Generation, having paid the cost of post-1918 isolationism, chose to pursue a more magnanimous vision of American power.

Rather than trying to impoverish our onetime adversaries, we rebuilt Germany, Italy and Japan as economic powerhouses closely allied with the United States. Rather than going it alone, we built up a whole network of international institutions — the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (now the World Trade Organization), NATO and other, shorter-lived security organizations such as SEATO and the Baghdad Pact — designed to promote the rule of law around the world.

The United States' critics were always suspicious of this institution-building, because they saw it as a cover for American hegemony, and they were in large measure right. But it was a benevolent hegemony that benefited both the U.S. and our allies without threatening anyone who did not already threaten us.

This is the reason no international coalition arose to resist American power as one did to resist every previous would-be hegemon from Philip II's Spain and Napoleon's France to Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. There has always been plenty of anti-Americanism around the world, but at the end of the day most nations understood that an alliance with the United States would enhance, not diminish, their peace and prosperity. We did not always implement our ideals — hypocrisy is the coin of the realm in international affairs — but the secret of our success was that we were a relatively benign superpower that championed a vision of human dignity that appealed to ordinary people everywhere.

Trump seems oblivious to this reality. He sees every international treaty as a racket and every alliance as a ripoff. But by destroying the foundations of the international order that the U.S. built, he risks destroying the unprecedented power and wealth we have accumulated since 1945.

If the U.S. pursues a "me first" policy, then every country in the world will do the same — and the result will be international lawlessness. Predatory states such as Iran, Russia and China will do well in the resulting chaos, while our allies — if we have any left — will suffer. If history is any guide, the U.S. will not be able to stay aloof from the consequences of this new disorder: Our trade and security will be imperiled. Ultimately we are likely to be drawn into conflicts that could have been avoided had we maintained our position as Leader of the Free World, a hard-won achievement that Trump appears intent on frittering away with his characteristic recklessness and thoughtlessness.

POLITICO Grunwald : Why Trump Actually Pulled Out Of Paris

It wasn't because of the climate, or to help American business. He needed to troll the world—and this was his best shot so far.

Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement was not really about the climate. And despite his overheated rhetoric about the "tremendous" and "draconian" burdens the deal would impose on the U.S. economy, Trump's decision wasn't really about that, either. America's commitments under the Paris deal, like those of the other 194 cooperating nations, were voluntary. So those burdens were imaginary.

No, Trump's abrupt withdrawal from this carefully crafted multilateral compromise was a diplomatic and political slap: it was about extending a middle finger to the world, while reminding his base that he shares its resentments of fancy-pants elites and smarty-pants scientists and tree-hugging squishes who look down on real Americans who drill for oil and dig for coal. He was thrusting the United States into the role of global renegade, rejecting not only the scientific consensus about climate but the international consensus for action, joining only Syria and Nicaragua (which wanted an even greener deal) in refusing to help the community of nations address a planetary problem. Congress doesn't seem willing to pay for Trump's border wall—and

Mexico certainly isn't—so rejecting the Paris deal was an easier way to express his Fortress America themes without having to pass legislation.

Trump was keeping a campaign promise, and his Rose Garden announcement was essentially a campaign speech; it was not by accident that he name-dropped the cities of Youngstown, Ohio, Detroit, Michigan, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, factory towns in the three Rust Belt states that carried him to victory. Trump's move won't have much impact on emissions in the short term, and probably not even in the long term. His claims that the Paris agreement would force businesses to lay off workers and consumers to pay higher energy prices were transparently bogus, because a non-binding agreement wouldn't force anything. But Trump's move to abandon it will have a huge impact on the global community's view of America, and of a president who would rather troll the free world than lead it.

Of course, trolling the world is the essence of Trump's America First political brand, and Thursday's announcement reinforced his persona as an unapologetic rebel who won't let foreigners try to tell America what to do, even when major corporations, his Secretary of State, and his daughter Ivanka want him to do it. He was also leaning into his political identity as Barack Obama's photographic negative,

dismantling Obama's progressive legacy, kicking sand in the wimpy cosmopolitan faces of Obama's froufrou citizen-of-the-world pals.

But it's important to recall what Obama did and didn't do when he led the community of nations to a deal in Paris. He didn't let the world dictate U.S. energy policy, because Paris is only a mechanism for announcing national commitments to cut emissions, not for enforcing those commitments. He didn't commit America to unrealistically ambitious emissions goals, either, just a 27 percent reduction from 2005 levels by 2025, not that drastic considering that the U.S. led the world in emissions before Obama and led the world in emissions reductions under Obama. Our electricity sector has already achieved that 27 percent goal, thanks to the continuing decline of coal power, and while our transportation sector has a long way to go, Obama's strict fuel-efficiency standards and the expansion of electric vehicles has it heading in the right direction. The real triumph of Paris wasn't America's promises; it was the serious commitments from China, India and other developing nations that had previously insisted on their right to burn unlimited carbon until their economies caught up to the developed world.

Similarly, it's important not to exaggerate the substantive impact of Trump's decision to bail on Paris, which will officially remove the

United States from the agreement in late 2020 at the earliest. It's a signal that the U.S. government no longer cares about the climate, but that's been abundantly clear ever since Trump won the election and appointed an energetic fossil-fuel advocate named Scott Pruitt to run the EPA. Leaving Paris won't reverse the rapid decline of coal or the boom of cleaner energy in America, because the economics of coal have fallen apart while the cost of wind and solar have plummeted, and it won't stop that same trend in China, India and the rest of the world. By the same token, if Trump had announced today that he was staying in the Paris deal, that wouldn't have meant that Trump was abandoning his efforts to gut Obama's climate regulations (like the Clean Power Plan for the electricity sector) and other climate policies (like those fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks). Really, it would have been pretty weird for Trump to remain in the deal while trying to undermine everything the U.S. was doing to live up to its commitments.

Meanwhile, the earth is still warming, the polar ice caps are still melting, and the seas are still rising, heedless of the inspiring words committed to paper in Paris, and just as heedless of a noisy American politician's decision to reject them. Trump may believe climate change is a hoax manufactured in China, and congressional Republicans may continue to oppose any action to

address it, but that won't make the physical realities of climate-driven droughts, floods, pandemics and refugee migrations any less brutal. It's reminiscent of the old riddle: If you call a tail a leg, how many legs does a horse have? Four, because a tail is not a leg. Trump can call global warming a hoax, but 2014 was nevertheless the hottest year on record, until it was displaced by 2015, which was overtaken by 2016. That tail is not a leg.

Still, it matters that the president of the United States seems to think it is, and no matter what he thinks, it matters more that he's announcing to the nations of the world that he intends to ignore an issue they consider vital to the planet. He is creating an intentional leadership vacuum, dispensing with the longstanding notion of the United States as the indispensable nation—just as he did when he withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal in Asia, with his tepid commitments to NATO on his trip to Europe, and with his proposal for drastic budget cuts in foreign aid and international diplomacy. He is making it clear that America First means the problems of the world are not America's

problems. He's opening the door for China and Europe to take over the role of global leaders on climate change, and maybe the world's other major problems.

The thing is, climate change is absolutely America's problem, not just in the long run but now; scientists believe it has already exacerbated the human and economic losses from California's drought, Superstorm Sandy, and the Zika virus. At the same time, the battle against climate change is an American opportunity; the U.S. solar industry already employs twice as many workers as the U.S. coal industry, and climate solutions in general—not just renewables but energy-efficient products and materials, batteries and other storage, sustainable forestry, carbon capture, and much more—will be one of the biggest growth sectors of the 21st century. Trump is basically telling clean-energy innovators they should go create jobs somewhere else.

The entire debate over Paris has twisted Republicans in knots. They used to argue against climate action in the U.S. by pointing out that it wouldn't bind China and other developing-world emitters; then they

argued that Paris wouldn't really bind the developing world, either, but somehow would bind the United States. In fact, China is doing its part, dramatically winding down a coal boom that could have doomed the planet, frenetically investing in zero-carbon energy. And it will probably continue to do its part even though the president of the United States is volunteering for the role of climate pariah. It's quite likely that the United States will continue to do its part as well, because no matter what climate policies he thinks will make America great again, Trump can't make renewables expensive again or coal economical again or electric vehicles nonexistent again. California just set a target of 100 percent renewable energy by 2045, and many U.S. cities and corporations have set even more ambitious goals for shrinking their carbon footprints. Trump can't do much about that, either.

What Trump can do is remind his supporters—and everyone else on the planet—which side he's on, and, more to the point, which side he's fighting. He's taking a shirts-and-skis stand against liberals, against goo-goos, against condescending scolds in Birkenstocks who don't like

Styrofoam or hulking SUVs or real Americans, against naïve globalists who want the U.S. to suck up to the French and the Chinese and the United Nations. Climate change will affect the entire earth, from drought-ravaged farm villages in Africa to floodprone condo towers in Miami, but for Trump it's just a symbol of the stuff that people who don't like Trump care about. Paris is just an Obama legacy that he can kill, when he doesn't have the votes to kill Obama's health reforms or Wall Street regulations or tax hikes on the wealthy. Whatever damage Trump's climate policies cause to the planet will be collateral damage, shrapnel from his political war on elites and the left and Obama.

But that won't make the damage any less real. The United States happens to be located on that planet, and it's the only known planet with pizza, whether the president wants to protect it or not. The United States is also part of the community of nations, and it's a community with many common interests, whether the president wants to lead it or not.



Robertson : Trump should start thinking about how history will remember him

(CNN)Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate deal will have come as no surprise in Scotland.

Before becoming President, Trump fought a long battle with the Scottish government over 11 wind turbines.

The "green energy" wind farm was to be built just off the coast from his newly acquired Trump International Golf Links.

So bitter was Trump's opposition to the plan, his attorneys took the case to court. Trump even gave testimony at a government hearing, decrying the environment-friendly project as bad for his investment in the golf course:

"I've spent a tremendous amount of money, debt-free, no debt on the property, nothing, building what many are already considering to be the greatest golf course anywhere in the world. I don't want to see it destroyed by having 11 monstrosities built, looming over it."

As Trump's refusal to sign up for the Paris Agreement on climate change became clear last weekend at the G7 summit in Sicily, his chief economic adviser, Gary Cohn, struggled to convince reporters of

his boss' environmental bona fides, saying:

"He reiterated his views on the environment -- he did, quote, say, 'The environment is very, very important to me, Donald Trump. I care a lot about the environment.' He talked about environmental awards that he has received in the past so he didn't want anyone to think that he didn't care about the environment. He very much cares about the environment."

In the villages around Trump's Aberdeenshire golf complex, folks remember not an entrepreneur who brought much needed jobs to the area but a bully who not only fell short of his lofty employment ambitions, but carved out his fairways and bunkers in a rare and environmentally unique area of sand dunes that have for millennia been slowly shifting along the coast, molding and migrating with the changing seasons and wind.

So bad was his falling out with the locals, Trump wrote 16 increasingly angry letters to Scotland's then-first minister, the famed Scottish Nationalist Alex Salmond, whom Trump had at one time befriended.

On April 19, 2012, in letter No. 8, Trump declares: "Your economy will become a third world wasteland that global investors will avoid. ... I love Scotland and only have its best interests at heart."

His 10th letter to Salmond on May 2, 2012, exposes the heart of Trump's concerns again: Money is more valuable than the environment. "You are single-handedly destroying the economic well-being of a great country. ... Your idea of independence is 'Gone With the Wind.'"

Trump tries every trick in the book to get his way, even invoking his long-dead mother, who was born hundreds of miles from the golf course, on the sodden, windblown Scottish Isle of Lewis: "I am doing this to save Scotland and (honor) my mother, Mary MacLeod, who as you know was born and raised in Stornoway. She would not believe what you are doing to her beloved Scotland."

Now the same question is on Trump, only writ large on the planet.

While other world leaders from Edinburgh to Berlin, Beijing to Moscow and beyond have pledged their support for the climate change accord, America -- a global leader per capita in carbon emissions -- is

distancing itself from the global mainstream.

The same evolution that created the sand for Trump's golf bunkers, put fish in the sea and wheat in bread has delivered the planet to a moment of choice: change or risk destroying it all.

A few weeks ago in Milan, Italy, former President Barack Obama, who oversaw America's backing for the Paris accord, laid out a stark view of the climate today: Seas are to rise by 3 feet, even if carbon cutting climate controls were enforced immediately. If nothing is done, then seas could rise by as much as 10 feet.

Most of the world's population live on coasts, he warned. Mass migration for food will also become an issue, he told the crowd of government ministers, food and climate experts.

Obama's message -- control of our climate is not an option, it's an imperative -- left no room for doubt. If there were any dissenters in the audience, they didn't let it be known. Instead he was lauded as a leader who, despite his foreign policy failings on Syria and elsewhere, had delivered the single biggest contribution to global well-being by shifting to supporting the climate

accord, adding the critical mass to make the agreement meaningful.

Over time, Trump's reversal risks seeing Obama's dire warnings realized. In the short term, it reinforces the growing fears of European leaders that trans-Atlantic ties are weakening. In the words of German Chancellor Angela Merkel,

we must "fight for our own future ourselves."

Trump's decision will touch all our lives -- and the lives of our children perhaps more profoundly than we can imagine. It won't just change the weather but the global political order.

In his own words, in another of his numerous letters to Salmond, the Scottish leader, about the Aberdeenshire wind farm, Trump tries flattery to get his own way. "History has proven conclusively that the world's greatest leaders have always been those who have been able to change their minds for the good. I will be your greatest

cheerleader if you modify your stance."

Where he stands today, Trump may want to reread some of his letters and reflect on how history will remember him.

The New York Times **UNE - Trump Hands the Chinese a Gift: The Chance for Global Leadership**

David E. Sanger and Jane Perlez

"The irony here is that people worried that Trump would come in and make the world safe for Russian meddling," said Richard N. Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, who was briefly considered, then rejected, for a top post in the new administration. "He may yet do that," Mr. Haass added, "but he has certainly made the world safe for Chinese influence."

The president, and his defenders, argue that such views are held by an elite group of globalists who have lost sight of the essential element of American power: economic growth. Mr. Trump made that argument explicitly in the Rose Garden with his contention that the Paris accord amounted to nothing more than "a massive redistribution of United States wealth to other countries."

In short, he turned the concept of the agreement on its head. While President Barack Obama argued that the United Nations Green Climate Fund — a financial institution to help poorer nations combat the effects of climate change — would benefit the world, Mr. Trump argued that the American donations to the fund, which he halted, would beggar the country.

"Our withdrawal from the agreement represents a reassertion of America's sovereignty," Mr. Trump said.

That, in short, encapsulates how Mr. Trump's view of preserving American power differs from all of his predecessors, back to President Harry S. Truman. His proposed cuts to contributions to the United Nations and to American foreign aid are based on a presumption that only economic and military power count. "Soft power" — investments

in alliances and broader global projects — are, in his view, designed to drain influence, not add to it, evident in the fact that he did not include the State Department among the agencies that are central to national security, and thus require budget increases.

It will take years to determine the long-term effects of his decision to abandon the Paris agreement, to the environment and to the global order. It will not break alliances: Europe is hardly about to embrace a broken, corrupt Russia, and China's neighbors are simultaneously drawn to its immense wealth and repelled by its self-interested ambitions.

But Mr. Trump has added to the arguments of leaders around the world that it is time to rebalance their portfolios by effectively selling some of their stock in Washington. Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany has already announced her plan to hedge her bets, declaring last weekend after meeting Mr. Trump that she had realized "the times when we could completely rely on others are, to an extent, over."

That may be temporary: It is still possible that Mr. Trump's announcement on Thursday will amount to a blip in history, a withdrawal that takes so long — four years — that it could be reversed after the next presidential election. But for now it leaves the United States declaring that it is better outside the accord than in, a position that, besides America, has so far only been taken by Syria and Nicaragua. (Syria did not sign on because it is locked in civil war, Nicaragua because it believes the world's richest nations did not sacrifice enough.)

But it is the relative power balance with China that absorbs anyone who studies the dance of great powers. Even before Mr. Trump's announcement, President Xi Jinping had figured out how to embrace the rhetoric, if not the substance, of global leadership.

Mr. Xi is no free trader, and his nation has overtaken the United States as the greatest emitter of carbon by a factor of two. Only three years ago, it was a deal between Mr. Obama and Mr. Xi that laid the groundwork for what became the broader Paris agreement.

Yet for months the Chinese president has been stepping into the breach, including giving speeches at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, that made it sound like China alone was ready to adopt the role of global standard-setter that Washington has occupied since the end of World War II.

"What the Paris accord represented, in a fractured world, was finally some international consensus, led by two big polluters, China and the United States, on a common course of action," said Graham T. Allison, the author of a new book, "Destined For War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?"

"What you'd expect us to do is sustain our position by maintaining our most important relationship around the world and address what the citizens of our allies consider their most important problems: economic growth and an environment that sustains their children and grandchildren," he added. "Instead, we are absenting the field."

That sentiment was evident on Thursday in Berlin. Just hours

before Mr. Trump spoke, China's premier, Li Keqiang, stood alongside Ms. Merkel, and used careful words as he described China as a champion of the accord. China believed that fighting climate change was an "international responsibility," Mr. Li said, the kind of declaration that American diplomats have made for years when making the case to combat terrorism or nuclear proliferation or hunger.

China has long viewed the possibility of a partnership with Europe as a balancing strategy against the United States. Now, with Mr. Trump questioning the basis of NATO, the Chinese are hoping that their partnership with Europe on the climate accord may allow that relationship to come to fruition faster than their grand strategy imagined.

Naturally, the Chinese are using the biggest weapon in their quiver: Money. Their plan, known as "One Belt, One Road," is meant to buy China influence from Ethiopia to Britain, from Malaysia to Hungary, all the while refashioning the global economic order.

Mr. Xi announced the sweeping initiative last month, envisioning spending \$1 trillion on huge infrastructure projects across Africa, Asia and Europe. It is a plan with echoes of the Marshall Plan and other American efforts at aid and investment, but on a scale with little precedent in modern history. And the clear subtext is that it is past time to toss out the rules of aging, American-dominated international institutions, and to conduct commerce on China's terms.

Los Angeles Times **Paul & Khanna : The case for restraint in American foreign policy**

Rand Paul, Ro Khanna

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."

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.

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

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.

Consider the case of Yemen. Without approval by the American people's representatives, we have

been supplying arms to Saudi Arabia, which is using them to fight the Houthi rebels, a group closely aligned with Iran. We have no stake in this fight, and the policy of arming Saudi Arabia has been counterproductive. Yet we are being blamed by civilians in Yemen, who hold us responsible for the bombs the Saudis are dropping. Nearly 17 million Yemenis face the threat of famine because of this conflict.

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.

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.

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 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 values yet does not prioritize the use of our power.

The New York Times Now

Peter Baker

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, who has nurtured a close relationship with Mr. Trump, offered only modest regret for the decision publicly. "Though Israel is disappointed that the embassy will not move at this time, we appreciate today's expression of President Trump's friendship to Israel and his commitment to moving the embassy in the future," his office said in a statement.

Husam Zomlot, the Palestinian Authority representative in the United States, welcomed the decision, saying it cleared away one obstacle to negotiations. "This is in line with the long held U.S. policy and the international consensus and it gives peace a chance," he said.

The decision is Mr. Trump's latest shift away from campaign positions upending traditional foreign policy as the president spends more time in office and learns more about the trade-offs involved. He has reversed himself on declaring China a currency manipulator, backed off plans to lift sanctions against Russia, declared that NATO was not "obsolete" after all, opted for now not to rip up President Barack Obama's nuclear agreement with Iran and ordered a punitive strike against Syria that he previously opposed in similar circumstances.

At the same time, the Jerusalem decision came just hours before Mr. Trump announced his decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate change accord reached by Mr. Obama. In doing so, he fulfilled a campaign promise to supporters worried that the pact would damage the United States economy, but he alienated longtime allies in Europe and Asia that have invested in the agreement.

In the case of the embassy, Mr. Trump may dishearten powerful supporters like Sheldon Adelson, the Las Vegas casino magnate and Republican donor who is close to Mr. Netanyahu and owns a newspaper in Israel. Some hard-line Israel backers have privately expressed concern that Mr. Trump has not lived up to his campaign pledges because he has been seduced into thinking he may reach the "ultimate deal" that has eluded every other president.

Mr. Trump began backing away from his promise to move the embassy shortly after taking office, swayed in part by King Abdullah II of Jordan, who rushed to Washington without a White House invitation to buttonhole the new president at a prayer breakfast. The king warned that a precipitous move would touch off a possibly violent backlash among Arabs, all but quashing

hopes of bringing the two sides together.

Mr. Trump has also urged Mr. Netanyahu to hold off on provocative housing construction in the West Bank pending peace talks. But the president pleased many in Mr. Netanyahu's right-leaning coalition by abandoning automatic support for a Palestinian state unless both sides agree.

Anticipating that Mr. Trump would back off the embassy move, some in Mr. Netanyahu's coalition had hoped that the president at least would say during his trip last week that Jerusalem was Israel's capital, but he did not do that.

Mr. Trump did visit the Western Wall, the holiest Jewish prayer site in the country, becoming the first sitting American president to do so — an act that some interpreted as indirect recognition since the wall is in a part of the city that Israel took control of during its 1967 war with Arab neighbors.

By the time Mr. Trump signed the waiver, Israeli officials had already assumed he would and sought to discount its significance on Thursday. "We've waited 69 years, we will wait 70 years," said Yoav Galant, the Israeli minister of housing. Tzachi Hanegbi, another minister, called it a "marginal" issue that had to do with "real estate," and

that Mr. Trump had made a "resonant statement" with his visit to the Western Wall.

But Naftali Bennett, a leader of a pro-settlement party within Mr. Netanyahu's coalition, said delaying the embassy move would actually damage the prospects for peace by fostering Palestinians' false hope that they would gain control of East Jerusalem. "Only recognizing a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty will end illusions and pave the way to a sustainable peace with our neighbors," he said.

The embassy question has assumed enormous symbolic significance over the years. The United Nations once proposed that Jerusalem be an international city, but after Israel declared statehood in 1948, it took control of western Jerusalem while Jordan seized the eastern side. During the 1967 war, Israel wrested control of East Jerusalem and annexed it. Since then it has vowed that Jerusalem would never be divided again, even as it built housing in eastern sections for Jewish residents.

Like every other country with a diplomatic presence in Israel, the United States has its embassy in Tel Aviv to avoid seeming to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital at the expense of Palestinians who also claim it as the capital of a future state of their own. Like Mr. Trump,

Bill Clinton and George W. Bush both promised to move the embassy as presidential candidates only to drop the idea in office.

In 1995, Congress passed a law requiring the embassy to be moved to Jerusalem by 1999 or else the State Department's building budget would be cut in half. But lawmakers allowed the president to waive the law for six months, so every six months since 1999, Mr. Clinton, Mr. Bush, Mr. Obama and now Mr. Trump have signed such waivers.

Mr. Trump had promised that he would be different and presented himself as the best friend Israel would ever have in the Oval Office.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

President Donald Trump renewed a waiver that keeps the U.S. Embassy in Israel in Tel Aviv instead of moving it to Jerusalem, the White House said Thursday.

Mr. Trump had promised on the campaign trail and during the transition that he would move the embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and recognize the city as Israel's capital in what would be a major reversal of longstanding U.S. policy.

Mr. Trump faced a June 1 deadline to sign the waiver, or else be legally obligated to move the embassy under a 1995 law.

In a statement, the White House said Mr. Trump decided to sign the waiver to "maximize the chances of successfully negotiating a deal between Israel and the Palestinians, fulfilling his solemn obligation to defend America's national security interests."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Despite not moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, President Trump's evident affection for Israel during his recent visit understandably cheered Israelis after eight years of cool relations with President Obama. Alas, nothing is simple in the Arab-Israeli conflict: A look at historical patterns suggests that, paradoxically, Israel does best with an Obama-style level of tension with Washington.

The explanation of this paradox starts with the observation that all American administrations since 1973, regardless of which party holds the presidency, have been convinced the Arabs are ready for peace with Israel. This problem has been especially acute since the

During the campaign, he said he would move the embassy "fairly quickly" and on the eve of his inauguration reiterated his commitment by telling an Israeli journalist, "You know I'm not a person who breaks promises."

But he has become enamored of the idea that he, unlike all of his predecessors, could be the one to finally negotiate a permanent peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, and he was persuaded that an embassy move would hinder that.

Khaled Elgindy, a former adviser to Palestinian leaders who is now at the Brookings Institution, said there

would be "a collective sigh of relief" among Arab leaders and others invested in peace talks. "While there is likely to be some backlash from his conservative base, especially evangelical voters, the fact that Trump is now personally invested in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking may be something of an insurance policy against his having a change of heart further down the road," he said.

Dan Shapiro, an American ambassador to Israel under Mr. Obama, said moving the embassy now "does not make sense" given Mr. Trump's interest in peace talks. But Mr. Shapiro said he agreed that

the embassy ultimately did belong in Jerusalem and that Mr. Trump still could make it happen if handled right.

"If they plan it smartly, coordinate the timing with key parties, and ensure that its placement in West Jerusalem reinforces, rather than undermines, the ability to achieve a two-state solution, they can still mark this accomplishment before the end of the president's term," said Mr. Shapiro, a senior visiting fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv.

Trump Won't Move U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem

Felicia Schwartz

WASHINGTON—

The statement also said Mr. Trump remains committed to his promise to move the embassy. Mr. Trump will next have to decide whether to sign a waiver in six months.

"As he has repeatedly stated his intention to move the embassy, the question is not if that move happens, but only when," the statement said.

The White House also said Mr. Trump's decision shouldn't be considered "to be in any way a retreat from the President's strong support for Israel and for the United States-Israel alliance."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office issued a statement Thursday urging the U.S. to move its embassy to Jerusalem, which Israel claims as its undivided capital.

"Though Israel is disappointed that the embassy will not move at this time, we appreciate today's expression of President Trump's

friendship to Israel and his commitment to moving the embassy to Israel," the statement said.

The Palestinian representative to the U.S., Husam Zomlot, said the decision "is in line with long held U.S. policy and it gives peace a chance." He said Palestinians are ready to begin consulting with the Trump administration and "are serious and genuine about achieving a just and lasting peace."

Both Israel and the Palestinians have claims to the contested city, and the U.S. has held that Jerusalem's final status should be the subject of negotiations aimed at resolving the long-simmering dispute.

Congress passed legislation requiring that the U.S. Embassy be relocated to Jerusalem in 1995, but the law allows the president to waive that order for six-month periods for national security reasons. Presidents from both parties have

consistently done so since the law took effect.

Since Mr. Trump took office, Arab officials as well as U.S. officials have warned him of the potential dangers of moving the embassy, including interfering with peace negotiations and causing regional unrest.

Mr. Trump isn't the first presidential candidate to promise an embassy move—former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush made similar comments as candidates that went unfulfilled.

But some officials and diplomats took Mr. Trump's pledge more seriously, as he continued to keep the possibility open once he took office. He still could make the move eventually.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, who recently began his post, is working from Tel Aviv, officials said. He has supported moving the embassy to Jerusalem.

Pipes : The Paradoxical Peril of Easy U.S.-Israel Relations

establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. American presidents consistently ignore the authority's revolutionary nature. In this spirit, after a meeting with PA leader Mahmoud Abbas, Mr. Trump deemed him a "strategic partner" for Israel and "ready for peace."

American leaders often insist that if only Jerusalem handed over yet more money, land and recognition, the Palestinian Authority would be inspired to make peace. In the face of near-infinite deceit, hostility, bellicosity and violence, this touching faith in Palestinian good neighborliness can be explained only by psychology. Former deputy national security adviser Elliott Abrams helpfully compares it to Tinker Bell in Peter Pan: "If you believe, clap your hands."

When Israeli governments concur with this fanciful thinking, as has happened under Labor and Kadima prime ministers, U.S.-Israel relations soar: Think of Bill Clinton's famously warm ties with Yitzhak Rabin.

But when Israelis resist such wishful assumptions, as does Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, tensions arise. Washington pushes for more concessions and Jerusalem resists. American presidents then face a choice: moan and criticize, or embrace and encourage. Mr. Obama chose the petulant route, as symbolized by his choice to eat dinner with his family in 2010 while Mr. Netanyahu cooled his heels in the Roosevelt Room.

As longtime American diplomat Dennis Ross has said for decades, Israel's cooperation increases when

the White House focuses on building its confidence. Without doubting the sincerity of Mr. Trump's warmth for Israel, the deal maker in him intuitively seems to understand that wooing Israelis provides the basis for later pressure. During his recent trip to Israel, Mr. Trump took every opportunity to lavish affection on Jerusalem, Jews, Zionism and Israel.

"Jerusalem is a sacred city. Its beauty, splendor and heritage are like no other place on Earth," he noted. "The ties of the Jewish people to this Holy Land are ancient and eternal," a point he illustrated with his own experience: "Yesterday, I visited the Western Wall, and marveled at the monument to God's presence and man's perseverance."

"Israel is a testament to the unbreakable spirit of the Jewish people," he went on. "I stand in awe of the accomplishments of the Jewish people, and I make this promise to you: My administration will always stand with Israel. . . . God bless the State of Israel."

Israelis fully reciprocated this warmth. David Horowitz, editor of the Times of Israel, spoke for many: "Simply by saying he loves it and stands with it, Trump wins over endlessly criticized Israel. . . . He and Netanyahu disagree on the Palestinians' peacemaking bona

fides. He didn't move the embassy. But the president showered Israel with praise, and made history by visiting the Western Wall. For now, that was more than enough."

This sentimental response provides an opening for Mr. Trump to demand that the Israeli government trust Mr. Abbas and make yet more unilateral concessions, a process that has apparently already begun with pressure to hand over territory on the West Bank. Given their bromance, how can Mr. Netanyahu deny Mr. Trump's requests?

This harks back to a pattern: Israelis and their supporters tend to pay

more attention to mood and symbolism than to policies. "Unlike other diplomatic bonds, which pivot on such national interests as trade and security interests, the U.S.-Israeli relationship has an emotional base," I wrote in 1992. "Feelings, not a cool assessment of interests, drive its every aspect. Tone, style, mood, and perception often matter more than hard facts."

Sadly, good relations cause Jerusalem to accede to Washington's consistently poor judgment. That's the peril of warm U.S.-Israel relations and the solace of poor ones. Better for Israel to be

chastised by a lousy U.N. Security Council resolution than to relinquish more territory to genocidal thugs.

Whereas U.S.-Israel relations blow hot or cold depending on the political winds, Israeli concessions to the Palestinians are unalterable mistakes that encourage irredentism, cost lives, prolong the conflict, and impede U.S. interests. Thus my counterintuitive conclusion: Cool relations are better for Israeli—and by implication, American—security.

ETATS-UNIS

NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE

The Age of Unilateral Rule

Rich Lowry

age of unilateral rule.

The Trump administration has been exhaustingly eventful, but almost none of the events have involved Congress.

The beginning of Donald Trump's presidency has been an extension of the last six years of the Obama administration, when Capitol Hill was largely a sideshow to the main event in the executive branch in general and the Oval Office in particular. Barack Obama and Donald Trump have almost nothing in common, except their modes of governance.

Obama was coolly cerebral and deliberative to a fault, whereas Trump is blustery and impulsive. Yet Obama and Trump are both, in their own ways, attention-hungry celebrities. Obama never demonstrated the patience or aptitude for real persuasion, whether LBJ-style arm-twisting or Reagan-style move-the-needle public argument. Neither has Trump. Institutionally, Obama was content to be a loner, and so is Trump.

Until further notice, this is the American model — government by and of the president. We live in the

It may be that Congress eventually passes Obamacare repeal-and-replace and tax reform, and makes its mark. Neither initiative is looking robustly healthy at the moment, though. And the action is all with Trump, what he does, says and tweets.

To his credit, Trump hasn't pushed the constitutional envelope the way Obama did with his Clean Power Plan and his executive amnesty (both blocked in the courts). What Trump has done unilaterally has been firmly within bounds and largely defensive in nature. He has either reversed Obama actions or used executive orders as symbolic measures.

Still, the yin and yang from Obama to Trump means that American government has become a badminton match between rival presidents with dueling executive actions. As a result, our laws are largely contested in the realm of executive decisions, agency rule-making and the courts. Arguably, in striking down Trump's travel ban on highly dubious grounds, the 4th Circuit has done more legislating this year than the United States Congress.

If Trump's unilateral rule is an extension of what has come before, it also is an intensification.

First, there's the timing. Ordinarily, a president loses Congress or otherwise stalls several years into his tenure, and looks to foreign affairs and executive orders for victories. Trump is already dependent on presidential unilateralism, even though his party controls both houses of Congress.

Trump is already dependent on presidential unilateralism, even though his party controls both houses of Congress.

It's not that Trump is deliberately cutting Congress out; he is desperate for it to get things done. He just doesn't have the interest or knowledge to push legislation along.

Meanwhile, Congress has been handing over authority to the administrative state for decades, and lately has gotten out of the habit of passing almost anything except last-minute omnibus spending bills. The Senate, in particular, is debilitated by a near-automatic 60-vote threshold.

Second, there is the continued centralization of power in the White

House. This has long been the trend, but President Trump has taken it to another level; he operates on a hub-and-spoke system with a small group of loyalists and family members jostling for influence around him.

The day Trump nearly initiated the process of pulling out of NAFTA captures the method perfectly — no serious deliberation, just the president's state of mind, based in large part on whom he had spoken to last. This is highly personalized (and idiosyncratic) rule.

In the mid 1980s, the late political scientist Theodore Lowi wrote a book called *The Personal President*. It warned of the effects of a "plebiscitary" presidency unhinged from Congress and political parties. He was on to something, although Bill Clinton and George W. Bush subsequently governed fairly traditionally. It is with Obama and Trump that we have moved into a different gear.

No matter what the written rules are, any system of government is susceptible to change through habits and precedent. We may be witnessing the creation of a new norm, one that hollows out the branch of government charged with writing the nation's laws.

Bloomberg

Bernstein : How Trump's Chaotic Presidency Threatens the Economy

Sure, you might think: Donald Trump isn't exactly a competent president. But it's a long-standing truism of U.S. politics that, at the end of the day, presidents really don't have immediate and severe effects, for better or worse, on

economic performance or jobs. Instead, what really matters are larger-scale forces -- say, the growth or stall of productivity, something that politicians have very little effect on in the short term. We can all play games with economic statistics and where presidencies

begin and end, but most of the claims involved are partisan fictions. 1

But that truism was never tested by Donald Trump.

Few seem to have adequately priced in the possibility of large,

unusual downside risks from having Trump in the White House. I'm not talking about normal policy differences, such as Trump's withdrawal from the Paris climate deal, in which some will argue (just in terms of economic development) that he's freeing U.S. businesses

while others will maintain that focusing on coal mining while the future is in renewables is a poor trade-off. I'm focused here on the possibility that his chaotic presidency could produce devastating results just because normal governing might prove impossible.

Here are the five biggest scenarios I'm aware of, and how the chances of each have changed since Trump won the presidency in November.

Trade War (unchanged). Perhaps the most obvious one, and the one that is most policy-based. Presidents have quite a bit of leeway on trade, and if Trump acts on his clear policy preferences he still could find himself (and, more importantly, the nation) in a spiraling situation with no good answers and with immediate economic consequences. On the good side, Trump hasn't actually done anything destructive in this area, and he's made it clear to everyone, foreign nations included, that most of his threats are just bluster. But on the bad side he's continued to use trade-war rhetoric -- most recently against Germany -- making it even more clear now than when he was elected that he really holds this policy position, and therefore may eventually act on it.

Government default/shutdown (increased chance). The debt limit will have to be

raised sometime this summer or fall or else the government will default. Funding bills are needed by the end of September to keep the government running (in both cases, temporary extensions are possible). It is extremely difficult to get to an extended shut down of the government or, even more dangerous, a default on the government debt payments. The former has only happened twice; the latter has never happened, and neither has ever come particularly close during periods of unified government. So the chances are still low, but I'd have to say that dysfunction in the House of Representatives and the White House so far this year has made the chances of one or the other a real, if not yet too large, possibility. And getting close could damage the economy even if the threat is averted at the last minute.

The president causes economic damage by saying something crazy (decreased). Here's one where Trump's widespread reputation as a paper tiger helps. His ability to spook the stock market or otherwise harm the economy with some stray remark is probably almost entirely gone; already by February observers were noticing that he could no longer move individual shares with his tweets. It's perhaps still possible that Trump could spark a foreign policy crisis by saying something inappropriate, but

even there most foreign nations have probably learned that much of what he says can be ignored.

Executive branch mishandling a crisis (increased). How would this administration deal with a Katrina-like natural disaster, an epidemic, or a financial crisis similar to the one in 2008? Well, they would apparently throw a bunch of empty desks at it. Take the Department of Treasury. The nominee for Deputy Secretary has withdrawn, eight nominees are waiting for confirmation, and several other important spots such as undersecretary for domestic finance still have no nominee. In an emergency, not only would the missing people be a risk factor for the smooth functioning of the department, but coordination among multiple agencies would be especially difficult. An inexperienced and error-prone White House wouldn't help. We knew back in November that Trump himself had no government experience, but the rest of this looks a lot worse now than it looked then.

The president mishandling a crisis (unknown, but probably increased). Even a well-staffed executive branch, with a highly functional White House, depends on the president himself or herself to lead when some external shock requires coordinated government action. Only the president can fully command the attention of executive

branch departments and agencies, pushing them (if needed) to drop other priorities and focus on a crisis. Only the president has the bully pulpit to focus the attention of the nation, if necessary, on something that must be done. So it can really matter whether the president has good judgment, knows how to use technical and political advisers, has the respect of others inside the government and out, and knows when to act and when to allow others to act. Perhaps, if and when some crisis shows up that Trump didn't cause himself, he'll prove himself capable. So far, there's no evidence of that, but then Trump remains untested by any serious challenge of this type. That's unlikely to last.

Again: None of this takes into account the likely effects of deliberate policy, such as (for example) the likelihood that Trump's jingoism is already harming the economy by depressing tourism and deterring foreign students from studying in U.S.

Overall? There's very little good news here. That doesn't necessarily mean disaster is around the corner. But it does probably mean that the downside risks to the economy from the current political situation are underappreciated.

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

James Comey & President Trump – Obstruction of Justice Didn't Happen

Andrew McCarthy

The thing to remember is that there's a big difference between perceiving "pressure" and believing that you have witnessed the obstruction of an FBI investigation, a federal felony.

Take this to the bank: Over the next week, before the much-anticipated Senate testimony of former FBI director James Comey, the media-Democratic complex is going to spare no effort to convince you that the words "pressure" and "obstruction" are synonyms – you know, like the words "collusion" and "crime."

They're not.

It may very well be that former FBI director James Comey is prepared to testify, consistent with a leaked report of a memorandum written to himself, that he felt President Trump pressured him to drop the FBI's investigation of Michael Flynn, Trump's first national-security adviser.

Even if this were true, it would not mean Comey believed the president *had committed felony obstruction*. No one grasps this better than the former FBI director himself.

On that score, I've been surprised, since the story of Comey's memo-to-self broke, to have been asked about the purported "contradiction" between the memo and Senate testimony the then-director gave in early May.

According to the memo (which has not been made public and from which only a selectively mined snippet has been reported), on February 14, President Trump told Comey, "I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go." Based on this, CNN, relying on "a source close to the issue" (hmmm), claims that Comey is prepared to testify that he felt "pressured" to pull the plug on the investigation.

Compare this with his May 3 testimony. Answering questions put by Senator Mazie Hirono (D., Hawaii), the then-director averred that he had never been directed by

superiors to halt an FBI investigation.

Contrasting the two statements, Comey's more fervid detractors accuse him of perjury. Should Comey testify next week that Trump pressured him in February, they reckon that either a) this claim or b) his May testimony that he'd never been "told to stop something for a political reason" would have to be false testimony.

It is a specious contention. First, Senator Hirono did not ask Comey about any direction given to him by the president. Her questions were about orders from the FBI director's Justice Department superiors. (The FBI is part of DOJ, and the director is subordinate to the attorney general.)

More important, let's assume that a question about whether he'd ever gotten a shut-down order from DOJ obliged Comey to include in his response any shut-down order he'd ever received from a president. (This assumption runs counter to perjury law, but let's pretend.) The bottom line would still be that an

order simply is not the same thing as *pressure*. Asserting that you have never been ordered to do something does not imply a representation that you have never been pressured to do that something.

No one in America knows the law of obstruction better than Comey, who has spent much of the last 30 years as a high-ranking federal prosecutor and the federal government's top cop. He is well aware that pressure is not obstruction. In this instance, moreover, Trump's exertion of pressure was relatively mild: He did not deny Comey the freedom to exercise his own judgment; the president expressed hope that Comey's judgment would be exercised in Flynn's favor. Any of us who has ever had an overbearing boss is familiar with this kind of prodding. It can be unpleasant, even anxiety-inducing. But Comey is a big boy, he has a history of not being intimidated by presidents, and what we're talking about here is not exactly the rack.

This is no doubt why Comey did not resign, and did not report to the Justice Department, his FBI staff, or Congress, that he had witnessed – indeed, been the victim in a sense – of an obstruction of an FBI investigation.

Let's stipulate that Comey has an outsized conception of what an FBI director's degree of independence from his political superiors should be. He may therefore be convinced that Trump's browbeating on Flynn's behalf was terribly inappropriate. That still doesn't make it obstruction . . . not even close.

Now, let's talk about that proper degree of independence.

Senator Hirono – again, asking about orders from the Justice Department, not the president – asked Comey whether his superiors had the power to “halt [an] FBI investigation.” He replied, “In theory, yes.” He used the word “theory” advisedly, drawing a contrast with how things usually work in practice. And to be sure, the Justice Department rarely orders the FBI to

shut down an investigation; if DOJ does not like a case, it usually advises the FBI not to waste more resources on it because it is unlikely to approve charges.

Pace Comey, however, what he was referring to is not merely a “theory.” It is the reality of the American constitutional framework.

Progressives love the idea of this or that executive power being delegated to subject-matter experts – altruists who will act only in the public interest, and who therefore should not be interfered with by their political superiors. That is not the system we have.

Law enforcement is largely shielded from politics, but that is not because there are *laws* against political interference. Instead, presidents stay their hands because it would be *politically damaging* to intrude too deeply into policing and prosecution. The public wants those functions controlled by objective law, not self-interested politics. But even this is not an absolute: Implicit in the pardon power, for example, is the understanding that tempering

harsh law-enforcement with pragmatic politics is sometimes desirable.

Our federal system, in any event, is based on political accountability, not expertise. We *hope* that law-enforcement officials will be good at their jobs, but we *demand* that they perform well by making their political superiors accountable to the public.

The FBI director is not an independent actor; the director is the subordinate of the president. No one appears to be alleging that Trump gave Comey a direct order to drop the Flynn investigation. Even if he had done so, however, it would have been a legitimate exercise of power – regardless of whether the FBI director found it a disagreeable exercise.

No one in America knows the law of obstruction better than Comey.

FBI supervisors and U.S. attorneys close down investigations and potential prosecutions all the time, even in cases in which the suspect is plainly guilty. These are exercises of discretion, not exemplars of

obstruction. Plainly, the chief executive cannot have *less* discretion than these inferior executive officers do.

As we've observed, the key concept in obstruction is corruption. To constitute an obstruction offense, the administration of law has to be impeded with a corrupt state of mind. Your disagreement with an exercise of discretion does not turn it into corruption. It may be a lapse in judgment, even a serious lapse; but that doesn't make it a crime.

Here, to the contrary, Trump did not even exercise discretion. He left the matter to Comey's discretion, with the hope, but not the insistence, that the discretion be exercised in Flynn's favor.

Did Director Comey feel pressure? Maybe . . . but not as much pressure as Flynn is feeling. Did I mention that he remains, and has all along remained, the subject of an FBI investigation?

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

White House Sets Up Dedicated Group to Handle Russia Probe

Peter Nicholas
and Rebecca

Ballhaus

The Trump White House is setting up a dedicated unit to cope with a Russia investigation that is picking up in intensity, in an attempt to keep the probe from derailing policy priorities that face an uncertain fate on Capitol Hill, people familiar with the effort said.

The new operation will include attorneys, researchers and communications specialists whose focus will be to reply to inquiries from investigators and reporters centering on alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election and any collusion by President Donald Trump's campaign aides.

The unit is being organized by chief of staff Reince Priebus, chief strategist Steve Bannon and Jared Kushner, a senior adviser and the president's son-in-law who has become a focus in the Russia probe, a White House official said. The official said it was unclear when the unit would officially begin, and wasn't aware of any outside hires for it so far.

The reorganization comes as the Russia probe is starting to take a personal toll on the nascent administration. Some senior White House officials are looking to hire lawyers.

Others are being told to be careful with documents and to consult the White House counsel's office if they have any questions about what they should discard. One aide warned a friend not to email him any off-color jokes in the event that the records are subpoenaed and made public.

One White House official involved in the effort said the unit is now being “built up” and its goal is to “segregate” the rest of the White House so that aides can keep a tighter focus on Mr. Trump's agenda. As it stands now, he said, when “something on Russia breaks, I spend four hours on it—that's four hours I don't spend” advancing policy goals.

White House officials are already trying to put elements of the new system into practice. Asked about the unit on Thursday, a press spokeswoman referred the question to an outside attorney Mr. Trump has retained to deal with the investigation, Marc Kasowitz.

Mr. Kasowitz's office didn't respond to a request for comment. Press Secretary Sean Spicer, too, in a briefing on Wednesday, referred questions about Russia to Mr. Kasowitz.

An open question is whether Mr. Trump can show the discipline needed to steer clear of daily developments over the Russia probe—or if he will feed the furor through his Twitter account.

Advisers and lawyers have pressured Mr. Trump in recent weeks to stop tweeting about the investigations being conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and two congressional committees. The FBI is also looking at violations of lobbying laws by two of Mr. Trump's former top aides, Mike Flynn and Paul Manafort, according to people familiar with the probes.

The U.S. intelligence community in December concluded that Russia was behind a sweeping cyber campaign to undermine the election, prompting President Barack Obama to impose new sanctions and eject some Russian officials from the U.S. Russia has denied any meddling, and Mr. Trump has denied his campaign aides did anything improper.

So far, the anti-tweet campaign hasn't been wholly successful. Mr. Trump stayed away from the Russia controversy during his foreign trip last month. But on Wednesday, he tweeted that the Russia probe was a “lame excuse for why the Dems lost the election” and retweeted a Fox & Friends tweet about Mr. Kushner's contacts with Russian officials.

“He needs to limit the Twitter traffic on the Russia issue,” said one person close to the president.

Other presidents faced with long-running investigations have set up similar structures to keep the White

House functioning. In 1994, as investigations into President Bill Clinton ramped up, his administration established a unit of about 10 lawyers, communications officials and congressional liaisons who operated outside of the White House's press shop.

The operation's goal: to ensure the rest of the White House could continue to promote the president's agenda, said Chris Lehane, a lawyer in the White House counsel's office in the Clinton administration who served on that unit.

Mr. Lehane said reporters gradually stopped asking questions about the investigations at the daily press briefings because they knew to direct their queries to the unit instead.

“You really need very, very tight discipline around making sure that [the unit members] are the only people entitled to talk on this topic,” said Jake Siewert, who served as press secretary in Mr. Clinton's second term.

White House aides say they aren't neglecting Mr. Trump's agenda amid a Russia probe that is a nearly inescapable part of the political landscape. In the West Wing, TVs turned to cable news programs show a steady stream of headlines dealing with Russia.

“The business of government goes on, despite what you might read to the contrary,” said Mr. Trump's

budget director, Mick Mulvaney, who rolled out the White House's 2018 budget blueprint last month.

Another White House official said in an interview that the administration

remains committed to passing bills that will overhaul both the health care system and tax code before the year is out, and doesn't expect the Russia investigation to intrude.

Mr. Trump plans to spend parts of July and August traveling around the U.S. and making a case for a tax code rewrite, with legislation likely to be introduced in Congress

after Labor Day, the official said. One senior House Republican aide said that such an effort would be welcome.

**The
Washington
Post**

Ignaitus : What does Russia think about all this? 'Washington has gone crazy.'

When Russian officials and analysts here talk about the U.S. investigation of their alleged hacking of the 2016 campaign, two themes predominate: They're flattered that their country is seen as such a powerful threat, and they're amazed that the United States is so preoccupied with the scandal.

This is the official line, to be sure, but it was also expressed by several critics of the regime I interviewed this week. People can't quite believe the sudden reversal of fortunes: Russia is back as a global force, after decades of humiliation. And the United States, so long the dominant superpower, is now divided, disoriented and, to Russian eyes, in retreat.

For the Kremlin version, here's how Sergey Karaganov, the head of Russia's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, describes his reaction to the investigation: "It's a mixture of disgust and sympathy. Disgust because 99 percent of that is lies or a concoction, maybe 100 percent. As for sympathy, it's a desperate picture when a great democracy is killing itself, committing collective suicide."

There's an undisguised tone of schadenfreude here, even as officials talk about U.S. overreaction. "I would have been proud and happy if the authorities of

my country would have used some hackers to penetrate [your system], and showed that you're living in a crystal palace and should not interfere in the affairs of others," said Karaganov, who's an informal Kremlin adviser in addition to running the think tank.

Russian President Vladimir Putin wins either way, argues Andrei Kolesnikov, an independent analyst who's a senior associate with the Carnegie Moscow Center. "If we did meddle in your elections, we show our might. If we didn't, we're pure."

A similar assessment of the win-win dynamic for Putin comes from Andrei Soldatov, one of Moscow's best investigative reporters and the author of many exposés about Russian intelligence. "What did Russia get [from the hacking] in terms of foreign policy? Almost nothing, except that Russia looks powerful," he told me. "That's why Putin is so popular. He gives people an identity: Once again, we're a superpower."

What surprises Russians is how quickly the U.S.-led order has been coming apart since the election of Donald Trump. Russian officials loathed Hillary Clinton and favored Trump. But it's unlikely that, even in the darkest corridors of the Kremlin, Putin's advisers imagined that President Trump would be so disruptive, or the reaction to him so

volatile. Russians have grown up being intimidated by the United States; they didn't imagine it was so fragile.

"We think Washington has gone crazy," said Andranik Migranyan, a former Russian government official who has taught politics in the United States. "The American story was always one of self-sufficiency. Now, we see a sense of vulnerability." He sees Trump's election as a "paradigm shift" for an America that was much more polarized and overstretched than the elites realized. Now, in his view, it's payback time.

You might expect that Russians would feel embarrassed by the charge that they tried to subvert U.S. and European campaigns, but it's the opposite. Migranyan explained: "You are assuring us that Putin is all-powerful, that he can do anything he wants — fix elections, change Europe, do anything."

The official media here are sardonic about each day's revelations in the U.S. media and Congress. When Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said this week that Russia was more dangerous than the Islamic State, a Russian news site responded: "Somebody give this gentleman a sedative." When a story broke about White House adviser Jared Kushner's problems, the same site headlined: "Once again, those

Russians!" Basically, they think it's funny.

Trump is a familiar sort of political figure to Russians — big, affable, boorish, a bit like Boris Yeltsin. "I wouldn't love him to run in Russia," Karaganov said of Trump, "but if your system couldn't provide better, why not?" He described Trump as "unbelievably brave" in challenging U.S. political orthodoxy, including his calls for better relations with Russia.

Trump's chief virtue for the Kremlin is that he turned back Clinton, who embodied the aggressive, pro-democracy, interventionist policies that Russia viewed as a mortal threat. "We saw them as absolutely 100 percent dangerous," Karaganov said. "My advice to the government if she wins was: Put your nuclear forces on alert, so they would know."

Putin is hosting a celebration of Russia's new power this week, at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, a Davos-like gathering. It's not a victory parade, but it might as well be. For Putin and his allies, America's vaunted "liberal international order" is dissolving.

"That order we did not like, and we are doing away with it," Karaganov said.

**The
Washington
Post**

UNE - Explanations for Kushner's meeting with head of Kremlin-linked bank don't match up

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — The White House and a Russian state-owned bank have very different explanations for why the bank's chief executive and Jared Kushner held a secret meeting during the presidential transition in December.

The bank maintained this week that the session was held as part of a new business strategy and was conducted with Kushner in his role as the head of his family's real estate business. The White House says the meeting was unrelated to business and was one of many diplomatic encounters the soon-to-be presidential adviser was holding ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration.

The contradiction is deepening confusion over Kushner's interactions with the Russians as the president's son-in-law emerges as a key figure in the FBI's investigation into potential coordination between Moscow and the Trump team.

The discrepancy has thrust Vnesheconombank, known for advancing the strategic interests of Russian President Vladimir Putin and for its role in a past U.S. espionage case, into the center of the controversy enveloping the White House. And it has highlighted the role played by the bank's 48-year-old chief executive, Sergey Gorkov, a graduate of the academy of the Federal Security Service, or FSB, the domestic intelligence arm

of the former Soviet KGB, who was appointed by Putin to the post less than a year before his encounter with Kushner.

Either account of the meeting could bring complications for a White House undergoing intensifying scrutiny from a special counsel and multiple congressional committees.

A diplomatic meeting would have provided the bank, which has been under U.S. sanctions since 2014, a chance to press for rolling back the penalties even as the Obama administration was weighing additional retaliations against Moscow for Russia's interference in the U.S. election.

A business meeting between an international development bank and

a real estate executive, coming as Kushner's company had been seeking financing for its troubled \$1.8 billion purchase of an office building on Fifth Avenue in New York, could raise questions about whether Kushner's personal financial interests were colliding with his impending role as a public official.

VEB, as Vnesheconombank is known, did not respond to a list of questions about the Kushner meeting and the institution's history and role in Russia. The bank declined to make Gorkov available for an interview.

Gorkov could draw new attention to the clashing story lines Friday, when he is scheduled to deliver

public remarks to an economic conference in St. Petersburg. Gorkov, cornered Wednesday by a CNN reporter on the sidelines of the conference, responded “no comments” three times when asked about the Kushner meeting.

The Kushner-Gorkov meeting came after Kushner met with the Russian ambassador to the United States, Sergey Kislyak, in early December. At the meeting, Kushner suggested establishing a secure communications line between Trump officials and the Kremlin at a Russian diplomatic facility, according to U.S. officials who reviewed intelligence reports describing Kislyak’s account.

The bank and the White House have declined to provide the exact date or location of the Kushner-Gorkov meeting, which was first reported in March by the New York Times.

Flight data reviewed by The Washington Post suggests that the meeting may have taken place on Dec. 13 or 14, about two weeks after Kushner’s encounter with Kislyak.

A 19-seat twin-engine jet owned by a company linked to VEB flew from Moscow to the United States on Dec. 13 and departed from the Newark airport, outside New York City, at 5:01 p.m. Dec. 14, according to positional flight information provided by FlightAware, a company that tracks airplanes.

The Post could not confirm whether Gorkov was on the flight, but the plane’s previous flights closely mirror Gorkov’s publicly known travels in recent months, including his trip to St. Petersburg this week.

After leaving Newark on Dec. 14, the jet headed to Japan, where Putin was visiting on Dec. 15 and 16. The news media had reported that Gorkov would join the Russian president there.

White House spokeswoman Hope Hicks and Kushner’s attorney said Kushner intends to share with investigators the details of his meeting with Gorkov.

“Mr. Kushner was acting in his capacity as a transition official and had many similar discussions with foreign representatives after the election,” Hicks told The Post in a statement this week. “For example, he also started conversations with leaders from Saudi Arabia that led to the President’s recent successful international trip.”

The bank this week told The Post that it stood by a statement it issued in March that, as part of its new investment strategy, it had held meetings with “leading world financial institutions in Europe, Asia and America, as well as with the head of Kushner Companies.”

Putin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that the bank’s activities “have nothing to do with the Kremlin.” Peskov, like Trump, has frequently dismissed revelations about the meetings as “fake news” and “a witch hunt.”

Officially, VEB is Russia’s state economic development bank, set up to make domestic and foreign investments that will boost the Russian economy.

Practically speaking, according to experts, the bank functions as an arm of the Kremlin, boosting Putin’s political priorities.

It funded the 2014 Sochi Olympics, a project used by Putin to signal that Russia holds a key role on the world stage.

VEB has also been used to promote the Kremlin’s strategic aims abroad, experts say, financing projects across the Eastern bloc.

“Basically, VEB operates like Putin’s slush fund,” said Anders Aslund, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Center and a Russia expert who follows the bank’s activities. “It carries out major Kremlin operations that Putin does not want to do through the state budget.”

Before the United States imposed sanctions, VEB sought to extend its international reach to draw more investment to Russia. Among those named by the bank to an advisory board for a new global fund was Stephen Schwarzman, the CEO of the Blackstone Group and now an outside adviser to the Trump White House. Schwarzman declined to comment through a spokeswoman, who said the fund’s advisory board has been inactive.

Gorkov was named to head VEB in February 2016, after eight years as a senior manager at Russia’s largest state-owned bank, Sberbank. While Gorkov was a deputy head of Sberbank, it was one of the sponsors of the 2013 Miss Universe Pageant in Moscow produced by Trump, who owned the pageant.

Gorkov’s personal relationship with Putin is unclear.

Some Russia watchers described Gorkov, who was not seen as being

especially close to the Kremlin before his appointment, as an unlikely diplomatic link between the Kremlin and the Trump administration.

“I can think of many back channels that one might cultivate to have close, discreet, indirect communications with Putin. VEB’s Gorkov would not make my list,” said Michael McFaul, who was the U.S. ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama.

Other observers suggested that Gorkov, the recipient of a “service to the Fatherland” medal, may have earned Putin’s trust as a discreet go-between.

“He indeed is an FSB academy graduate, and for the Kremlin today it is a sign of trustworthiness,” said Andrey Movchan, who heads the economic program at the Carnegie Moscow Center think tank.

VEB has played a role in Russian espionage efforts in the past, serving as the cover for a Russian operative convicted last year of spying in New York.

According to court documents, Evgeny Buryakov posed as the second-in-command at the bank’s Manhattan office for at least three years while secretly meeting dozens of times with a Russian intelligence officer who tasked him with gathering intelligence on the U.S. economic system.

The court records show that Buryakov’s handlers were also recorded discussing attempts to recruit an American whom government officials have confirmed was Carter Page, an energy consultant who later served as an informal adviser to Trump’s campaign. Page has said he assisted the FBI with its investigation into the spy ring and provided the Russians no sensitive information.

The court documents show that the FBI recorded a conversation in which one of Buryakov’s handlers described hearing an intelligence officer tell Buryakov’s VEB boss that Buryakov worked for a Russian intelligence service.

VEB paid for Buryakov’s legal fees after his arrest, the court documents show. The Russian Foreign Ministry at the time blasted the charges and accused the U.S. government of “building up spy hysteria.”

Buryakov was sentenced to 30 months in prison but was released in April for good behavior. He was immediately deported to Moscow.

Efforts by The Post to reach Buryakov through family members were unsuccessful.

VEB, along with other Russian state-owned institutions, has suffered financially since 2014, when the United States imposed economic sanctions following Russia’s incursion into Crimea.

Gorkov’s meeting with Kushner took place at a time of major changes within the bank.

On Dec. 21, VEB announced that its proposed 2021 development strategy — which Gorkov dubbed “VEB 2.0” — had been approved by its supervisory board, which is chaired by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.

As a result of the sanctions, U.S. companies are prohibited from lending the bank money or buying equity in the institution, an attempt to drain resources from the Russian economy.

The sanctions would not prohibit Kushner from conducting a business negotiation with VEB or even prevent the Russian bank from investing in a U.S. firm.

Experts on Russia’s security services said that it would have been unlikely for Gorkov to meet with Kushner and not discuss sanctions.

Gennady Gudkov, a reserve colonel in the FSB who is now a leader of a small opposition party, said that Russian business leaders are looking for ways to lobby for the softening of sanctions. “This activity is constant,” Gudkov said in an interview. “They are trying however they can, even informally, to lower the sanctions.”

In late December, Gorkov told Russian state television that he hoped “the situation with sanctions will change for the better.”

In February, Gorkov met with Putin to update him on the bank’s status. “We are confident of its future,” he told the Russian leader, according to a transcript released by Putin’s office, asserting the bank had many new deals in the works.

“Good,” Putin said.

Brittain, Helderman and Hamburger reported from Washington. Natalya Abbakumova in Moscow and Alice Crites in Washington contributed to this report.

White House 'Muslim Ban' Man Pushes for Even More Power

Spencer
Ackerman

Stephen Miller, the hard right White House speechwriter and domestic policy adviser, became a conservative celebrity for penning President Donald Trump's apocalyptic "American Carnage" inaugural address and for serving as the public face of the administration's travel ban.

But Miller is trying to take on a second role—a power move known only to a handful of people in the White House and across the administration. The nationalist firebrand has elbowed his way into national security and foreign affairs, trying to push the U.S. government to adopt hardline stances on refugees and other international issues.

The series of moves has so horrified administration officials that they've created a paper trail to try to keep Miller from implementing his nationalist goals for international issues—spelling out the consequences of disobeying court orders, for example, that prevent Trump from further curtailing the number of refugees coming into this country.

Among those documents, officials told The Daily Beast on the condition of anonymity, is a guidance paper from the Justice Department about the legal liabilities the administration would incur for flouting a judge's order on refugees.

Since the National Security Council's composition is up to each president, Miller's involvement isn't "per se" inappropriate, said David Rothkopf, an NSC historian. But, Rothkopf said, Miller "has no national security experience and is largely seen as a political operative, and neither of these characteristics tends to be a positive on the NSC."

Miller's incursions into the realm ordinarily reserved for the NSC are not limited to refugees. Sources said he and his allies have exceeded his domestic policy purview to question why the U.S. ought to support certain international institutions, including the U.N. Population Fund, which considers access to contraception and abortion services a human right. Miller was also part of the nationalist faction that prevailed upon Trump to withdraw from the Paris climate-change accord on Thursday. The Daily Beast's Lachlan Markay and Asawin Suebsaeng reported.

Accordingly, officials see Miller's intrusions through the White House's Domestic Policy Council, which reports to him, as an attempt to deliver red meat to Trump's anti-immigration and nationalist voters. Some, however, are unsure how much Miller is directing the effort personally and how much DPC officials are interpreting their mandate. In the Trump administration and its predecessors alike, the DPC is a significantly more political entity than the NSC, where senior leaders attempt to avoid the perception of carrying out a domestic political agenda.

Formally, Miller has no position on the NSC. But the Domestic Policy Council is typically invited to participate in NSC meetings in which its agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, have equity. During the Obama administration, the DPC was often invited to participate in NSC meetings on migration and refugee issues.

But under Trump, Miller has reversed that order, bringing the NSC and its constituent agencies into ostensibly DPC meetings. Foreign policy officials have been shocked to hear discussions of their issues in the DPC-convened meetings dominated by domestic political considerations rather than their international implications. The blurring of lines, a knowledgeable administration official said, has sowed confusion.

"There are no clear lines of authority or divisions of labor," the official said. "There's just not a lot of transparency here—where the work product goes, who's tasked with what."

The 31-year old Miller is an incendiary conservative who, along with chief strategist Steve Bannon, is a leader of the administration's nationalist wing. A number of profiles have reported that his preoccupation with immigration, disgust with multiculturalism, and enthusiasm for offending liberals were evident even in his California high school, where he objected to Spanish-language announcements. At Duke University, the white nationalist Richard Spencer described himself as a "mentor" to Miller, a claim that Miller vociferously denied to The Daily Beast's Tim Mak.

Miller's media savvy at Duke, where he strenuously defended lacrosse players accused of rape in a racially ugly incident (the charges were ultimately dropped), gave him a national profile. After college, he parlayed that into jobs for GOP

Reps. Michele Bachmann and John Shadegg before getting the role that would make his career. As a Senate aide to now-Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Miller was credited—or blamed—for blocking an Obama-era immigration deal. He took that focus to the White House, playing a leading role in drafting the controversial restrictions on entry to the U.S. of travelers from majority-Muslim nations and refugees.

Those restrictions, spelled out in executive orders, faced massive legal pushback. In March, Trump attempted to revise the so-called Muslim ban to pass judicial muster. The revamped executive order retained a critical provision on refugees: Section 6 of the March order limited their entry to 50,000 in fiscal year 2017, less than half of the 110,000 refugees Obama forecasted admitting into the country this year.

Almost as soon as Trump issued the new order, federal judges blocked the administration from enforcing key aspects, including the Section 6 refugee cap. Hawaii district judge Derrick Watson even cited Miller's own words ("Fundamentally, you're still going to have the same policy outcome...") in his ruling that the new executive order was as legally deficient as the old one.

Inside the government, however, officials had concerns about whether Miller would abide by the injunction. With the U.S. almost certain to surpass the order's intended refugee limits, those tasked with implementing refugee policy this spring began fearing that the nationalist wing of the administration would attempt to blame bureaucrats for undermining Trump's policies. So they did what experienced officials excel at doing: They created a paper trail to keep the entire administration on the same page.

Lawyers across the government discussed and created documentation spelling out the government's obligations now that the judges had blocked the refugee cap. A critical aspect of that effort was a Justice Department guidance making clear that the administration would put itself in legal jeopardy by defying the injunction.

"While we stand ready to implement the executive order to its maximum effect should the court order be lifted, in the meantime, we don't want to run afoul of the legal rulings," said the U.S. official.

Miller and his allies "know the lawyers are really skittish, so they're

trying to avoid the lawyers, who say, 'No, you can't do that,'" another official said.

Along with a spending bill for the rest of the fiscal year that did not curb refugee admissions, the maneuver worked. Last week, the State Department acknowledged that it is lifting weekly refugee quotas. The U.S. has already admitted nearly 50,000 refugees in fiscal year 2017, with four months to go.

But Miller's influence over refugees and other international issues goes beyond concerns over U.S. refugee admissions. Last week, Foreign Policy reported that Miller obstructed Italy's attempt to make the global migration crisis central to the recent G-7 summit.

The DPC has also trod on NSC toes by questioning American support for a variety of international institutions, particularly those that inflame right-wing sensibilities. Among them are the U.N. Population Fund and other organizations that aid with abortion access and global health, indicating what one official described as an "outsized understanding" of how Miller sees the DPC's role. Miller's allies typically ask, pointedly, if supporting such groups is an efficient use of U.S. government cash. In April, the administration withheld more than \$32 million from the U.N. fund.

Though the administration is divided into competing fiefdoms, Miller is unequivocal in the meetings that blur the lines between NSC and DPC authority. He frequently says he speaks for Trump. Unnerved career civil servants have been known to push back on his hardline positions, but given Miller's claimed closeness to the president, they do so delicately.

"As any casual observer can conclude, it's not totally clear what the president thinks from time to time," said a U.S. official, "but it's hard when you've got an adviser purportedly speaking on his behalf."

Neither the White House nor Miller responded to requests for comment.

It is not the first time that Miller's allies have reached for a national security role. Trump in January placed Bannon on the NSC, only to reverse course under pressure, including dissatisfaction from National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster. Rothkopf, the NSC historian, said Miller's incursions into NSC territory indicated the persistent potency of the administration's nationalist faction.

Miller "is seen as a vestige of the Bannon regime that was supposed to have been defunct or marginalized. Clearly that didn't work out as promoted," Rothkopf said. McMaster's control of the NSC process is not complete, which is very worrisome."

"They remain influential, and Miller's role is a further sign that