

Revue de presse américaine

Ambassade de France aux États-Unis
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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Mercredi 5 juillet, réalisation : Josselin Brémaud



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FRANCE – EUROPE



French Prime Minister Warns of Cuts to Tame Its ‘Volcano’ of Debt

William Horobin
4-5 minutes

warned that the country is reeling under an “unbearable” debt burden and pledged austerity measures in a speech outlining policies for President Emmanuel Macron’s five-year term in office.

first time since his appointment in May and since the election of a commanding majority for Mr. Macron in June’s legislative elections.

Mr. Macron’s presidency lost some of its élan last week when state auditor Cour des Comptes said

there are gaping holes in the country’s finances, making it tougher for the newly elected French leader to deliver his election promises. According to the auditor, France will not meet the European Union’s target of a deficit under 3% of

July 4, 2017 2:45 p.m. ET

PARIS—French Prime Minister Mr. Philippe was addressing the Edouard Philippe on Tuesday French National Assembly for the

economic output this year, as the previous government had pledged.

"We are dancing on a volcano that is rumbling louder and louder," Mr. Philippe said.

Repairing France's public finances is a key plank of Mr. Macron's economic strategy both at home and on the Continent. The centrist leader is pushing Germany and Chancellor Angela Merkel to accept a greater sharing of the burden by eurozone states, pledging in return that France will revamp its labor laws to make the jobs market more flexible and will respect EU budget rules after years of missing targets.

Mr. Philippe said his government will cut spending to meet the 3% deficit

target this year, and make further cuts to reduce spending by 3 percentage points of economic output over the course of Mr. Macron's five-year term. The public sector payroll will be contained and no part of the budget will be spared from the search for savings, Mr. Philippe said, noting in particular France spends more than its peers on housing and job training programs.

"France has an addiction to public spending, which, like any addiction resolves none of the problems it claims to," Mr. Philippe said.

Mr. Philippe, who comes from the center-right Les Républicains party, said the government will still deliver Mr. Macron's election pledges on

investment and tax cuts, including a €50 billion (\$57 billion) investment program focused on health and renewable energy, and reductions in corporate and payroll taxes.

But the prime minister said changes to wealth taxes and a tax credit system for employers would not come into effect until 2019. Over the whole five-year term, taxes will fall by 1 percentage point of economic output, he said.

France's largest business lobby, Medef, said it regretted the delay of measures to cut the cost of employment.

"The catastrophic state of our public finances should encourage speedy

and determined action," said Medef chief Pierre Gattaz.

Mr. Philippe also drew criticism from leftists. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the far-left group in the National Assembly, said the policies unveiled by the government amounted to following austerity instructions from Germany that would destroy France's public services.

Referring to the German chancellor, Mr. Mélenchon said, "We didn't elect Ms. Merkel."

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

Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as 'French Prime Minister Vows Cuts to Ease Debt Burden.'



Macron's Premier Says France Must Break Spending Addiction

@gviscusi More stories by

Gregory Viscusi

5-7 minutes

By , , and

4 juillet 2017 à 10:29 UTC-4 4 juillet 2017 à 13:16 UTC-4

- Philippe promises 20 billion euros of tax cuts in five years
- Public spending won't increase before 2022, Philippe says

French President Emmanuel Macron

Photographer: Jasper Juinen/Bloomberg

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said France must break the addiction to public spending that has left its economy trailing peers as he outlined plans to rein in the budget and cut taxes.

In his maiden speech at the National Assembly as premier, Philippe promised 20 billion euros (\$23 billion) of tax cuts by the end of President Emmanuel Macron's term in 2022. Spending will drop by the

equivalent of 3 percentage points of gross domestic product in that time and taxation will fall by 1 point, he said.

"We must face the truth about the financial situation of the country," Philippe said. "France can no longer be the champion of both public spending and of taxes. France has an addiction to public spending, and like all addictions it requires willpower and courage to kick it."

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Philippe spoke a day after Macron addressed a joint session of congress in Versailles. While Macron's speech was a lofty call for French renewal, Philippe provided the nuts and bolts, laying out the timetable and the specific steps the government will take to revive an economy that has underperformed the euro zone for the past three years with unemployment roughly double the rate of the U.K. and Germany.

Philippe won a vote of confidence in his government by a margin of 370 to 67. The number of votes against was the lowest ever for any prime minister setting out his agenda since France's current constitutional

arrangements came into effect in 1959, though the level of abstention was also at a record.

Political Renewal

The prime minister's address wasn't just a dry rendition of his policy program though. He began with an ode to the new parliamentarians from Macron's movement, pointing to a black female lawyer from a tough neighborhood who benefited from affirmative action at an elite university, a female soldier who rose through the ranks and a Rwandan-born economist adopted by a French couple.

"You are an assembly that has been feminized, made younger, and renewed," he said. Of the National Assembly's 577 members, 430 were elected for the first time in June's legislative elections.

Still, after the president's soaring rhetoric on Monday, Philippe's message was very much focused on concrete measures.

Payroll taxes will be cut starting in 2019. Corporate income tax will be lowered gradually from 33.3 percent now to 25 percent in 2022 to converge with the European average. The wealth tax will be limited to real estate assets starting in 2019. And those actions will be

achieved while keeping France's commitment to its European partners to limit the deficit that has been part of every government budget for the past three decades.

French government spending accounted for 56 percent of GDP in 2016, the highest in the 28-nation European Union, according to Eurostat. While the tax burden of 48 percent of GDP was also the EU's highest.

The government has already canceled a planned pay increase for public employees for this year and is looking for at least another 2 billion euros in savings to bring the deficit down to 3 percent of GDP or less in 2017 from 3.4 percent in 2016. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire will update euro-area finance ministers on the situation next week and present a multi-year budget plan in September.

"The message is clear," Philippe said. "Work must pay."

The prime minister also outlined plans to build 15,000 new prison places, raise the price of cigarettes to 10 euros a pack, make health care more efficient, and renew France's education system.

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CNBC : French prime minister taunts Trump, compares him to an ostrich

Karen Gilchrist

5-6 minutes

Christophe Morin | IP3 | Getty Images

French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe

France's new prime minister, Edouard Philippe, took a not-so-

subtle slap at President Donald Trump, saying anybody who refused to sign the Paris climate agreement was "scared of the future."

In outlining his government's reform agenda Tuesday, the 46-year-old lawyer-turned-politician reiterated France's commitment to tackling climate change under the United Nations framework. He insisted that opponents of the deal were ignorant

of the environmental challenges that lie ahead.

"Those who, through selfishness or a lack of conscience, turn their backs on the Paris climate change agreement, show more than just a simple misunderstanding of the world that is coming. It shows that at the heart of things, they are scared of the future," Philippe told the French National Assembly in Paris.

Trump withdrew from the Paris agreement in June, eliciting widespread consternation from signatories in Europe and Asia, as well as individual U.S. states.

"The ostrich is without doubt a nice animal, but putting your head in the sand has never prepared a person to face the future," Philippe continued, as he announced several measures to combat greenhouse

gas emissions, including hiking diesel taxes in line with petrol.

The prime minister, however, did give an apparent nod to one of Trump's other reform policies by announcing new measures to retain

French businesses in much the same way Trump pledged to revive the U.S. corporate sector.

"Companies must want to set themselves up and develop on our

soil rather than elsewhere," Philippe said.

He added that his government would cut the corporate tax from 33.3 percent to 25 percent by 2022,

while dramatically cutting unemployment.

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Gobry : The Predictable Winners of Macron's Presidency

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Emmanuel Gobry

7-9 minutes

Europe

Emmanuel Macron's instinct is to pursue policies that benefit France's elite "enarques."

by

4 juillet 2017 à 09:38 UTC-4

From here to anywhere.

Photographer: Patrick Hertzog/AFP/Getty Images

French President Emmanuel Macron has promised a dramatic departure from the recent past. France's youngest leader since Napoleon has brought in on his coat-tails a new generation of fresh-faced young leaders, many of whom have never held political office before. And in his debut speech to both houses of France's parliament, Macron reiterated his call for a new order -- a "veritable revolution," as he called it, to re-energize French politics.

But while the new faces and reforming ambitions are a welcome change in France, it's worth asking whether the move will empower new thinking. A closer look suggests that the most immediate beneficiaries of Macron's policies will be a more seasoned group: France's "enarques," or graduates of the famous Ecole Nationale d'Administration, its finishing school for civil servants.

Every country has its factories for elites -- think of Oxbridge in the U.K. or the Ivy League in the U.S. France's ENA is relatively small, graduating 80 to 100 every year; but ENA graduates are immediately hired into top civil service tracks. Because of the close links between the government and business, and the system whereby civil servants can work for the private sector with a guarantee of their old government job back, ENA grads also dominate the business world. (This explains how Macron could end up a managing partner at Rothschild & Co at the ripe young age of 30, after working in the French finance ministry out of ENA.)

This core of seasoned, well-connected professionals are set to see their power increased under Macron -- not out of some conspiracy to empower elites, but because to an enarque most problems are solvable with the help of other enarques. There are already signs this is happening.

Much has been made of how Macron has introduced political neophytes to France's National Assembly. But French deputies have skeletal staffs and depend on government services. While long-serving members who have built up relationships and expertise in a domain over the years and therefore do not rely on official bodies as much are the exception, most of these members are now gone, thereby increasing the power of the (enarque-run) bureaucracy over the legislature. The very inexperience of Macron's new deputies makes them more dependent on the old guard, or

at least the ENA graduates who run most of the bureaucracy.

Similarly, Macron's decision to prevent politicians from holding several offices at once, a seemingly common-sense measure, works to the benefit of the enarques. France has so many administrative layers that any local project must gain the approval of several bodies. Often the only way for a local politician to wrest approval or subsidies from a reluctant bureaucracy is to be elected to several of those offices at once. While no doubt well-intentioned, the move will in practice end up reducing the power of local elected officials relative to the largely enarque-dominated central bureaucracy.

Macron's proposed anti-terrorism law has a similar impact. The main thrust of the law is that it takes many decisions in anti-terrorism investigations away from investigating judges, and puts them into the hands of prefects, senior civil servants in charge of overseeing police forces in a specific area. In France, judges don't come from ENA, but from a different civil service school. Prefects, however, do. However unconsciously, Macron and his advisers and prime minister find it natural that the counter-terrorism problem would be better tackled with, well, enarques, leading the way.

Macron's regulatory decisions may also benefit -- guess who. Bloomberg News reported that Macron's government has done a quiet U-turn on EU rules regarding banking regulation, softening

France's traditionally hawkish line. As Macron knows well, three of the four biggest French banks by assets are run by enarques, and finance is a common landing pad for enarques; they will be delighted.

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The problem with all of this is not necessarily that enarques are not well-suited to running France; by and large, they are very smart, competent and public-spirited. But as with any tight-knit group of people who have the same education, similar careers and often similar backgrounds, biases and groupthink can take over. Furthering the power of unelected bureaucrats over elected public servants may backfire among the many who feel disenfranchised already by the political elite and recently rejected both mainstream parties as a result.

France has been ruled by enarques for most of the postwar era, and the results are decidedly mixed. The Macron era ought to be a break from the past. Whether the enarque class can use their new and old powers to further Macron's goal of reinvigorating French politics remains to be seen. But one thing seems clear: The man whose rise no one predicted seems to be predictable after all.

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



Surprise: Trump and France's Macron may wind up allies after all

Benny Avni

4-6 minutes

The catalyst for a blossoming friendship between President Trump and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron could well be a mutual desire to rein in Iran.

But first, wait — friendship? Wasn't Macron Trump's sharpest critic, jabbing him on climate change, taunting him on Twitter, even trying to show dominance by refusing to let go during the two leaders' first handshake and then bragging about

it afterward? Won't he and German Chancellor Angela Merkel diss Trump again this weekend, at the G20 gathering in Hamburg? What about Trump quitting the Paris climate accord, which Macron seemed to take doubly personally?

Yet there are signs of an early thaw: Macron just eagerly joined Trump by vowing French jets will bomb Syria alongside American ones if Bashar al-Assad's forces use chemical weapons again. Plus, Macron invited Trump to attend the Bastille Day festivities on France's national holiday July 14. And Trump accepted.

So Captain Renault and Rick Blaine are about to strike a friendship again as America and France step arm into that Casablanca fog.

Not everyone is cheering, though. Syria is Iran's client, and Trump is building a regional coalition against Tehran while Congress tries to push through new sanctions. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif was in Paris over the weekend to try to preempt Macron from joining the pile-on.

Europeans and former Obama officials fear the toughening of Iran policies as well. Last week, former

State Department official Jeff Feltman, now heading the United Nations' political department, gave the Security Council a glowing review of Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal. That was echoed by top European Union diplomats.

America's UN Ambassador Nikki Haley spoiled the party by listing Iranian violations of Security Council resolutions, from missile launches and manufacturing to arms sales and the spreading war and terrorism across the Mideast. "We won't turn a blind eye to the Iranian regime's behavior and will work with the

global community to enforce sanctions," Haley said.

So which way will France swing? "On this, we're somewhere in the middle between the EU and America," a French diplomat told me over coffee here.

It's a fair assessment. While Zarif tried his charm on Macron, the People's Mujahedin of Iran (MeK), an anti-regime group, held its annual rally in a Parisian suburb. The group's leader Maryam Rajavi's top applause line was a promise that regime change in Iran is "within reach."

Well, maybe. But here's the point: France hosted Rajavi and her disciples, conferring sort of

legitimacy on the anti-mullah group for decades — even as the State Department listed the MeK as a terrorist group. Former French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner addressed the group Saturday. As did some of Trump's closest allies — Newt Gingrich, Rudy Giuliani, John Bolton — who came as close as possible to saying Trump, too, supports regime change, without quite declaring it in so many words.

You don't have to support the MeK, or regime change for that matter, to notice the tug of war going on here: Once European leaders are done trying to change Trump's mind on climate and immigration, they'll try to influence his Iran policy, begging

him not to be too harsh with the mullahs.

It isn't all so cut-and-dried, though. When questioned about French companies' push to do more business in Iran, officials point out that in some cases they're being beaten to deals by major American firms — Boeing, for one, is strong-arming their Airbus out of the Iranian market. Eager to create job opportunities at home, they say, Trump may be willing to do just what some Americans accuse Europeans of doing.

Trump and Macron ought to hash that out this weekend at the G20 and in Paris on July 14. The end of the Obama era has left both

countries wondering what their roles are. After all, France took a tougher line on Iran during the runup to the nuclear deal than Team Obama did. Macron — and Trump, for that matter — should follow the example set by Macron's predecessor.

Perhaps a renewed effort to punish and isolate Iran to better address the nuclear threat will even, eventually, spell the end of a regime that for decades has oppressed Iranians and wreaked havoc on the Mideast and beyond.

If so, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship. And more peaceful handshakes.

Baltimore Sun : Rachel Marsden: Schwarzenegger and Macron blow hot air while France swelters

Rachel Marsden

5-7 minutes

PARIS — On a recent Friday afternoon, while a historic heat wave was finally subsiding across France, I strolled by the Élysée Palace, home of the French president, as a massive black Range Rover pulled up to the door. (This at a time when the transit authority was offering locals special rates to get us out of our cars as pollution ticked up and the temperature hit 40 degrees Celsius.) A palace staffer opened the door and out popped Arnold Schwarzenegger, environmental activist. French President Emmanuel Macron greeted Mr. Schwarzenegger with a handshake.

They disappeared into the palace and later posted a selfie video together on Twitter, with former California governor Schwarzenegger explaining that he and Macron had met to discuss environmental issues and a green future. Macron added that they had discussed "how (we) can deliver together to make the planet great again."

How about starting with making Western infrastructure — including French air conditioning — great again?

I could nitpick, as many on social media have, that Mr. Schwarzenegger didn't squeeze all of his muscles into a tiny Smart car. I'm just glad that he was comfortable here in Paris in the extreme heat. The rest of us sure weren't. Rather

than playing superheroes in a buddy movie, perhaps Messrs. Schwarzenegger and Macron can fix what's just on the other side of the palace wall before taking on the rest of the planet's problems?

Let's ignore the debate on climate change and whether or not its man-made, and whether it's hotter in the summertime now than it was a half-century ago. Records show that there were hotter days decades ago in France and in North America. The difference is that modern technology has allowed for our societies to adapt to adverse weather conditions so they're not as noticeable. I still recall lying in bed in my childhood home in Vancouver, Canada, 30 years ago, unable to sleep in 35C heat. That same heat still exists when I go back to Canada in the summertime, except we now have this thing called air conditioning. (Tell that to the French, though.)

French President Emmanuel Macron speaks during a special congress gathering both houses of parliament in the palace of Versailles, outside Paris, Monday, July 3, 2017. (Eric Feferberg / AP)

While Mr. Macron was promoting planetary reform, kids just to the north in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis were opening fire hydrants to fill inflatable pools and the streets with water in order to escape the heat. "Streetpooling" resulted in about 600 hydrants being opened, wasting enough water to fill 240 Olympic-sized pools over four weeks, French utility company Veolia told the daily newspaper Le

Figaro. That prompted French police to issue a public service notice with a drawing of a fire hydrant and the caption, "This is not a shower."

And as the government encouraged the French to use mass transit for a special reduced price, citizens who accepted that offer were forced to withstand a virtual hell. Buses and subways were transformed into crowded infernos — again, without any air conditioning. I have a transit pass and typically use it to get around the city, but during the heat wave I turned to air-conditioned Uber.

Even hospitals sometimes lack such modern comforts, as an American friend who gave birth in Paris in the heat of summertime recently discovered. My local post office put up a sign apologizing for having to close several times due to the heat.

So while climate-change activists are busy trying to figure out how to get taxpayer funds into the coffers of foreign countries under the guise of assisting their adaptation to adverse weather conditions, we taxpayers have to suffer due to insufficient infrastructure.

And it's not just a French problem (nor is the problem limited to air conditioning). Maintaining adequate infrastructure is a challenge for much of the Western world. Some people count public housing as infrastructure, and a fire at London's Grenfell Tower housing complex that killed 79 people earlier this month became a tragedy of such magnitude due to years of neglect,

according to residents. U.S. President Donald Trump, acutely aware of America's degrading infrastructure, has announced a \$1 trillion plan to upgrade it.

Mr. Macron has criticized Mr. Trump for pulling out of the Paris agreement on combating climate change, but Mr. Trump is just choosing to cut through the nonsense. The Paris agreement is about laundering money, sending tax dollars from developed nations to multinational corporations via underdeveloped nations, all under the pretext of infrastructure upgrades to help poorer countries adapt to climate change. Trump is simply keeping taxpayer funds in America and using it to bolster domestic infrastructure and adaptability.

Mr. Macron would be wise to try making France great again before he tries to take on the rest of the planet, and Mr. Schwarzenegger would better serve the world by staying home and supporting a fellow Republican who's trying to prioritize the citizens of his own country over a globalist money-laundering scam.

Rachel Marsden is a columnist, political strategist and former Fox News host based in Paris. She appears frequently on TV and in publications in the U.S. and abroad. Her website can be found at <http://www.rachelmarsden.com>.

Breitbart : 'I Will Govern Like a Roman God'

by Jack Montgomery4 Jul 2017,16:44

4 minutes

French president Emmanuel Macron has declared he will

govern France like Jupiter, the Roman king of the gods, shortly after officials told the media his thought process was "too

complex" for journalists to understand.

Summoning over 900 politicians from both houses of the French parliament to a rare Congress at the palace of Louis XIV – the ‘Sun King’ – in Versailles, he threatened to overrule lawmakers with a referendum if they try to frustrate the “reforms” he wishes to impose on the legislature. Such assemblies are usually reserved for times of national crisis.

Reuters reports him as saying he desires to reign as a “Jupiterian” president – “a remote, dignified figure, like the Roman god of gods, who weighs his rare pronouncements carefully”.

This bizarre statement of intent comes just days after Macron scrapped the president’s traditional Bastille Day press conference, with an Elysée Palace official claiming the 39-year-old’s thoughts are “too complex” for journalists.

Macron’s “complex thought process lends itself badly to the game of

question-and-answer with journalists”, the spokesman explained – prompting much mockery in the French press.

It has been speculated that Macron is keen to cultivate an aloof, almost imperial aura after being derided as a placeman for the unpopular socialist François Hollande, in whose government he served as economy minister, or as a poodle for Angela Merkel, the German chancellor widely regarded as the European Union’s driving force.

“You are the heir of François Hollande,” scoffed nationalist rival Marine Le Pen during their head-to-head election debate. “We now call you Baby Hollande; Hollande Junior!”

She added that, whatever the outcome of the election, “France will be led by a woman: either me or Mrs. Merkel.”

Much of the commentary on Macron’s alleged natural

submissiveness hints at his relationship with his wife – twenty-five years his senior – with Italy’s larger-than-life former president Silvio Berlusconi teasing that he is “a nice lad with a good-looking mum”.

Efforts by the EU loyalist to strengthen his public standing by picking fights with the governments of Central Europe, who have been resolutely defiant in the face of attempts by Brussels to impose compulsory migrant quotas on them, have been less than successful.

Hungarian premier Viktor Orbán gently dismissed him as “a new boy” who had yet to find his feet.

“Macron’s entrance wasn’t too encouraging, as he thought the best way to show friendship was to immediately kick Central European countries. This isn’t how we do things around here, but he’ll soon get to know his way around,” he added.

Posing as the EU’s champion against President Donald Trump has also backfired, with a pointed, public snub of the U.S. leader in favour of Angela Merkel and other Europeans at a G20 summit ending in embarrassment when the 70-year-old manhandled him with a powerful handshake.

Macron was clearly rattled by the exchange, granting a brief interview with journalists in order to emphasise that another handshake with President Trump – in which the Frenchman clung on for dear life – was a “moment of truth” in which he supposedly demonstrated that he “would not make small concessions, not even symbolic ones”.

Follow Jack Montgomery on Twitter: @JackBMontgomery

CNBC : Macron's State of the Union address: what next for France

Karen Gilchrist

8-10 minutes

Etienne Laurent | Reuters

French President Emmanuel Macron walks through the Galerie des Bustes (Busts Gallery) to access the Versailles Palace’s hemicycle for a special congress gathering both houses of parliament (National Assembly and Senate), near Paris, France, July 3, 2017.

French President Emmanuel Macron vowed Monday that he would move to a public vote if lawmakers did not move quickly enough to back his ambitious reform agenda.

In a rare address to both houses of parliament which echoed the U.S. State of the Union address, the newly-elected president said that he planned to cut the number of lawmakers by a third in order to drive ahead with the overhaul plans which helped him ride to victory in May.

This would reduce the number National Assembly members from 577 to 385 and the number of Senate members from 348 to 232.

He then told the almost 1,000 senators and MPs present at the palace of Versailles that if his proposed changes did not receive

parliamentary approval within a year he would take the decision to a referendum.

Why call a referendum?

The purpose of Macron’s proposed plebiscite is twofold: it demonstrates the urgency with which he hopes to implement change and it sends a clear signal to the public that their voices will be heard.

“He’s playing a game with the parliament, with the Senate, to show that he is serious about implementing reforms,” Antoine Lesne, head of SPDR ETF Strategy at State Street Global Advisors, told CNBC Tuesday, noting that the pledge was not binding.

Macron also promised to add a dose of proportional representation and introduce petitions to get key topics discussed in a bid to give more power to the people.

“The people on the street want something different and he hears that,” Lesne said. “He wants to show that he is listening to the people.”

The last time France held a referendum was in 2005, when it voted against creating a consolidated constitution for the entirety of the EU by a majority of 55 percent.

The move to hold a vote which was ultimately rejected spawned criticism

of the then-President Jacques Chirac in much the same way it did for former British Prime Minister David Cameron and former Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, who both backed failed referenda.

What happens next?

Arguably of greater importance is the speech due to be made by French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe to the National Assembly later Tuesday.

He is expected to fill in the gaps left by Macron and provide further details of his government’s overhaul agenda, including labour market reforms, tax revisions and new security measures. Already Macron has vowed to lift France’s state of emergency, in place since the Paris attacks of November 2015, this autumn but gave no more clarity.

Mayor of Le Havre Edouard Philippe speaks as he presents the candidates for the ‘La République en marche’ party ahead of the June parliamentary elections

Known as a ‘general policy statement’, the speech may also conclude with an optional confidence vote.

This is risky as failure by the National Assembly to endorse Philippe’s statement would lead to the collapse of his government under the French Constitution.

However, validation would provide the government with a stronger mandate to drive ahead with reforms.

The government may be willing to take this gamble given the broad support Macron’s La République En Marche (LREM) movement received in presidential and parliamentary elections this year.

However, analysts have suggested that LREM’s popularity among lawmakers may not be as far reaching as hoped and such a vote could be unwise.

“You’ve had two consecutive presidents now who have come in with a grand reform agenda and have got absolutely nowhere. Macron looks like maybe he’ll be more successful but his party is already a coalition, he’s already taken from the left and the right,” James Athey, global fund manager at Aberdeen Asset Management, told CNBC Tuesday.

“There really isn’t much of it that you can really say, hand on heart, the entirety of his recently cobbled together party are really going to go for.”

Philippe is due to make his speech at 3pm C.E.T. Tuesday.

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France's Macron Visits Nuclear Submarine, Simulates Launch

PARIS —

French President Emmanuel Macron is taking part in a missile launch simulation aboard a nuclear

submarine in the Atlantic to signal his commitment to the country’s nuclear deterrent.

The simulation is part of a daylong visit to nuclear weapons facilities Tuesday on the Ile Longue base off

the Brittany coast. It comes just after North Korea announced that it had tested an intercontinental ballistic missile.

Macron's office says he is visiting a



France: Europe-themed homage for Holocaust survivor Veil

ABC News
2-3 minutes

Holocaust survivors joined France's president and European dignitaries Wednesday at a special memorial ceremony for Simone Veil, who rose from the horrors of Nazi death camps to become president of the European Parliament and one of France's most revered politicians.

Best known in France for spearheading the legalization of abortion, Veil faced down sexist criticism and repeatedly broke barriers for

warhead assembly and testing facility, then spending a few hours underwater in the Atlantic aboard the nuclear submarine "The

Terrible," where he will take part in a simulated missile launch.

France will be the only EU country with nuclear weapons after Britain's departure. According to the French

constitution, it's the president who decides whether to fire nuclear missiles.

Macron praised her as inspiring "respect and fascination."

"She loved Europe, she always fought for it ... because she knew in the heart of this European dream there were above all dreams of peace and freedom," he said.

Veil lost her parents and brother in Nazi camps, and spoke frequently about the need to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive.

"She knew that memory is here so that the unthinkable does not happen again," Macron said.

"Just as you leave us, Madam, please receive an immense thank

you from the French people", he concluded in front of the coffin covered with a French flag, in the presence of hundreds of ordinary citizens and high-profile guests including former presidents Nicolas Sarkozy and Francois Hollande.

Veil will be the fourth woman to be honored at the Pantheon. She will join two women who fought with the French Resistance during World War II, Germaine Tillion and Genevieve de Gaulle-Anthonioz, and Nobel Prize-winning chemist Marie Curie.



4 detained in Belgium, 1 in France after anti-terror raids

By The Associated Press
BRUSSELS —
Jul 5, 2017, 7:43 AM ET

Authorities have detained four people for questioning following a half dozen anti-terror raids in Brussels as part

of an investigation that was not link to past extremist attacks in Paris and Brussels.

The federal prosecutor's office said that "various weapons were found" in one of the raids.

At the same time, on the outskirts of Lille in northern France, 100

kilometers (62 miles) from Brussels, another major anti-terror operation was held, French media reported. The La Voix du Nord newspaper said one man was detained.

Belgium and France are both on high alert since extremist attacks

have hit Paris and Brussels over the past few years.

Belgian media said the raids centered on a bikers group, the Kamikaze Riders, two of whom have been sentenced on anti-terror charges last year.



A French Choreographer Who Plays With the DNA of Dance

Roslyn Sulcas

7-9 minutes

MANCHESTER, England — Ten thousand gestures, 25 dancers, an hourlong performance. "It's a one-line ideal" said Boris Charmatz, the French choreographer, who was watching a rehearsal of his new work from the front row of seats in the cavernous, chilly Mayfield Depot, a former train station here.

"10000 Gestures," which will have its premiere on July 13 as part of the Manchester International Festival, may be a one-line idea, but it's an extremely complicated one. Mr. Charmatz's concept is that no gesture — a word he uses to refer to any single movement, be it a dance step or a shoulder shrug — is ever repeated; and that every dancer's sequence is unique.

"It plays with the DNA of what is supposedly dance, with the usual ideas of choreographic pattern, style, structure," said Mr. Charmatz, who speaks rapidly in fluent, lightly accented English. "If you don't repeat, you are throwing your material away all the time. You

cannot do 'good' choreography like this."

Mr. Charmatz, 44, seemed mildly pleased at the idea of not aspiring to "good" choreography. "It takes the pressure away," he joked.

The choreographer Boris Charmatz. Duncan Elliott for The New York Times

But his rigor and concentration were perfectly evident as he watched the dancers go through the first 10 minutes of the piece. "Not too anecdotal, please," he called out to one; "fifteen seconds is a little too long for that sequence," he said to another. Only when a dancer ran into the audience and hurled herself onto his lap as part of her sequence did he lose his intense stare and laugh.

Mr. Charmatz said the idea for "10000 Gestures" came to him while watching one of his own pieces, "Levée des Conflits Extended," at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2013. "The idea of 'Levée' was that it was based on limited gestures, so you were constantly circling through the sequence, like a living sculpture changing shape," he said. "I thought, what if you flip that,

and have a piece where none of the dancers ever repeat a gesture or do the same one as anyone else?"

How do you create 10,000 completely different gestures? Over many, many hours working in a group on various themes, Mr. Charmatz explained. The themes included: "doing nothing," microscopic movements (raising an eyebrow, flicking fingers), violence, eroticism, dance history, obscenity, and politics — a "Brexit means Brexit" gesture made by Theresa May is even in there.

"Each person has a different idea about what an erotic or a violent gesture might be," Mr. Charmatz said, "so you get 25 variations on these ideas all happening together."

The premise of "10000 Gestures" is that no move is ever repeated and that every dancer's sequence is unique. Duncan Elliott for The New York Times

All the themes come in a specific order and last for a predetermined amount of time, he explained, although the number of dancers onstage and the groupings they create vary constantly. When it was pointed out that structuring the work

through changing configurations might verge on good choreography, he laughed. "Of course I want it to be compelling to watch," he said. "I'm bringing all my skills, even the ones I don't have, to this piece."

A major name in the European contemporary dance world, Mr. Charmatz has never followed a traditional path. He made his name when still quite young: In 1993, at 19, he choreographed "À Bras le Corps" with Dimitri Chamblas, a friend from the Conservatoire de Lyon, where both had trained after defecting from the Paris Opera Ballet school to pursue a more contemporary dance orientation. The simplicity, physicality and direct attack of "À Bras le Corps," performed in a boxing ring with spectators seated on all sides, was a salutary shock in the highly theatricalized world of 1990s French dance.

Mr. Charmatz continued on an iconoclastic path. He did not form his own ensemble or accept commissions for companies. He danced with various troupes and collaborated with fellow choreographers while creating relatively few pieces, which were often more like installation works

than conventional dance performances. From 2002 to 2004, he ran a nomadic school for 15 students; he has written a book about contemporary dance and is a co-author of two others.

When he was appointed, in 2009, to lead the National Choreographic Center in Rennes, his first decision was to change its name to the Musée de la Danse. Unlike most of the choreographers who head regional centers in France, Mr. Charmatz has no permanent company, and works on a project-to-project basis. (His term in Rennes ends in 2018.)

Mr. Charmatz, standing, gives direction as the dancers prepare to rehearse his piece "10,000

Gestures." Duncan Elliott for The New York Times

"Boris brings movement and ideas together in space in extraordinary ways," said John McGrath, the director of the Manchester International Festival, who added that he was keen to make dance an increasingly important part of the biennial event. "How do ideas manifest in art? The ambition of this work, the largest he has ever made, and the ambition of the idea felt like something we could really embrace."

The experience of creating "10000 Gestures" has been grueling but exhilarating, said Mr. Chamblas, who still dances "À Bras le Corps" with Mr. Charmatz and is performing

in "10000 Gestures." "It is all entirely fixed choreographically, and you have to be very precise, and switch from one parameter to another extremely fast," he said.

He gave a quick run-down: "At the beginning of the piece are the gestures of doing nothing, but very fast, 25 of them; then 15 movements going backwards, then 55 'crazy' movements, then five rest positions. All of that is about a minute."

Mr. Charmatz said that an important early decision was to perform almost everything at high speed. "What's interesting is to create a storm, like snowflakes coming at you in the light," he said. "It's as if we keep running, the piece will hold together. Or like the idea that when you are

dying, your life flashes before you. It plays also with the idea, which people are always saying, that dance is ephemeral, that no two moments are ever the same."

The underlying idea of death, he added, felt important, and also the idea of being fully present. Referring to the recent suicide bombing at an Ariana Grande concert, he said: "We are in Manchester, with everything that happened here, so I have used Mozart's Requiem in the piece. And not to be too political, but it's easy to feel, especially in France, like you can't move for problems — migrants, unemployment, Brexit. In some ways this is also about moving on. Every moment says 'now.'"

**The
New York
Times**

Ramdane Touhami's New French Empire (online)

Dana Thomas
9-11 minutes

Ramdane Touhami in one of his L'Officine Universelle Buly locations in Paris. Roberto Frankenberg for The New York Times

PARIS — A large beauty emporium was scheduled to open here on Wednesday in the former foundry where Auguste Rodin's "The Thinker" was cast.

It is the second Parisian outpost for L'Officine Universelle Buly — a three-year-old luxury cosmetics company founded by the kinetic French entrepreneur Ramdane Touhami. The 2,000-square-foot space in the Marais district will include a 19th-century-style boutique selling the brand's aromatic potions, powders, soaps and perfumes.

It will also house a Japanese florist specializing in delicate dried arrangements and Café Tortoni, a revival of the famed Belle Époque coffeehouse on the Boulevard des Italiens, offering house-blended hot chocolate, homemade ice cream and, in homage to Marcel Proust, madeleines.

But it will not be simply a retail space.

If all goes according to plan, it will be the cornerstone of a new sort of European luxury group — one that, like those anchored by Hermès, Cartier and Louis Vuitton, is rooted in the French Empire but reaches far beyond the traditional product segments of apparel, leather goods, watches and jewelry.

"For me, luxury is not only leather handbags and clothes," Mr. Touhami said while having an espresso at a cafe counter. He was

wearing a khaki jacket, T-shirt, white baggy pants, vibrant orange socks, Birkenstocks and taqiyah skullcap. Luxury, he said, is "calligraphy, fine food, beautiful décor, authentic details and working with artisans."

It has "one foot in the past," he added, "and one foot in the future."

The group, named Honmono (for the Shinto philosophy, meaning "the real product") is off to a lightning start. The five-star Hôtel de Crillon, also scheduled to reopen on Wednesday after a four-year renovation, will have an extensive range of Buly amenities in each bedroom — a major coup for the brand.

Mr. Touhami is planning to roll out Café Tortoni branches in China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan and to open 30 more Buly boutiques worldwide in the next year. He also said he was in negotiations with a major luxury group that wants to invest in the enterprise.

"The world wants Paris," Mr. Touhami said. "And we sell Paris: a fantasy of Paris."

That Mr. Touhami is the force behind this luxury paradigm is perhaps the most startling development of all. A former skateboard kid, he has had his hands in nearly every sort of business in the last 25 years, from reality television to Cire Trudon, the French manufacturer of wax once beloved by royalty. He said his ambition had been driven primarily by three basic requisites: "inciting revolution," "having fun" and "meeting beautiful girls."

Even now — at a relatively more-settled 42 and married to the French aristocrat Victoire de Taillac-Touhami, who runs Buly with him — Mr. Touhami is not your typical luxury brand executive. He speaks so quickly that he can leave his

listeners downright dizzy, and he infuses all that he does with this same manic energy.

His biography reads like a piece of wild fiction, though he swears it's all true. He is the grandson of a Moroccan hero and son of an apple picker in the Tarn-et-Garonne region of France ("I grew up in apple orchards," he said), and he dropped out of technical school at 17.

He had introduced a T-shirt brand called Teuchiland — riffing on the Timberland logo with a reference to cannabis — that was a youth sensation, and building that business seemed much more interesting than studying. Yet it all ended abruptly, he said, when a gang in Toulouse "kidnapped me, tortured me and stole all my money."

Mr. Touhami fled to Paris, where he spent a year without a home. "I slept in public toilets, in the Métro," he said matter-of-factly. "And I still hate dogs." In an altercation with another vagrant, he said, he was stabbed and has a 10-inch scar down his shin to prove it. "I almost bled out," he said. "When you almost die, you embrace life."

He "left homelessness," as he puts it somewhat cryptically, when he fell for a cute girl. Not long after, he started skateboarding, and founded King Size, a skatewear and skateboard company, in partnership with a local manufacturer.

He sold it in 1997, and cooked up a variety of other projects, including in 1998 co-hosting a French reality television program called "Strip-Tease," which chronicled the intersection of hip-hop and middle-class life, and he opened L'Épicerie, a concept store with his friend the designer Jeremy Scott, who was based in Paris at the time. But it did not last long.

"We lost an enormous amount of money, which wasn't ours, so we didn't care," Mr. Touhami said. "We had a lot of fun and we met a lot of girls."

Mr. Touhami spent time in Japan, where he rebooted the fashion retail brand And A, returned to Europe to work as the men's wear director for Liberty in London, and, later, in Paris, created Résistance, a streetwear line that paid homage to the Black Panther Party.

"I went to see other mysterious movements, like the Zapatistas and Hezbollah. I met all the crazy men of the world," he said, proudly. "We were anarchists! We thought it was fun!"

In 1999 he met Ms. de Taillac, a French public relations executive and one of four sisters (another is the jeweler Marie-Hélène de Taillac). The couple married a decade later in a multiday party at the Taillacs' Gascony chateau, Luxeube, not 20 miles from where Mr. Touhami grew up. Today, the Touhamis have three children.

Over the years, they have lived in Jaipur, India; New York; Tangier, Morocco (where Mr. Touhami owned a cafe and had a donkey polo club); and, most recently, Tokyo. This summer, they are returning to Paris and their Left Bank contemporary duplex perched atop a historic building where, he noted with glee, the legendary French finance minister Colbert once lived.

The idea for Buly came to him after he read Honoré de Balzac's 1837 novel "César Birotteau," about a celebrity Parisian perfumer who loses his fortune in real estate speculation. Mr. Touhami was so seduced by the tale that he researched it and discovered that the title character was based on a

French fragrance tycoon named Jean-Pierre Bully, who sold skin tonic called Vinaigre de Bully.

Mr. Touhami acquired the name and, after tweaking the spelling, dreamed up a new iteration of the brand — similar in spirit to the old-school operations Penhaligons in London and Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Italy.

He found an all-white art gallery on the Rue Bonaparte that, with the help of artisans, he transformed into a fin-de-siècle dream of handmade oak cabinetry, antique glass vitrines, Bénou marble counters, terra cotta floors and a swan-beak faucet and sink that “we pulled out of a St. Petersburg palace,” he said.

The New York Times

Europe Will Be Watching Trump's Visit to a Right-Tilting Poland

Rick Lyman

8-10 minutes

Posters advertising President Trump's planned speech at Krasinski Square in Warsaw. Czarek Sokolowski/Associated Press

WARSAW — Polish officials are bragging: On President Trump's way to the Group of 20 summit this week, he is coming to Poland first, choosing it over more powerful American allies like Germany, France or Britain.

“We have a new success, Trump's visit,” Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the head of the governing party and Poland's true power broker, said in a speech last week. Mr. Trump's visit, he said, is causing other European countries to “envy” Poland.

That remains to be seen. Mr. Trump's last visit to Europe in May unnerved American allies, causing some leaders to rethink the United States' relationship with the Continent. Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany has already said that she expects difficult talks with Mr. Trump when he arrives in Hamburg on Friday for the G-20 economic summit meeting.

For Mr. Trump, the stop in Poland on Thursday is something of an appetizer before the main course, a visit to a friendly right-wing, populist government with a kindred approach on any number of key issues, from immigration to global warming and coal mining.

Opponents worry that the visit will be seen as a tacit endorsement of a Polish government that has been criticized by its European Union partners for moves to co-opt the

There, as well as in his other one-of-a-kind shops in Taipei and Seoul and shops-within-shops at Dover Street Market in London and Bergdorf Goodman in New York, Mr. Touhami offers more than 700 products, including botanical-based masks and scrubs, and toothpastes, all without parabens, phenoxyethanol or silicone.

He says his sales staff, elegant young women and men in neat navy suits, have been trained by a protégé of the head of protocol for the emperor of Japan. “The best service in the world is in Japan,” Mr. Touhami said. “That is what we master and offer.”

Items are personalized for clients on the spot, including monogrammed soaps and made-to-order potpourri.

news media, its political opponents and, most recently, the courts.

Some fear that the visit may further widen a fissure between East and West in the European Union, which Mr. Trump has disparaged previously, and embolden leaders like Mr. Kaczynski and Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary, who has been similarly criticized for a light authoritarianism.

One of the few points of tension is Russia, which Mr. Trump seems to like and Poland, as a former Soviet satellite, has a long history of regarding warily.

Poles will also be listening carefully for whether Mr. Trump reaffirms the United States' commitment to respond to an attack on another NATO member. He failed to do so in a previous European tour, to the dismay of longtime European allies, which he instead upbraided as not paying their fair share for the alliance.

Mr. Trump is to meet Thursday morning with Andrzej Duda, Poland's president, and attend a session of the Three Seas Initiative Summit, a gathering of Central European leaders.

Finally, he will deliver what the White House is describing as a major speech in the Warsaw square that was the epicenter of the Warsaw Uprising during World War II.

“He will praise Polish courage throughout history's darkest hour, and celebrate Poland's emergence as a European power,” Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, Mr. Trump's national security adviser, said during a White House briefing last week.

“He will lay out a vision, not only for America's future relationship with

“We want to disrupt the beauty business the same way the food business was disrupted 20 years ago,” he said. “We aren't some big corporation raking in profits. We don't care about money. We want to change the philosophy of the industry.” Still, Bully is by all accounts a highly profitable business, though it does not release sales figures.

He and Ms. de Taillac-Touhami have also produced “An Atlas of Natural Beauty,” a thick, richly illustrated encyclopedia detailing their doctrine, which will be published by Ebury Press in Britain in September.

To celebrate, the Touhamis are planning an empire-themed dinner for 50 in the National Archives

groundwork, said Marcin Matczak, a law professor at the University of Warsaw.

Now, Law and Justice is focusing on lower courts, proposing a law that would change the way judges are selected. Instead of a National Judicial Council dominated by judges making selections, the new law would split the council in two, with judges on one side and political appointees on the other and the added stipulation that judges must be approved by both groups and then by Parliament.

“This government hates anything they don't have full control over,” Dr. Matczak said. “Don't you think Trump would like the power to control the courts when it is blocking his immigration moves?”

In late April, the board of the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary described itself as “gravely concerned” with the government's proposals.

On May 5, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe issued a “final opinion” that the proposed law would have a “negative impact” on the selection of judges and “should be reconsidered in its entirety.”

Law and Justice officials wave away such complaints and insist that their moves are an honest attempt to reform a bloated, entrenched and sometimes corrupt court system by putting the courts under more direct democratic control.

“Judges in Poland don't pay traffic fines,” said Marcin Warchol, deputy justice minister. “They say it's against the Constitution to fine them. That is why the public sees them as a privileged group. All we want is for the public to have at least minimal influence on the selection of judges.”

“And the courts are next,” Mr. Bodnar said.

The early moves against Poland's constitutional tribunal set the

building in Paris, inspired in part by the “Grand Dictionnaire de Cuisine,” Alexandre Dumas's treatise on the art of dining, and in part by a summer feast hosted in the early 1800s by the French diplomat and gourmand Talleyrand and prepared by Marie-Antoine Carême, who was generally considered one of the world's first celebrity chefs. Christofle is to lend antique tableware; the chef Daniel de la Falaise will oversee the cuisine.

“There will be things en gelée, and classic patisserie,” Mr. Touhami said.

And then there will be more projects. “I sell one to pay for the next,” he said. “It's right to do everything, because then you know how to do everything.”

The government also wants to increase the efficiency of the courts, where cases often drag on for years, by streamlining their administration and limiting the scope of cases heard, he said.

Government officials say opponents are overreacting to the new court plan, which is not wildly dissimilar to others in Europe.

"Double standards!" Mr. Warchol said. "Yes, there are international standards, but there is also international hypocrisy."

Political opponents and others have been less inclined to adopt a benign

view of the proposed changes.

"As long as there are no significant protections, they will take over whatever they can get away with," Mr. Bodnar said. "I have no doubt."

Mr. Bodnar's ombudsman's office was established in the waning years of communism as a way to make sure citizen complaints got a fair hearing and an independent champion.

He has spoken out forcefully against the new proposed court law, thus far without pushback from the governing party. Others were not so lucky.

In late January, Malgorzata Gersdorf, the president of the

Supreme Court, wrote an open letter urging judges to fight fiercely for their independence.

"The courts are easily turned into a plaything in the hands of politicians," she said. "You must show that we are in opposition to the pushing of a democratic state into oblivion."

Shortly afterward, the governing party asked the constitutional tribunal whether, perhaps, Ms. Gersdorf should be removed from office because of an alleged error in the way she was selected several years ago.

That ruling was expected two weeks ago but, like another expected ruling from the tribunal on the constitutionality of the new court

laws, it was postponed until after Mr. Trump's visit.

Jerzy Stepień, director of the Institute of Civic Space and Public Policy at Lazarski University and a former president of the constitutional tribunal, said he thought Mr. Trump's visit was likely to offer only a temporary reprieve. The new court law will go forward, he said, with many more to come.

"They are destroying all the institutions we had been dreaming about under communism and that we have been building for 20 years," Mr. Stepień said.

POLITICO

Trump Wants a Do-Over in Europe

By Thomas Wright

20-25 minutes

President Donald Trump is hoping Europe will give him a second chance.

This week, he heads to Poland at the invitation of its president and to participate in a regional infrastructure summit and to Hamburg, Germany, for the G-20 summit. The trip offers the chance for redemption after a catastrophic visit to Brussels in May that left the NATO alliance hanging by a thread because of his refusal to endorse Article 5, NATO's mutual defense clause.

Story Continued Below

G-20 summits are usually sleepy affairs, especially in recent years, but this occasion is replete with geopolitical intrigue. The trip is ambitious and difficult. I spoke with six serving officials, all off the record, and 10 recent officials and senior experts from the United States, Europe and Asia for this article. The overwhelming view is that the trip is finely poised between success and failure, with the outcome depending largely on when President Trump listens to his mainstream advisers or indulges his nationalist and America First impulses. The risks can be cast into three baskets—the Poland visit, the Trump-Putin meeting and the G-20 summit.

1. Poland
At first glance, Poland offers Trump an opportunity to repair the damage of the Brussels visit by demonstrating his commitment to the security of Eastern Europe. Trump is also likely to be greeted positively in Warsaw, which should provide a useful counterpoint to what are likely to be massive public

protests in Hamburg. He could have gone to the Baltics, which are terrified of Russian belligerence and desperate for more American help, but that could have been viewed negatively by Vladimir Putin. He could have gone to Romania, but its president recently visited the White House. So, Poland it is. However, this is not why the Polish government thinks Trump is going to Warsaw.

Trump chose Poland, the Poles believe, because he is ideologically aligned with its ultra conservative Law and Justice Party government, which is under fire in Europe for eroding the rule of law and for its hostility to multiculturalism and liberal values. Jeremy Shapiro, a former Obama White House official who is director of research at the European Council on Foreign Relations and has spoken with Polish officials and experts in recent weeks, told me that Polish officials see Trump's visit as a "vote of confidence" and "an opportunity to form a bilateral 'special relationship' with the administration."

The Poles also believe Trump is making a big strategic gambit to throw his weight behind their Three Seas Initiative, which brings together twelve Central and Eastern Countries from the Adriatic Sea, the Black Sea and Baltic Seas to develop regional infrastructure to reduce their energy dependence on Russia. The initiative, which was created a year ago by Poland and Croatia in Dubrovnik, is meeting in Warsaw to discuss how to make that ambition a reality. They are particularly hopeful that the Warsaw summit will see a deal with Trump on exports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) that could undermine Nordstream 2, the German-Russian energy pipeline that has proven particularly divisive in Europe.

Poland's neighbors see another dimension to the Three Seas. One former German official told me that Poland is seeking to resurrect an old, pre-World War II Polish plan known as *Intermarum* whereby Poland would seek to unite Central and Eastern Europe under Polish leadership and then counterbalance German leadership to the west and Russia to the east. A current senior German official told me that for Germany, "what happens in Warsaw is at least as interesting as what happens at the G-20 in Poland." German and French officials are worried that Trump might use the visit to drive a wedge between "new" and "old" Europe, reprising the strategy pursued by then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in the run up to the Iraq war of 2003.

It's not just the Germans. Poland's gambit is controversial elsewhere in the region, too. A former senior official from another Three Seas member state told me, "I worry he might give [the governing Law and Justice Party chief Jaroslaw] Kaczynski and [Hungary's far-right President Viktor] Orban a boost, a bad reprise of Rumsfeld's 'old' vs 'new' Europe, but this time not because we were supportive of the U.S. on the war on terror but because those two are nativist Euroskeptics." He said that some Three Seas states are solidly behind German Chancellor Angela Merkel, are welcoming of refugees and are "in no way interested in getting involved in Trump's fights."

A Trump administration official told me the administration has no intention of recreating the old versus new Europe divide. But Europeans are wary of the precedent set by Trump's infamous Brussels speech, in which the "axis of adults" in the administration inserted an explicit endorsement of NATO's commitment to collective self-

defense, only for Trump and his closest advisers to take it out at the last minute.

A senior Polish official said that German fears are overblown. "It is impossible and undesirable," he told me, to counterbalance Germany. "Poland wants American support for infrastructural investment"—period. However, he acknowledged that some in Washington may have a different agenda. "We are obviously aware," he said, of Trump's "criticism of Angela Merkel and the EU. We are critical also but we need the EU and do not want to see it dissolved." He acknowledged the Polish government didn't know Trump's real intentions.

The danger, warns Piotr Buras, the head of the Warsaw office of the European Council on Foreign Relations, is that Poland may be stumbling into a diplomatic catastrophe. It may not want to divide Europe, but some in the Trump administration might see an opportunity to do so. "Why," wonders Buras, "is an American president invited to attend a regional infrastructural conference? Why not the secretary of energy or an official from the State Department?" The Three Seas Summit, he says, has to be viewed in the context of Poland's troubled relationship with France and Germany. "If Trump wanted to drive a wedge [between new and old Europe] he could do it," Buras says. "He could appeal to Polish national pride, he could praise it as a special ally that meets its 2 percent defense spending target, and he could use the summit to criticize Germany and the EU."

Warsaw, then, could well become the next stage in the battle between the president and the "axis of adults." National security adviser H.R. McMaster and Defense Secretary James Mattis may see the Poland trip as nothing more than an

occasion to demonstrate America's commitment to NATO. This would be a real accomplishment. A former senior U.S. official told me the Europeans should recognize the positive side to the visit—after a lifetime of ambiguity toward Eastern Europe, Trump is demonstrating a commitment to the region. But, as Buras suggests, the president's nationalist advisers, particularly Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, could use the trip to undermine the EU and empower nationalists in Europe. Trump's instincts are much closer to Bannon's than they are to McMaster's—so when he shows up in Warsaw, he may be willing to go along with the nationalists, as he was in Brussels. And this is what has Europe on tenterhooks.

2. The Putin Meeting

Trump will be sitting down with Putin for the first time, a meeting that has been highly anticipated—and, for some, dreaded. The Associated Press reported earlier this week that the Trump administration was deeply divided on whether to do the summit. According to the report, Trump and some of his closest aides "have been pressing for a full bilateral meeting. He's calling for media access and all the typical protocol associated with such sessions, even as officials within the State Department and National Security Council urge more restraint."

Clearly, Trump prevailed—further evidence that the president remains committed to forging a partnership with the Kremlin strongman, who he's praised as "very smart" and defended from allegations of killing journalists. In fact, the administration has been laying the groundwork for this meeting for months. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's trip to Moscow in March was widely misinterpreted as a showdown with Russia because it came on the back of a pinprick strike on Bashar Assad's air force in Syria, but it laid the groundwork for a reset 2.0. The two countries agreed to set up a joint task force to address "irritants which have dogged our relations over the last couple of years, particularly under the administration of President Obama" as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov put it. President Trump also broke with precedent and granted Lavrov a meeting in the Oval Office in which he shared highly classified intelligence with him.

The reset continues apace. According to press reports, Trump has asked his team to come up with a list of concessions that could be offered to Putin in Hamburg, including the return of two compounds in Maryland and New York that the Obama administration stripped from Russia as part of a

sanctions package. Less clear is what Trump wants in return.

The fears of the State Department and National Security Council are well founded. Putin, a former KGB officer who specialized in what the Russians call "political technology," is the arch manipulator—"deft at psyching people out" as a former U.S. official put it—and his meetings with foreign leaders are frequently notable occasions. Putin brought his Labrador, Konni, to his first meeting with Angela Merkel, who has a lifelong fear of dogs. In his first meeting with Nicholas Sarkozy, he personally threatened to "smash" the French leader "to pieces," leaving him dazed and confused in the press conference that followed. Famously, Putin bonded with George W. Bush over their shared Christianity by telling him a story about how his crucifix was blessed by his mother in Jerusalem and was subsequently the only item to survive a fire in the family Dacha. This tale infamously prompted Bush to say he saw into Putin's soul.

One former senior Bush administration official who dealt with Putin told me there is a risk that Putin might trick Trump into doing a deal on Syria and Ukraine in the meeting. The agreement might only last a few days until it became clear that it was a bad deal. Such a scenario would likely expose divisions within the Trump administration, it would discredit the president, and it could also heighten his suspicion of his own government who Trump would perceive as undermining his partnership with the Russian president. Even if it did not last the week, it would be a major win for Putin. The Germans were worried about Trump striking a deal with Putin early on—one senior German official told me they became less worried after the early Cabinet appointments, but now they are concerned again.

One question is whether Trump will bring up the matter of the Russian attack on the U.S. political system in 2016 and the continuing threat Russian capabilities and intentions pose to future U.S. elections. A second is whether Trump will talk about the Russian threat to Western democracies in his public remarks, particularly in Poland. The Polish government may have broken with their predecessors on most foreign policy matters but they still fear Russia just as much. A Polish official told me that they would like to see Russia discussed "in as much detail as possible," but they don't necessarily expect it, given Trump's track record. The Poles will take any mention of Article 5 as a win and declare victory. But failure to elaborate on why Russia is a threat will undermine any claim by the

administration that the visit is about bolstering NATO.

It is inconceivable that any other American president would not use a speech in Poland in 2017 to talk about the danger from Russia, but Trump is unique. Lost amid the uproar over his refusal to endorse Article 5 in Brussels was the fact that Russia was not on the agenda at the NATO mini-summit or in the bilateral meetings with European leaders. After a barrage of criticism, Trump relented and finally endorsed Article 5 after his meeting with the Romanian president in June, but only in response to a question. Given his track record of indecisiveness and reversing himself on policy, his Cabinet and allies alike are keen to see him elaborate on Article 5 in a formal speech.

3. The G-20 Summit

The first question surrounding the G-20 is whether there will be violence. The summit will take place in the Schanzenviertel, a district of Hamburg that was a historic home for German counter-culture, including violent, left-wing radicalism. It is now a trendy area populated by upmarket bars and restaurants, but the symbolism of hosting the world committee for capitalism in the spiritual home of radicalism could be too much for some. A German official told me that having the G-20 in that particular district will be seen as a major provocation by left-wing radicals and they may well feel obliged to respond. It is hard to imagine a worse venue from a security perspective.

In recent weeks, there have been glimpses of what might happen. On June 20, there were a series of coordinated arson attacks on passenger rail lines in 12 different locations throughout Germany. German officials believe this to be a trial run for the summit. Cyber attacks to cut power in Hamburg have also occurred. There will be mass protests too, but the German hosts have gone to great lengths to insulate the world leaders, particularly President Trump, from them—there is some distance between the designated protest areas and the meetings. The only way Trump might hear them will be on cable news.

Substantively, the G-20 is waiting to see if Trump is accommodating himself to the international economic order or if he is determined to disrupt it. The G-20 operates along two tracks—finance ministers and leaders. The last meeting of the finance ministers was at Baden Baden, Germany, in March. It did not go well. The Trump administration insisted on removing

standard language about resisting protectionism and it even rejected proposed compromise language from German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schauble on respecting rules-based institutions. The damage was largely undone at the G-7 summit in Sicily and the IMF C meeting, when the American side took a more constructive approach. However, the legacy of the Baden Baden meeting means that trade has been elevated to the leaders level—meaning it will be front and center in Hamburg.

Doug Rediker, a former member of the Executive Board of the IMF, says that most countries hope the Hamburg summit builds on the progress made in Sicily but anything could happen, particularly because countries not represented at the G-7, like China and India, will want their say.

And then there is Trump. Opposition to trade and the open global economy has been a consistent theme of his for over 30 years. "The G-20," Rediker says, "is his opportunity to flex some muscle. It is unlikely he would not launch some fireworks given it is the largest stage there is."

The spark could come if Trump uses a Department of Commerce investigation to declare that steel imports hurt U.S. national security, and slaps tariffs on steel from U.S. allies, particularly Canada, Japan and Germany. Other governments have promised retaliatory measures and there are fears that Trump, with a life-long hostility to free trade, may welcome the opportunity to wage a trade war.

One additional wrinkle is that Trump looks likely to use the prospect of steel tariffs to pressure other G-20 members to join the United States in a unified front against China economically. Germany, France, South Korea and even the United Kingdom are unlikely to go along, given their close economic ties to China.

The rest of the formal agenda is unlikely to see greater comity. Merkel will seek support for her initiative to promote greater stability in North Africa to ease migration flows to Europe, but Trump may well dismiss it as wasteful foreign aid.

Interestingly, the Western Europeans seem likely to downplay the climate issue. They know where Trump stands and do not want to take a confrontational stance. They would like the summit, and the trip, to repair the damage done during Trump's visit to Europe June, when the G-7 summit was dominated by disagreements over the Paris Climate Accord. French President Emmanuel Macron's invitation to

Trump to attend the July 14 Bastille celebrations in Paris, which is also the centennial of the U.S. entry into World War 1, should be seen in this light.

The formal agenda may well take second place to informal geopolitics—a perennial feature of the G-20 since whenever world leaders meet they will find a way to informally discuss the most important issues of the day. All will be trying to find a way to influence Trump. As David Gordon, a former director of policy planning for the Bush administration, put it, Trump tends to get on well one-on-one with world leaders except for Europeans. “Europeans are the outliers,” he says, “because Trump sees them as free-riders and European domestic politics means they cannot praise and flatter Trump as some others might.” That Macron is fresh from multiple electoral successes may present him with an opportunity to develop a personal relationship with Trump.

Asia is no easier. In the first few months of his administration Trump basically adopted a North Korea-centric Asia strategy that handed all of the leverage to Beijing. He reduced U.S. operations in the South China Sea and suggested he would give China a say in his

Taiwan policy as long as it continued to cooperate on North Korea. U.S. allies, including Japan, were growing anxious. Now, it appears as if Trump’s “patience” of relying on China’s president Xi Jinping to solve the North Korea problem is exhausted. An arms sale to Taiwan and a new freedom of navigation operation suggest Trump may finally be taking a broader view of Asia strategy—though many problems remain, including the lack of a positive economic agenda for the region, a flirtation with a trade war and the failure to appoint senior officials on Asia, which has badly depleted U.S. diplomatic power. The G-20 summit was going to provide some clues as to the direction of Trump’s Asia policy, but North Korea’s 4th of July intercontinental ballistic missile test dramatically raises the stakes. One question that arises is if the heightened threat from North Korea provides Xi with an opportunity to use his personal relationship with Trump and his son-in-law Jared Kushner to persuade them to flip back toward China.

I asked Remnin University’s Professor Yinhong Shi, one of China’s most astute observers of world affairs, for his assessment. He said Trump “lacks imagination in China policy” and he expects him to ramble on about North Korea and

threaten Xi with secondary sanctions on China. Xi will, he said, try “to maintain the image of a quite friendly” or “special relationship between him and Trump.” However, “this would not prevent Xi” from playing the role of defending the “liberal world trade order” and the Paris climate change accord. Xi would draw sharp contrasts with Trump on these two issues, Shi said.

Shi identifies the major question hanging over the G-20 summit: Does the United States still want to be the leader of the postwar international order? The vast majority of member states, with the major exceptions of China and Russia, hope the answer is yes. They are prepared to make it easy for the United States to affirm its historic leadership role. But they really have very little idea what Trump will do.

Trump’s forthcoming visit to Europe could be a success. He could stay above the fray in Poland, praising his hosts but refraining from attacking Germany and expressing support for the European Union. He could heed his advisers’ warnings and limit his interaction with Putin. He could build on the G-7 talks on

trade and show he supports a healthy global economic order. He could even use the five days between the G-20 and his appearance in Paris to visit U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan instead of returning home.

For most presidents, success would be well within reach. But Trump is no ordinary president. He is unique in every way. He is unique ideologically in that he is the only U.S. president to object to the postwar liberal international order, especially on trade, alliances and values. He is unique temperamentally, becoming a sycophant when praised and an enemy when slighted. His foreign counterparts will remember how he was manipulated by Saudi Arabia into siding with Riyadh against Qatar over the objections of his secretary of state. And he is unique in how he processes information. He has a short attention span, a limited interest in detailed briefings and a fondness for cable news. The pattern is fairly clear by now. Most of the time, his mainstream advisers can box him in, but it is hardest when he is center stage, either in a crisis or on a foreign trip. Poland and Hamburg provide the next test.



McManus : Explaining Trump to Europeans

Doyle McManus
6-7 minutes

If you’re planning a trip to Europe this summer, be forewarned: You may spend a lot of time explaining Donald Trump to the natives.

In our case, it started immediately, with the British immigration officer at London’s Heathrow Airport.

“Are you from the Southern states?” he asked. What he meant was: Are you Trump voters?

“What has gotten into you people?” he demanded. “You used to be a model other countries wanted to follow. Now we watch you and shake our heads.”

That was one of dozens of unsought conversations in three countries about the state of American politics. Europeans’ familiarity with the details of our national melodrama was sometimes startling.

“What’s the real story about Melania?” our British friend Naomi asked. “Is she moving into the White House or not?”

Europeans who once resented our superpower status now express

sympathy for our troubles -- even nostalgia for American leadership.

“What about the famous son-in-law?” asked Lala, our Italian neighbor, amused to catch Americans practicing the kind of clan-based politics Italians know. “Is he the brains of the family?”

“If Trump is impeached, then Pence becomes president, right?” asked Liliane, a German lawyer. “Would he be worse?”

Brits, Italians and Germans all asked whether Trump’s presidency would be over by the end of the year. I described the complexities of impeachment, and how unlikely it was that a Republican-controlled Congress would go there. I reminded them of Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi, who won three elections and governed for nine years despite prosecutors’ efforts to bring him down.

Our European friends’ absorption in all things Trump goes beyond mere gossip, of course. They have gnawing concerns about an increasingly disorderly world — one in which the president of the United States, instead of bolstering stability, often seems to be a disruptor.

It wasn’t a scientific sample by any stretch. But our conversations

mirrored a Pew global survey released last week which found that Trump is unpopular across much of the world and that his unpredictability has shaken confidence in the United States.

For half a century, Europeans got used to thinking of the United States as a stable cornerstone of world politics — not always sophisticated in their eyes, not always right, but reliably there. Now that we’re less reliable, they’re more nervous. “If the United States is making the world less stable instead of more stable, we’re all in deep,” Lala’s husband Carlo said in fluent American.

They know all too well that Europe — politically divided, militarily weak and economically listless — can’t fill the empty role of the missing superpower.

“Europe could be strong if countries knew how to work together, but they don’t,” said Peter, a German yoga instructor. “Nationalism gets in the way.”

Trump may have had one positive effect on continental politics, as Europe’s wave of nationalist populism appears to have ebbed. Trump-style anti-immigrant populists lost ground in three major elections

this year: the Netherlands in March, France in May and Britain in June. In France, Trump virtually endorsed populist candidate Marine LePen; she was trounced by the Obama-style Emmanuel Macron.

“We have learned from your example,” Liliane joked.

There may be a silver lining for Americans too. Europeans who once resented our superpower status now express sympathy for our troubles — even nostalgia for American leadership.

Many Europeans condemned George W. Bush for invading Iraq. Then they pouted when Barack Obama, whom they liked better, made it clear he was more interested in Asia. Now they see a president who thinks alliances are a scam and doesn’t put much stock in the U.S. treaty commitment to defend Europe.

Europeans have plenty of reasons to worry about their future. Islamist terrorism has accelerated with attacks in England, France and Belgium. The European Union is in danger of falling apart. Russia is meddling in their elections and corrupting some of their governments. They still haven’t

solved their massive unemployment problem.

In earlier times of trouble, American presidents stepped in with reassurances that the United States wanted a Europe that was prosperous, strong and united. Trump says, instead, that he sees Europe as a competitor, not an ally, and that he prefers his competitors to be weak, poor and disunited.

**The
New York
Times**

Sharma : The Next Economic Powerhouse? Poland

Ruchir Sharma

7-9 minutes

Cristóbal Schmal

If getting rich is hard for individuals, it is harder still for nations. Of more than 190 countries tracked by the International Monetary Fund, fewer than 40 count as wealthy or advanced economies. The rest are known as emerging nations, and many of them have been emerging forever. The last large country to make it into the advanced class was South Korea, 20 years ago. The next major nation likely to join that club could be Poland, an under-the-radar economic star that President Trump will visit this week on his second overseas trip in office.

Mr. Trump will meet with leaders of the ruling Law and Justice party, who are thrilled that he has chosen to visit Warsaw before Berlin, Paris or Brussels, and participate in a meeting to promote regional economic ties in Eastern Europe. Other European leaders are unnerved by how Mr. Trump's populism echoes the right-wing nationalism of his Polish hosts — both have been attacked as illiberal threats to the postwar Western order. But so far, two years of populism has not derailed a quarter-century of steady economic progress in Poland.

The I.M.F. has a complex definition of "advanced," but a common thread is that all the nations have a per-capita income of at least around \$15,000. Since Poland completed the transition from Communism to democracy in 1991, its economy has been growing at an average annual rate of 4 percent and, remarkably, has not suffered a single year of negative growth. In those 25 years, Poland's average income has risen to near \$13,000, from \$2,300, and it is now on pace to pass the \$15,000 mark by the turn of this decade.

This is testimony to the long-term fiscal sobriety of Poland's leaders,

Italian columnist Beppe Severgnini recently compared Trump's America to a straying husband, but suggested that he'd come home.

"Go ahead, have your affairs," he wrote. "But don't forget: You're married to us."

Perhaps he had forgotten that Trump is already on marriage No. 3 — and that he views wedding vows and treaties as open to

and its sharp break with Communism. After the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Poland set out to distance itself as far as possible from Russia, and adopted the financial discipline and institutional reforms required to join the European Union.

In the last decade, Warsaw emerged as the conservative opposite of decadent Moscow. Its staid tycoons are almost incapable of the flashy self-promotion common among the Russian oligarchs, and they have embraced American-style entrepreneurship with an enthusiasm rarely found elsewhere in Europe.

This pro-American, anti-Russian streak runs deeper than the current populist mood, making Poland a natural and increasingly potent American ally. In the past the relationship has focused on military ties and geopolitics, but Poland is already one of the few NATO members meeting its commitment to spend at least 2 percent of gross domestic product on defense. This meeting shifts the focus to the regional economy at its breakout moment.

Since World War II, the few poor nations that made it rich tended to do so in regional clusters, starting with Italy, Spain and other countries in Southern Europe, and then East Asia. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan went unheralded for years before they were recognized as the "Asian miracle" economies.

Now Eastern Europe is rising, just as quietly, with small nations like the Czech Republic leading the way. Poland is close on its heels. With a population of nearly 40 million and a half-trillion-dollar economy that is already the world's 24th largest, it is now big enough to put all of Eastern Europe on the global economic map.

Poland is working its way up just as the Asian miracles did, as a manufacturing power, even though this path is much harder now.

renegotiation, just like real estate contracts.

Most Americans don't pay nearly as much attention to European politics as my Italian, British and German friends pay to ours. There are too many countries, too many elections. And the details of European economic integration are mind-numbing.

Manufacturing is declining as a share of the global economy, and with China taking much of this shrinking pie, few other major manufacturing nations are still expanding their share of global exports. That select group of around half a dozen includes South Korea, the Czech Republic — and Poland.

No other sector has as much impact as manufacturing in generating the jobs and productivity gains that can make a nation rich. With its cheap currency and relatively low wages — still one-third those in Germany — Poland is more than competitive with the Asian manufacturing powers. Exports from manufacturing account for 33 percent of G.D.P. in Poland, well above the average for emerging nations of 22 percent.

Moreover, the secret to getting rich is less about speed than stability. Many emerging economies have managed to generate spurts of rapid growth, often well above Poland's 4 percent average, only to lose all their gains by running up debts and heading into a crisis — like Brazil and Mexico in the early 1980s, and Indonesia and Thailand in the late 1990s.

Other emerging economies remain unstable partly because they still rely on exporting raw materials like oil or soybeans, and thus tie their fate to volatile swings in the global commodities market. Among the leading oil exporters, 90 percent are no richer today relative to the United States than they were the year they started producing oil. Most are poorer.

Today, of the 13 middle-income countries with average incomes of \$10,000 to \$15,000, nine are still dependent on commodity exports, including Brazil, Russia and Argentina. The other four are all in Eastern Europe, led by Poland.

None of the commodity-dependent economies is likely to grow steadily enough to become the next rich country, certainly not for long. Countries such as Argentina and

But perhaps we should listen more closely to our European friends.

They've noticed that, under Trump, an important alliance — one that has kept their continent peaceful for 70 years — is in danger of slipping away through neglect. They see what they're losing, and they're worried. Shouldn't we be too?

Venezuela have in the past century become almost as rich as the United States, only to tumble after serial crises.

Export manufacturing prowess can stabilize a rising economy by generating reliable foreign revenue, allowing countries to invest heavily without running up huge debts. This is what happened in Poland. An exception is the manufacturing giant of China. In a headlong effort to fuel growth after the 2007 financial crisis, the Chinese government has encouraged a domestic lending boom that has driven up debts to nearly 300 percent of G.D.P., a risk that reduces China's chances of becoming the next rich country.

If there is a threat to steady growth in Poland, it is its recent autocratic turn. Poland's government has drawn fire from top European Union officials for interfering with the courts, cracking down on the news media and dissent, and refusing to accept Muslim refugees.

When Law and Justice took office, however, the concern was that it would derail growth by meddling in the private sector and trying to fulfill costly populist promises. While it has fulfilled pledges to lower the retirement age and subsidize families with two or more children, so far these policies have not caused much harm.

The deficit and public debt remain manageable. The currency remains stable, exports continue to boom and the trade balance is in surplus. Since its winning streak began in 1991, around 80 percent of Poland's growth has been delivered by the private sector, and the momentum there remains strong.

So look beyond China and India, Russia and Brazil. Poland, rising the old-fashioned way, through manufacturing, is likely to be the next rich nation. And, as Mr. Trump will see, Poland is a vital ally not only on the NATO front line, but also as a leader of the world's most vibrant economic bloc.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Germany Warns of Hacking Leaks Ahead of Election

revue de presse américaine du 5 juillet 2017

Andrea Thomas

4-5 minutes

July 4, 2017 8:35 a.m. ET

BERLIN—Russia is likely to leak hacked government information in an attempt to influence Germany's parliamentary election, top security officials said Tuesday, as they pointed to multiple attempts to steal confidential documents in recent months.

Hackers linked to Russia, as well as China and Iran, have repeatedly targeted the foreign ministry and its diplomatic missions as well as the finance and economics ministries. Other targets included the chancellery and Germany's armed forces, according to an annual report by Germany's domestic intelligence agency.

Suspected Russian hackers accessed confidential information from lawmakers in a sophisticated attack in 2015 that shut down parliament's computer network for days.

Stolen communication from that attack could be used to try and change the course of the Sept. 24 election, when Chancellor Angela Merkel is seeking a fourth term, the heads of Germany's interior ministry and domestic intelligence service said.

Western officials have repeatedly pointed the finger at Russia since its intervention in Ukraine for engaging in hybrid warfare—an array of hostile acts that range from military provocations to large-scale propaganda campaigns and cyberattacks.

Russia has been accused of conducting such attacks ahead of the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the presidential elections in France this spring. The Russian government has denied the allegations.

Ms. Merkel will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Hamburg this week when she chairs this year's summit of the Group of 20 large economies.

"We have witnessed efforts to influence the elections in America, we have witnessed efforts to

influence the vote in France. We have every reason to believe that this originated in Russia," said German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière.

"We can therefore not rule out, and must prepare ourselves for, similar attempts with regards to the elections in Germany," he said.

The minister said it was noteworthy that an extensive amount of communication from the Bundestag, parliament's lower house, had been siphoned off in the 2015 attack but never released.

"It could be, and I personally expect this, that parts of this will be published over the coming weeks."

The attack, the most severe in German parliament's history, took technicians days to stop and prompted an overhaul of parliament's IT infrastructure, which is kept separate from the more protected networks of the federal government.

Germany's domestic intelligence agency said later a suspected Russian hacker group known as Sofacy or APT28 and linked to

politically motivated hacks across the world, appears to have conducted the hack.

"Victims of the espionage of confidential e-mails and other sensitive data have to expect that explosive or compromising issues can be made public at any time," the report warned.

Separately, security officials also warned that Germany should expect to brace itself for more terror attacks by Islamic State.

Members of the radical salafi branch of Islam, the main recruiting pool for terrorists, now numbered 10,100 in the country, compared with 9,700 in 2016, Germany's domestic intelligence agency said.

Mr. de Maizière said security services had 680 people under surveillance who were thought willing and able to commit attacks, "the highest number ever."

Write to Andrea Thomas at andrea.thomas@wsj.com

Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as 'Germany Warns Of Hacking Leaks As Vote Approaches.'

The
Washington
Post

Europe's fixer, Merkel faces test in preparing the continent to confront Trump

Becker

7-8 minutes

By Isaac Stanley-

through the West, Merkel now leads her left-wing rival — who poses a more credible threat to her than does the far-right Alternative for Germany — by double digits.

But achieving her ambition, and fortifying Europe in the face of a combative Russia and inward-looking United States, will be a new challenge for the unassuming tactician who disclaims grand visions.

When she announced last year that she would stand again for reelection, she called it "grotesque" to suggest that she, on her own, could safeguard Western liberalism. But she also leads Europe's most powerful economy, and she struck out on her own in opening her country's doors to more than a million asylum seekers in 2015. This record sets her up to counter Trump, whose intransigence on trade, immigration and climate she has pledged to meet with a show of European unity.

Merkel is scheduled to meet with Trump on Thursday, the eve of the summit, in a tete-a-tete that could be a chance to reset relations after several cold encounters that led the German leader to conclude that Europe could no longer fully rely on the United States. On the campaign trail, Trump called her refugee

policy "insane," and as president, he has scolded the Germans for running a trade surplus with the United States. After transatlantic talks in Europe laid bare the distance between the two leaders on trade, the environment and collective defense, Merkel returned to Germany to report that Europe had to "take our fate into our own hands."

"It's a very difficult situation," said Hans Eichel, a former German finance minister and a founder of the Group of 20. "Incredibly, the United States has decided to be outside the liberal mainstream of the world, and you see signs that China, especially, is trying to fill this gap."

The question, Eichel said, will be who manages this uncertainty. When Merkel presides over negotiations among leaders of the world's major economies, she is the natural answer.

"People are expecting her to stop the world from moving in this protectionist direction and to stand up for democracy," said Hans Kundnani, a senior transatlantic fellow at the German Marshall Fund. "But the idea that the German chancellor can replace the president of the United States is nonsense."

If Merkel is not the new leader of the free world, what is she?

"She is a doctor of nuclear physics," said Elmar Brok, a member of the European Parliament and a close ally of Merkel's. Merkel studied physics at Leipzig University in what was then East Germany, where her father, a Protestant pastor, had moved the family shortly after Merkel was born.

Since taking office in 2005, Merkel has managed one crisis after another, including the failure of the European Constitution, the euro zone emergency and the rush of migrants fleeing Syria's civil war.

Behind Merkel's resolve has been a sense that something bigger was at stake, according to people who have worked with her for years.

"Coming from East Germany, she is absolutely convinced — it's in her bones — that systems can fail," said Mariam Lau, a political correspondent for Die Zeit, a German weekly newspaper.

The fact that "Europe could have imploded" if the German chancellorship were on the line led Merkel to seek a fourth term, said Stefan Kornelius, international editor of the daily Süddeutsche Zeitung and a biographer of the chancellor.

At the same time, Merkel has made no bid to unilaterally defend the liberal international order. She welcomed the election of France's Emmanuel Macron, who lifted hopes for a rededication to the European project along a Franco-German axis. But Berlin will have to make concessions, said Kundnani, above all easing fiscal rules to help Macron succeed domestically.

Jürgen Hardt, foreign policy spokesman for Merkel's ruling coalition in Parliament, said the chancellor sees her work in the "international theater" — especially defense cooperation — as most pressing in a

potential fourth term. She has also emphasized new engagement with Africa, to spur development but also stem the tide of immigration.

"The G-20 venue is in Europe, but we wanted to send a message to our African partners that we're trying to solve these problems together," Merkel said recently at a meeting of European leaders in Berlin.

Jürgen Trittin, a leading Green Party lawmaker, said Merkel's Africa initiatives are "window dressing" that fail to leverage sufficient public money. More broadly, he said, her refusal to abandon austerity limits

her ability to make Europe a more powerful global actor.

"We've seen good pictures of Merkel and Macron, but on substance, what is she proposing?" Trittin said.

The Daily 202 newsletter

PowerPost's must-read morning briefing for decision-makers.

Brok, Merkel's ally in the European Parliament, said the chancellor would like to make a more independent Europe the focus of her final term.

"I think that she hopes she gets a chance to be more than a crisis

manager," Brok said. "She wants to be a builder, a constructor."

What precisely she aims to build is harder to say, because she eschews grand visions, approvingly quoting the warning of Helmut Schmidt, a former chancellor of West Germany, that "those who have visions should go see a doctor."

"As always, she is going step by step," Eichel said. "But now, we have a situation in which it is no longer enough to go step by step."



3-4 minutes

EU, Japan Race to Clinch Trade Deal Ahead of G-20 Summit

Emre Peker

protectionist policies during their annual summit. With the White House scrapping some trade deals, seeking to renegotiate others and launching probes against imports to the U.S. on national security grounds, world leaders gathering Friday-Saturday in Germany are increasingly worried that Mr. Trump's actions could spark trade wars.

"It is important for us to wave the flag of free trade in response to global moves toward protectionism by quickly concluding the free-trade agreement with Europe," Mr. Abe said at a cabinet meeting on Tuesday. The Japanese premier also dispatched Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, who is overseeing the negotiations, to the EU capital.

Japan's interest in securing deeper economic links with Europe surged after Mr. Trump's election, according to an EU official. That led to a March summit in Brussels, where Mr. Abe,

European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker pledged to speed up negotiations that have been ongoing since 2013. On Thursday, EU and Japan's top officials will seek to deliver on that promise.

"This new deal would send a powerful signal to the rest of the world that two large economies are resisting protectionism," the commission—the EU's executive arm—said after the last round of talks in Tokyo.

With €125 billion (\$142 billion) of exports and imports in 2016, an EU-Japan trade deal would be one of the most significant the bloc has reached. It would also present a political victory for Brussels, which seeks to build on a sweeping agreement with Canada to position the EU as the global champion of free trade.

The EU-Japan deal could similarly scrap an annual €1 billion worth of customs duties and propel European exports of processed food, chemicals and medical devices, according to officials.

Yet both Brussels and Tokyo also face stiff domestic opposition against the deal, particularly over Japanese auto exports and European agricultural sales. EU-Japan negotiations haven't yet yielded a compromise on either point, as well as some other thorny issues, such as settling disputes.

—Alastair Gale in Tokyo and Valentina Pop in Brussels contributed to this article.

Write to Emre Peker at emre.peker@wsj.com

Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as 'EU, Japan Race to Clinch Trade Accord.'

July 4, 2017 5:50 a.m. ET

BRUSSELS—The European Union and Japan's leaders will gather in Brussels on Thursday, seeking to announce a sweeping trade deal that would send a strong signal for global cooperation against U.S. protectionism a day before the Group of 20 summit.

Officials from both sides will reconvene talks in the EU capital ahead of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's arrival, racing to clinch a deal after failing to resolve differences in Tokyo during two days of negotiations through Saturday.

The EU-Japan push comes as G-20 leaders—representing the world's 20 biggest economies—prepare to rebuke President Donald Trump's

INTERNATIONAL



Zelizer : Trump is destroying his credibility with the world

Julian Zelizer, CNN Political Analyst

Analyst

7-9 minutes

Story highlights

- Julian Zelizer: At G20 summit this week Trump in weaker position
- Many will question his ability to deliver on his promises

Julian Zelizer, a history and public affairs professor at Princeton University and a CNN political analyst, is the author of "The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society." He's co-host of the "Politics & Polls" podcast. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own.

(CNN)When President Donald Trump enters the annual G20 Summit this week, he will begin an important dialogue about a series of pivotal issues ranging from financial regulation to trade and immigration.

The conversations, which the G20 has been conducting since 1999, will involve cabinet-room style talks with all the leaders in this powerful group as well as side discussions between particular leaders focusing on the challenges that their respective nations face and tensions that exist between them. Most eagerly anticipated are the potential interactions between Presidents Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin.

But Trump walks into this summit with the United States now in a much weaker position than when he

started his presidency. The President, who prides himself on making America great again, brings with him a set of liabilities that will make it more difficult for him to persuade others at this crucial gathering in Hamburg, Germany, to listen to his recommendations or fear his threats -- despite all the economic and military power that the United States brings to the table.

Social media unease

Let's begin with the tweets. Putting aside the specific content of the recent blasts from the Oval smart

phone, the President's ongoing Twitter storms make all leaders uneasy. The heads of government in most nations prefer a certain amount of predictability and decorum from other heads of state. To have one of the most powerful people in the room being someone who is willing to send out explosive and controversial statements through social media, including nasty personal attacks or an edited video of him physically assaulting the media, does not make others at the G20 feel very confident about how he will handle deliberations with them.

Everyone knows that it is possible the next tweetstorm will be about them or that some of the conversations that were not intended for a mass audience could become public, thanks to the potential indiscretion of the President himself. Given his willingness to stretch the truth or say things that are false, this creates less than ideal conditions for negotiation.

Flouting international agreements

But it doesn't just stop with Twitter. The President has continually hammered away at international agreements that involve most of the leaders at the summit. His decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord was devastating since many of the key players in the room, including Germany, strongly support this commitment to slow global warming.

His announcement was seen as a prime example of the kind of conservative unilateralism that they fear is also sweeping their own continents. The President's decision to simply say no, then claim there

would be a possibility for renegotiation, caused huge ripples.

Trump has done the same with his broadsides against free trade agreements, a principle that has been a central goal for many of the nation's meeting at the table.

Given that most of the participants are working to achieve frameworks of agreement on all of these issues, Trump stands out as something of a bull in the china shop, who they simply don't trust. "Whoever believes that you can solve problems through isolation and protectionism is making a grave error,"

said German Chancellor Angela Merkel

, "The world has become less united ... the discord is obvious and it would be dishonest to paper over the conflict."

Failure to deliver at home

The failure of the Trump administration to deliver on any major legislation at home since his inauguration and his continuing low approval ratings (despite his strong support with the base) also make him weaker overseas.

Historically, foreign leaders pay close attention to the domestic standing of a president to gauge whether he can deliver credible commitments or follow through on tougher threats. One of the factors that put President Richard Nixon in a strong position to pursue détente, a series of steps that aimed to ease tensions between the US and the Soviets, as well as China, was that he had created a strong political coalition after the 1968 election and was seen moving legislation and

foreign policies forward in his first years in office.

In the current situation, especially in the wake of the health care fiasco, there is more than enough reason for other leaders at the summit to doubt whether Trump has the ability to really mobilize support for any deal once he is back in the states.

Then there is the Russia investigation, which continues to hang like a cloud over this administration. The investigation has two effects overseas. Like the tweets, it simply adds to the sense of instability that plagues Trump's presidency. In the same way that many leaders are not very confident about what the President will be doing or saying in the next few days, they, like Republicans on Capitol Hill, watch nervously to see what the next bombshell will be in the investigation, if any.

What's more, the investigation directly impinges on Trump's ability to be as effective as possible in dealing with Russia, a pivotal nation state in a number of military and diplomatic fronts, from Ukraine to Syria. Every conversation that the President has about Russia is tainted in the minds of many officials, who wonder whether this has to do with the investigations.

Even if the President and his team had serious ambitions to achieve a kind of détente with Russia to break through some of the logjams that exist overseas right now, those efforts will be difficult and many legislators -- in both parties -- will be unwilling to give him or Putin the benefit of the doubt that more productive relations are possible.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson offered a reminder that the State Department, the strength of which

has historically been essential for presidents to succeed overseas, is under siege from the White House. According to CNN, Tillerson

reportedly gave

a tongue-lashing to a high-ranking White House official about the need to let his department remain independent in hiring personnel, and for shooting down proposed nominees after months when State has been severely understaffed. Without the State Department's expertise, which the President needs to prepare and engage in discussions like those taking place in Germany, the US starts the negotiations with its hands tied behind its back.

Impact of first months of Trump presidency

The costs of Trump's governing style have become clearer in recent weeks. Despite the ongoing refrain from some of the punditry that that base still loves him and so the situation is not as bad as it seems, Trump has already done a lot to damage the US, domestically and abroad.

We have been fortunate that there has not yet been a major international crisis or major terrorist attack in the US, since there are serious concerns about whether Trump would be able to respond effectively.

Last week, Republicans witnessed how their health care plans were undercut rather than helped by Trump. This week, as he goes into the summit with less leverage than another president would probably have, citizens see some of the costs overseas that have resulted from his weaknesses and political failures.



Hodge

8-10 minutes

July 4, 2017 4:13 p.m. ET

Donald Trump sets out Wednesday on the second foreign trip of his presidency, a rapid-fire series of meetings with world leaders that all could be upstaged by his first face-to-face encounter since the election with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

The two will meet Friday afternoon in Hamburg, Germany, in what the White House on Tuesday began describing as a "bilateral" session, rather than the more casual and impromptu encounters that

Trump to Face Putin, Discuss North Korean Threat During Europe Trip

Peter Nicholas and Nathan

sometimes play out at world summits.

Mr. Trump first will stop in Poland and then head to Hamburg for a two-day summit of leaders from the Group of 20 nations that figures to be tense. European leaders have signaled they are prepared to confront Mr. Trump over an "America first" doctrine they see as harmful to both free trade and the environment.

"This will be a very tough summit for him," said Angela Stent, a government professor at Georgetown University.

Previewing the clashing agendas, German Chancellor Angela Merkel seemed to take a swipe at Mr. Trump last week over his withdrawal from the Paris climate

accord, telling parliament, "We cannot and will not wait until every last person in the world has been successfully convinced of the scientific findings about climate change."

The French, meantime, are worried that Mr. Trump might take new steps that inhibit free-flowing trade and say Europe is preparing to consider retaliatory measures should he impose tariffs on U.S. steel imports, an issue the administration is now studying.

An adviser to French President Emmanuel Macron said, "If the measures impact European exports, we would of course be led to react very quickly and we are preparing for that."

After arriving in Germany, Mr. Trump will meet with no fewer than nine foreign counterparts, White House officials said.

An issue that has taken on increasing urgency is North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

On the eve of Independence Day in the U.S., North Korea test-fired what it claimed to be an intercontinental ballistic missile, stepping up its effort to develop a nuclear weapon system that could target the U.S.

Mr. Trump tweeted after the launch: "Perhaps China will put a heavy move on North Korea and end this nonsense once and for all!"

Mr. Trump will hold meetings with a pair of allies threatened by

Pyongyang's nuclear program: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan and South Korean President Moon Jae-in. He also will meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping, whom Mr. Trump is beseeching to take more forceful gestures to rein in North Korea's weapons program.

As North Korea's largest trade partner, China has economic clout that it can use to pressure the North Korean regime, administration officials say.

Speaking to reporters in advance of the trip, H.R. McMaster, Mr. Trump's national security adviser, said that China has "tremendous coercive power in connection with the economic relationship and the trade relationships with North Korea. So, China acknowledged that there is a lot that they can do in connection with convincing the North Korean regime that it's in their interest to denuclearize."

None of Mr. Trump's meetings is likely to command as much attention as his sit-down with Mr. Putin.

As a candidate, Mr. Trump heaped praise on Mr. Putin and vowed that the two would forge a better rapport than was the case under former President Barack Obama.

Since his election, though, the president and top officials have acknowledged that relations between the two countries remained sour.

"We may be at an all-time low in terms of relationship with Russia," the president

said at a news conference in April.

Part of the reason for Mr. Trump's visit to Warsaw, meantime, is to show solidarity with Eastern Europe allies living in Russia's shadow, a senior administration official said. During the visit, Mr. Trump will give a speech at Krasinski Square, site of an uprising against Nazi occupying forces during World War II. The president will also hold a joint news conference with his Polish counterpart, Andrzej Duda.

"It's a bit of message to Russia that we're going to stand with countries on NATO's eastern flank that are most directly pressured by Russia," the official said.

A backdrop to the Trump-Putin meeting is an intensifying U.S. investigation into Russia's role in the 2016 presidential race. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is probing whether Trump campaign aides colluded with Russia to help him defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded Russia hacked computer systems and stole private emails to damage Mrs. Clinton's candidacy and elect Mr. Trump. Russia has denied the charge, while Mr. Trump has said he believes Russia was "probably" behind the cyberattacks.

Russian officials believe the investigations handcuff Mr. Trump when it comes to foreign policy.

"There are very serious and influential circles who still cannot reconcile themselves to the victory of Donald Trump in the elections and use the question of relations

with Moscow for domestic politics," said Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in an interview published Monday. "They are trying to limit the administration's abilities to maneuver."

It is unclear whether Mr. Trump will confront Mr. Putin about Russian meddling in the election. Intelligence officials have warned that Russia is prepared to mount more covert efforts to undermine American elections.

Seldom one to stick to the script, Mr. Trump will come into the meeting with Mr. Putin with "no specific agenda," Mr. McMaster told reporters. "It's really going to be whatever the president wants to talk about."

But members of Congress want to see the president raise the issue with Mr. Putin.

"The only way that we defend our next election is by making them pay a price for their interference in our last election," said Sen. Chris Coons (D., Del.), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

White House officials said they expect the two leaders will discuss the civil war in Syria and the conflict in Ukraine. They discouraged hopes of a major breakthrough.

"Part of this meeting will be just to see if we can talk more and argue less and ratchet down the tensions," the administration official said.

A top Russian official said this week that Mr. Putin is expected to raise the issue of fighting terrorism, but tempered expectations of a rapid rapprochement, Russian news agencies reported.

Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov said Monday it would be "logical to discuss" the crises in Syria and Ukraine, but added: "We believe that in general the problem of international terrorism needs to be discussed between the two leaders of the world powers as a top priority," Russian news agencies reported.

The U.S. and Russia have consistently been at odds over Syria and Ukraine policy, and Russia has been under American and European sanctions after Moscow's annexation of the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

Mr. Putin has cast himself as a bulwark against Islamic militancy with his intervention in Syria, where U.S. officials say he has focused efforts largely on propping up the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

—Anton Troianovski and William Horobin contributed to this article.

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Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as 'Putin Meeting Tops Trump's Trip Agenda.'

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Jonathan Cheng in Seoul and Alastair Gale in Tokyo

9-12 minutes

Updated July 4, 2017 10:53 p.m. ET

North Korea's successful launch Tuesday of its first ballistic missile capable of reaching the continental U.S. escalated a diplomatic face-off and threatened to shift the decades-old strategic balance in the Pacific.

The U.S. and South Korean militaries conducted a joint exercise on Wednesday morning local time, firing tactical surface-to-surface missiles into the waters off South Korea to counter what it called "North Korea's destabilizing and unlawful actions."

"The U.S. commitment to the defense of the ROK in the face of threats is ironclad," the Eighth U.S. Army, which commands U.S. Army forces in South Korea, said in a

North Korea Missile Launch Threatens U.S. Strategy in Asia (UNE)

statement. ROK is the abbreviation for South Korea's formal name, the Republic of Korea.

Late Tuesday, the Trump administration denounced North Korea and demanded global action after concluding Pyongyang had launched an intercontinental ballistic missile.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. "strongly condemns" North Korea for the launch. "Testing an ICBM represents a new escalation of the threat to the United States, our allies and partners, the region, and the world," he said.

The development presents President Donald Trump with his biggest foreign-policy challenge and raises the potential costs of military action against Pyongyang. It comes as Mr. Trump has expressed frustration with China's inability to curb North Korea's advancing weapons program.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley on Tuesday requested an urgent U.N. Security Council meeting on North Korea, a spokesman said. A U.N. spokesman said the session would be held at 3 p.m. Wednesday. The U.S. requested that the meeting be open.

The missile test is likely to push North Korea up the agenda Friday and Saturday at a meeting of leaders of the Group of 20 advanced nations in Germany, where Mr. Trump is set to hold a separate meeting with the leaders of Japan and South Korea.

The Trump administration has sought to increase pressure on China, North Korea's top trading partner and ally, to take greater action to cut off Pyongyang's economic lifeline. Mr. Trump is set to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping at the G-20 summit in Hamburg.

The missile, which North Korean state media identified as the Hwasong-14, or the Mars-14, was launched at 9 a.m. local time Tuesday from an airfield in the country's northwest. Leader Kim Jong Un oversaw the test, North Korean state media said.

The missile, like others that Pyongyang has tested this year, was fired at a steep trajectory, reaching an altitude of about 1,740 miles before splashing down 580 miles away between Japan and the Korean Peninsula, according to North Korean state media. The numbers were in line with U.S., South Korean and Japanese military analyses, though the Pentagon initially identified the missile as an intermediate-range ballistic missile.

"As a full-fledged nuclear power that has been possessed of the most powerful intercontinental ballistic rocket capable of hitting any part of the world, along with nuclear

weapons, the DPRK will fundamentally put an end to the U.S. nuclear war threat and blackmail," North Korea's state media said, using an acronym for the country's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Trump addressed a crowd of military guests Tuesday at the White House for the annual fireworks display, but didn't address the North Korean launch.

Tuesday afternoon, the European Union said foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini would speak to her counterparts in coming days to discuss possible further U.N. Security Council measures and will consider additional unilateral EU sanctions against North Korea.

The U.S. has tried to use a combination of punitive economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation and military pressure to check Pyongyang's nuclear-weapons ambitions.

Washington has begun using so-called secondary sanctions, which target companies that do business with North Korea, to economically isolate the country, sanctioning one Chinese bank last week. Another last-resort U.S. move would be to eliminate travel by Americans to North Korea.

China has been the main diplomatic hope for the U.S. But after the death last month of American student Otto Warmbier following 17 months of captivity in North Korea, Mr. Trump said in a June 20 Twitter message that China's efforts had "not worked out."

Mr. Trump's Twitter posts have underscored the fluctuations in U.S. policy, as he wrote in a post after the launch that China should "put a heavy move on North Korea and end this nonsense once and for all."

North Korea announced the launch on state television in the early hours

of Independence Day in the U.S. The regime has test-fired missiles on or around July 4 before, including in 2006 and 2009.

Mr. Kim, in a statement carried Wednesday on North Korean state media, called Tuesday's ICBM test a "package of gifts" on U.S. Independence Day. He said it showed that the North's "showdown with the U.S. imperialists has reached its final phase."

He appeared to rule out any discussions on giving up its weapons programs, saying the North wouldn't "put its nukes and ballistic rockets on the table of negotiations in any case."

If fired at a flatter trajectory, the missile would have a range of more than 4,100 miles, said David Wright, a physicist with the Union of Concerned Scientists—enough to reach Alaska and parts of the Hawaiian archipelago, and the U.S. naval base in Guam.

Uzi Rubin, an Israeli missile-defense engineer and former head of the country's Missile Defense Organization, said that based on a preliminary analysis, he believed the Hwasong-14 was capable of flying nearly 6,200 miles—putting San Francisco in range.

"The question of when they will be ready is immaterial," Mr. Rubin said in an interview. "They are ready."

Some analysts cautioned that North Korea faces many technical hurdles before it has a fully operational nuclear-armed ICBM. Among the challenges is ensuring the missile can carry and detonate a warhead at a predetermined target.

North Korea has said it can mount a nuclear bomb on a long-range missile, but opinion on that is divided.

Markus Schiller, a rocket analyst with German space and defense consultancy ST Analytics, said North Korea faces several years of

engineering work. "Their work is just starting."

North Korea said the ICBM test showed that it had mastered the ability of its warheads to survive the strain of atmospheric re-entry—a frequently cited hurdle for its missile-development program.

"Despite the harsh atmospheric re-entry conditions of having to face the heat reaching thousands of degrees centigrade, extreme overload and vibration, the nuclear warhead detonation control device successfully worked," Wednesday's state media report said.

While North Korea has been able to threaten Japan and South Korea for years with shorter-range missiles, Tokyo and Seoul could rely on Washington's nuclear deterrent. But with San Francisco potentially at risk, those allies could start to doubt the U.S.'s commitment, said Adam Mount, senior fellow with the left-leaning Center for American Progress think tank in Washington.

"We could see this day coming, but it was politically easier to continue to insist that the problem could be solved and that the problem would be solved than to prepare for this eventuality," he said.

In a tweet in January, Mr. Trump said that North Korea's development of a nuclear weapon capable of reaching parts of the U.S. "won't happen!"

Since Mr. Kim, the North's third-generation leader, took power at the end of 2011, Pyongyang has accelerated its missile-development program, adding new capabilities that have given it the ability to fire missiles farther and with less preparation time.

The U.S. has weighed military options against North Korea since at least the early 1990s, though it appears to have decided in each case that it was too risky.

"I just don't see how it makes sense," says Daniel Pinkston, a North Korea specialist and professor at Troy University in South Korea. "You would initiate some military operation that is almost certainly going to fail, and it would unleash so many of the things that you'd want to avoid."

Among those things, he said, were the bombardment by North Korea of Seoul, the South Korean capital, or nuclear war.

North Korea's ability to threaten the continental U.S. could increase its leverage in potential negotiations, said Narushige Michishita, director of the Security and International Studies Program at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo. One objective often stated by North Korea: the removal of around 28,500 American troops in South Korea.

Following a meeting in the Kremlin Tuesday between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russia and China issued a joint statement saying the two countries agreed to promote a plan for North Korea to call a halt to further nuclear and missile tests while the U.S. and South Korea freeze large-scale military exercises.

The U.S. has said before that there is no equivalency between legitimate U.S.-South Korean military maneuvers and North Korea's missile and nuclear tests, which violate United Nations resolutions.

—Kersten Zhang in Beijing and Nathan Hodge in Moscow contributed to this article.

Write to Jonathan Cheng at jonathan.cheng@wsj.com and Alastair Gale at alastair.gale@wsj.com

Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as "North Korea Missile Tensions Rise."



North Korea: Kim Vows Nukes Are Not on Negotiation Table

Foster Klug and Hyung-Jin Kim / AP

6-8 minutes

(SEOUL, South Korea) — North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un vowed his nation would "demonstrate its mettle to the U.S." and never put its weapons programs up for negotiations a day after test-launching its first intercontinental ballistic missile. The hard line suggests more tests are being prepared as the country tries to perfect a nuclear missile capable of

striking anywhere in the United States.

Tuesday's ICBM launch, confirmed later by U.S. and South Korean officials, is a milestone in Pyongyang's efforts to develop long-range nuclear-armed missiles. The North isn't there yet — some analysts suggest it will take several more years to perfect such an arsenal, and many more tests — but a successful launch of an ICBM has long been seen as a red line, after which it would only be a matter of time — if the country isn't stopped.

Worry spread in Washington and at the United Nations, where the United States, Japan and South Korea requested a U.N. Security Council emergency session, to be held later Wednesday. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. response would include "stronger measures to hold the DPRK accountable," using an acronym for the nation's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Related

The uproar only seemed to inspire the North, whose propaganda machine rarely fails to aggrandize its leader and its military or to thumb its nose at rivals Seoul and Washington.

A report in its state media Wednesday described leader Kim as "feasting his eyes" on the ICBM, which was said to be capable of carrying a large nuclear warhead, before its launch. "With a broad smile on his face," Kim urged his scientists to "frequently send big and small 'gift packages' to the Yankees," an apparent reference to continuing the stream of nuclear

and missile tests Kim has ordered since taking power in late 2011.

The North was also pleased that its test came as Americans celebrated Independence Day. Kim, the state media report said, told "scientists and technicians that the U.S. would be displeased to witness the DPRK's strategic option as it was given a 'package of gifts' incurring its disfavor by the DPRK on its 'Independence Day.'" The North has a history of conducting weapons test on or around July 4.

Kim reportedly "stressed that the protracted showdown with the U.S. imperialists has reached its final phase and it is the time for the DPRK to demonstrate its mettle to the U.S., which is testing its will in defiance of its warning."

The test, North Korea's most successful yet, is a direct rebuke to President Donald Trump's earlier declaration that such a test "won't happen!"

A U.S. scientist analyzing the height and distance of the launch said the missile could potentially reach Alaska.

North Korea's Academy of Defense Science, in a bit of hyperbole, said the test of what it called the Hwasong-14 marked the "final step" in creating a "confident and powerful nuclear state that can strike anywhere on Earth."

South Korea's Defense Ministry, in a report to lawmakers, tentatively concluded that North Korea test-fired a "new missile with an ICBM-class range" of more than 5,500 kilometers. But the ministry said it's not certain if the test was successful because Seoul couldn't verify if the North has mastered re-entry technology for an ICBM. The ministry said North Korea may now conduct a nuclear test with "boosted explosive power" to show off a warhead to be mounted on a missile.

The launch sends a political warning to Washington and its chief Asian allies, Seoul and Tokyo, while also allowing North Korean scientists a chance to perfect their still-incomplete nuclear missile program. It came days after the first face-to-face meeting between Trump and Moon and ahead of a summit of the world's richest economies.

On Wednesday, U.S. and South Korean troops, in response to the ICBM launch, engineered a show of force for Pyongyang, with soldiers from the allies firing "deep strike" precision missiles into South Korean territorial waters. South Korean President Moon Jae-in ordered the drills arranged with the United States to show "North Korea our firm combined missile response posture," his office said.

Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, a former commanding officer of the British Armed Forces Joint Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Regiment, said that "in capability of missile terms and delivery, it is a major step up and they seem to be making progress week-on-week." He added, however, that "actually marrying the warhead to the missile is probably the biggest challenge, which they appear not to have progressed on."

North Korea has a reliable arsenal of shorter-range missiles and is thought to have a small number of atomic bombs, but is still trying to perfect its longer-range missiles. Some outside civilian experts believe the North has the technology to mount warheads on shorter-range Rodong and Scud missiles that can strike South Korea and Japan, two key U.S. allies where about 80,000 American troops are stationed. But it's unclear if it has mastered the technology needed to build an atomic bomb that can fit on a long-range missile.

Soon after the launch, Trump responded on Twitter: "North Korea has just launched another missile. Does this guy have anything better to do with his life? Hard to believe that South Korea and Japan will put up with this much longer. Perhaps China will put a heavy move on North Korea and end this nonsense once and for all!"

"This guy" presumably refers to Kim. China is North Korea's economic lifeline and only major ally, and the Trump administration is pushing Beijing to do more to push the North toward disarmament.

After North Korea claimed earlier this year it was close to an ICBM test launch, Trump took to Twitter and said, "It won't happen!"

North Korea says it needs nuclear weapons and powerful missiles to cope with what it calls rising U.S. military threats.

Regional disarmament talks on North Korea's nuclear program have been deadlocked since 2009, when the North pulled out of the negotiations to protest international condemnation over a long-range rocket launch.

The missile test could invite a new round of international sanctions, but North Korea is already one of the most sanctioned countries on Earth.

Last year, North Korea conducted its fourth and fifth atomic bomb tests and claimed a series of technical breakthroughs in its efforts to develop long-range nuclear missiles. The fifth nuclear test in September was the North's most powerful atomic detonation to date.

The Korean Peninsula has been divided since the end of World War II. Almost 30,000 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea.



North Korea missile launch marks a direct challenge to Trump administration (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/emilyrauhala?fref=ts>

9-11 minutes

North Korea's latest test launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile marks a direct challenge to President Trump, whose tough talk has yet to yield any change in Pyongyang's behavior as the regime continues its efforts to build a nuclear weapon capable of striking the mainland United States.

The missile — launched Tuesday in North Korea, late Monday in the United States — flew higher and remained in the air longer than previous attempts, enough to reach all of Alaska, experts said. They called it a major milestone for North Korea's weapons program.

The test comes just before Trump will see key Asian leaders and Russian President Vladimir Putin later this week. North Korea was already expected to be a main subject for meetings on the sidelines of the Group of 20

economic summit, but the test adds urgency to a widening U.S. campaign aimed at further isolating North Korea.

[Experts: North Korea's missile was a 'real ICBM' — and a grave milestone]

The day after the launch, the U.S. Army and the South Korean military conducted a missile exercise in response to "North Korea's destabilizing and unlawful actions," U.S. Pacific Command said in a statement. It was unclear how Pyongyang might react to the exercise, which launched missiles into South Korean territorial waters along the country's eastern coastline.

On July 4, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping called on North Korea, South Korea and the United States to embrace a Chinese de-escalation plan designed to defuse tensions over Pyongyang's missile program. Russia's and China's presidents call on North Korea, South Korea and the U.S. to adopt

a de-escalation plan to defuse tensions over Pyongyang's missile program. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

"Together with the Republic of Korea, we conducted a combined exercise to show our precision-fire capability," said Dana White, a Pentagon spokeswoman.

Trump responded to the North Korean missile test by applying rhetorical pressure on China, North Korea's ally and economic lifeline, and by mocking dictator Kim Jong Un on Twitter.

"North Korea has just launched another missile. Does this guy have anything better to do with his life?" Trump asked in a message very shortly after the launch.

"Hard to believe that South Korea and Japan will put up with this much longer," Trump continued. "Perhaps China will put a heavy move on North Korea and end this nonsense once and for all!"

The launch follows a string of recent actions by Pyongyang, including a salvo of missiles last month and three tests in May. Kim has now launched more missiles in one year than his father and predecessor in the family dynasty did in 17 years in power.

North Korea has also conducted five nuclear weapons tests since 2006, including two last year.

The number and variety of tests worry experts who see each step as part of a march toward a missile capable of striking America's West Coast.

The missile tests violate existing United Nations and other sanctions, which North Korea has found ways to evade. Although Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have declared that the "era of strategic patience" with North Korea is over, the new U.S. administration has not spelled out what that means.

Tillerson has said Washington might eventually negotiate with North

Korea under the right circumstances, but he has suggested that possibility is remote. The United States will act alone if it must, he has warned, though he has not spelled out what exactly that would entail.

The Trump administration has recently leaned on China to rein in North Korea and curb illicit trade with the country, an international pariah largely cut off from the global financial system.

Given that Japan and South Korea are within range of existing North Korean missiles, Trump has also sought to unite leaders of both nations behind a strongly worded U.S. position that it will no longer tolerate the North's provocations. The Trump administration has asked other nations around the globe to sever or downgrade diplomatic ties with Pyongyang.

Leaders of China, South Korea and Japan will be at the G-20 meeting in Germany.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe appeared to share Trump's frustration, if not his tone. In remarks to the news media, he vowed to work closely with the United States and South Korea, but called on China and Russia to do more.

"I'd like to strongly urge international society's cooperation on the North Korea issue and urge China's chairman, Xi Jinping, and Russia's President Putin to take more constructive measures," Abe said.

In a daily news conference, Geng Shuang, a spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry, condemned the test but countered that Beijing had "spared no effort" in its fight.

On Tuesday, Russia and China jointly proposed that North Korea put further nuclear and missile tests on hold while the United States and ally South Korea refrain from large-scale military exercises. Both Russia and China oppose North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Both also oppose the U.S. antimissile system being installed in South Korea.

Experts said the Trump administration does not have many choices for what to do next.

"Unfortunately, the Trump administration has few options other than robust economic pressure on China and North Korea," said Anthony Ruggiero, a specialist on the long-running diplomatic and military standoff at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "The U.S. wasted the last 10 years with a combination of negotiations that were destined to fail and strategic patience that failed from the start."

A new sanctions regime led by the United States would be the best response, Ruggiero said, because China and Russia would veto the most effective form of sanctions at the U.N. Security Council.

Last week, the Trump administration announced sanctions targeting a China-based bank accused of laundering money for the North Korean government and moved forward with an arms sale to Taiwan that Beijing opposes.

Trump followed up with a call Sunday to China's Xi, in which Trump "raised the growing threat posed by North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs," according to the White House.

"Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a denuclearized

Korean Peninsula," a White House statement said, while "President Trump reiterated his determination to seek more balanced trade relations with America's trading partners."

The trade reference was an implicit threat to reassert U.S. complaints about Chinese economic practices that Trump has largely set aside in recent months as he has sought to engage Xi, with whom he claims a strong relationship.

China has pledged cooperation with the United States over North Korea but has not fundamentally shifted away from a strategy that balances pressure on the Kim regime with keeping the regime afloat, said Chris Steinitz, a research scientist at the federally funded, nonprofit Center for Naval Analyses.

"It's kind of how China looks at everything. They have a very long view," Steinitz said. "They will wait, they will bide their time. They have a lot of priorities."

In the meantime, Steinitz said, North Korea will continue to test missiles.

[With South Korean president, Trump denounces 'reckless and brutal' regime in North Korea]

The U.S. military said the Hwasong-14 was in the air for 37 minutes, a duration that signals a significant improvement over previous tests. In a special announcement on state television, North Korea said the missile flew about 579 miles, reaching an altitude of 1,741 miles.

The launch was made from a site in North Korea's North Pyongan province, and the missile flew more than 500 miles before landing in waters off Japan's coast, U.S.,

South Korean and Japanese officials said.

As with other recent launches, the missile appears to have been fired at a very steep trajectory in an effort to avoid flying over neighbors.

Multiple independent analyses of the test showed that the missile flew at a high-altitude trajectory, soaring to about 1,700 miles before landing in the Pacific off the Japanese coast, about 580 miles from its launch point.

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The Pentagon and the State Department confirmed late Tuesday that North Korea had launched an ICBM.

"The United States strongly condemns North Korea's launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile," Tillerson said in a statement. "Testing an ICBM represents a new escalation of the threat to the United States, our allies and partners, the region, and the world."

Tillerson added that the United States intends to bring the issue before the U.N. Security Council to hold North Korea accountable. On Tuesday, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, announced that she and her counterparts in Japan and South Korea had requested an emergency Security Council meeting, set for Wednesday afternoon.

Rauhala reported from Beijing. Joby Warrick and Dan Lamothe in Washington and Shirley Feng and Yang Liu in Beijing contributed to this report.



What Can Trump Do About North Korea? His Options Are Few and Risky (UNE)

David E. Sanger

9-11 minutes

President Trump boarded Air Force One in Morristown, N.J., on Monday. Al Drago for The New York Times

When President-elect Donald J. Trump said on Twitter in early January that a North Korean test of an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States "won't happen!" there were two things he still did not fully appreciate: how close Kim Jong-un, the North's leader, was to reaching that goal, and how limited any

president's options were to stop him.

The ensuing six months have been a brutal education for President Trump. With North Korea's launch on Tuesday of what the administration confirmed was an intercontinental ballistic missile, the country has new reach. Experts said the North Koreans had crossed a threshold — if just barely — with a missile that could potentially strike Alaska.

Mr. Kim's repeated missile tests show that a more definitive demonstration that he can reach the American mainland cannot be far away, even if it may be a few years before he can fit a nuclear warhead

onto his increasingly powerful missiles. But for Mr. Trump and his national security team, Tuesday's technical milestone simply underscores tomorrow's strategic dilemma.

A North Korean ability to reach the United States, as former Defense Secretary William J. Perry noted recently, "changes every calculus." The fear is not that Mr. Kim would launch a pre-emptive attack on the West Coast; that would be suicidal, and if the North's 33-year-old leader has demonstrated anything in his five years in office, he is all about survival. But if Mr. Kim has the potential ability to strike back, it will shape every decision Mr. Trump and his successors make about

defending America's allies in the region.

For years, the North's medium-range missiles have been able to reach South Korea and Japan with ease, and American intelligence officials believe the missiles are capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

But this latest test suggests that the United States may already be in range as well, and that, as one former top American intelligence official noted recently, would put enormous pressure on American missile defenses that few trust to work.

On Tuesday, Mr. Trump's secretary of state, Rex W. Tillerson, called for

"global action" and for the United Nations Security Council to "enact stronger measures" against the North's government in Pyongyang. He added that the United States would consider nations that provide economic or military help to North Korea to be "aiding and abetting a dangerous regime."

Mr. Trump still has some time to act. What the North Koreans accomplished while Americans focused on Independence Day celebrations was a breakthrough, but not a vivid demonstration of their nuclear reach.

Their missile traveled only about 580 miles, by itself no great achievement. But it got there by taking a 1,700-mile trip into space and re-entering the atmosphere, a flight that lasted 37 minutes by the calculation of the United States Pacific Command (and a few minutes longer according to the North Koreans).

Flatten that out, and you have a missile that could reach Alaska, but not Los Angeles. That bolsters the assessment of the director of the Missile Defense Agency, Vice Adm. James D. Syring, who said at a congressional hearing last month that the United States "must assume that North Korea can reach us with a ballistic missile."

Perhaps that is why Mr. Trump has not issued any "red lines" that the North Koreans cannot step over.

He has not even repeated the policy that President George W. Bush laid out in October 2006 after the North's first nuclear test: that he would hold the country "fully accountable" if it shared its nuclear technology with any other nation or terrorist group. Mr. Trump's advisers say they see little merit in drawing lines that could limit options, and they would rather keep

the North guessing.

So what are Mr. Trump's options, and what are their downsides?

There is classic containment: limiting an adversary's ability to expand its influence, as the United States did against a much more powerful foe, the Soviet Union. But that does not solve the problem; it is just a way of living with it.

A photograph distributed by the North Korean government that is said to show the launch of the Hwasong-14 missile on Tuesday. KCNA, via Associated Press

He could step up sanctions, bolster the American naval presence off the Korean Peninsula — "we're sending an armada," he boasted in April — and accelerate the secret American cyberprogram to sabotage missile launches. But if that combination of intimidation and technical wizardry had been a success, Mr. Kim would not have conducted the test on Tuesday, knowing that it would lead only to more sanctions, more military pressure and more covert activity — and perhaps persuade China that it has no choice but to intervene more decisively.

So far, Mr. Trump's early enthusiasm that he had cajoled China's president, Xi Jinping, to crack down on the North has resulted in predictable disappointment. Recently, he told Mr. Xi that the United States was prepared to go it alone in confronting North Korea, but the Chinese may consider that an empty threat.

He could also take another step and threaten pre-emptive military strikes if the United States detects an imminent launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile — maybe one intended to demonstrate the potential reach to the West Coast. Mr. Perry argued for that step in 2006, in an op-ed in The

Washington Post that he wrote with a future defense secretary, Ashton B. Carter. "If North Korea persists in its launch preparations, the United States should immediately make clear its intention to strike and destroy" the missile on the pad, they wrote.

But Mr. Perry noted recently that "even if you think it was a good idea at the time" — and he now seems to have his doubts — "it's not a good idea today."

The reason is simple: In the intervening 11 years, the North has built too many missiles, of too many varieties, to make the benefits of a strike like that worth the risk. It has test-flown a new generation of solid-fuel missiles, which can be easily hidden in mountain caves and rolled out for quick launch.

And the North Koreans still possess their ultimate weapon of retaliation: artillery along the northern edge of the Demilitarized Zone that can take out the South's capital, Seoul, a city of approximately 10 million people and one of the most vibrant economic hubs of Asia.

In short, that is a risk the North Koreans are betting even Mr. Trump, for all his threats, would not take. "A conflict in North Korea," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said on CBS's "Face the Nation" in May, "would be probably the worst kind of fighting in most people's lifetimes."

Which leads to the next option, the one that South Korea's new president, Moon Jae-in, talked about in Washington on Friday when he visited Mr. Trump: negotiation. It would start with a freeze on North Korea's nuclear and missile tests in return for an American agreement to limit or suspend military exercises with South Korea. Mr. Xi has long urged that approach, and it won an endorsement on Tuesday from

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, after he met with the Chinese leader.

That, too, carries risks. It essentially achieves the North Korean and Chinese goal of limiting American military freedom of action in the Pacific, and over time it would erode the quality of the American-South Korean military deterrent.

Negotiating with the North is hardly a new idea: President Bill Clinton tried it in 1994, and Mr. Bush in the last two years of his term. But both discovered that over time, once the North Koreans determined that the economic benefits were limited, the deals fell apart.

Moreover, a freeze at this late date, when the North is estimated to have 10 to 20 nuclear weapons, essentially acknowledges that the North's modest arsenal is here to stay.

Mr. Tillerson said as much when he visited Seoul in mid-March and told reporters that he would probably reject any solution that would enshrine "a comprehensive set of capabilities" in the North. He has since softened his public comments. Administration officials now suggest that a freeze would not be a solution, but a way station to a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula — in other words, an agreement that Mr. Kim would give up all his nuclear weapons and missiles.

But it is now clear that Mr. Kim has no interest in giving up that power. As he looks around the world, he sees cases like that of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya, an authoritarian who gave up his nascent nuclear program, only to be deposed, with American help, as soon as his people turned against him. That is what Mr. Kim believes his nuclear program will prevent — an American effort to topple him.

He may be right.



Experts: North Korea's missile was a 'real ICBM' — and a grave milestone

<https://www.facebook.com/jobyy.warrick>

7-9 minutes

Days before world leaders are set to meet for the Group of 20 summit, North Korea claims it successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile. Days before world leaders are set to meet for the Group of 20 summit, North Korea claims it successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

The North Korean missile that soared high above the Sea of Japan on Tuesday was hailed by state-run television as a "shining success." But to U.S. officials, it was a most unwelcome surprise: a weapon with intercontinental range, delivered years before most Western experts believed such a feat possible.

Hours after the apparently successful test, intelligence agencies continued to run calculations to determine precisely how the missile, dubbed the Hwasong-14, performed in its maiden flight. But the consensus among missile experts was that

North Korea had achieved a long-sought milestone, demonstrating a capability of striking targets thousands of miles from its coast.

Initial Pentagon assessments said North Korea had tested a "land-based, intermediate-range" missile that landed in the Sea of Japan just under 600 linear miles from its launch point, Panghyon Airfield, near the Chinese border. The State Department and the Pentagon later confirmed North Korea had launched an intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM. Government and independent analyses showed the missile traveling in a steep arc that

topped out at more than 1,740 vertical miles above the Earth's surface.

If flown in a more typical trajectory, the missile would have easily traveled 4,000 miles, potentially putting all of Alaska within its range, according to former government officials and independent analysts. A missile that exceeds a range of 3,400 miles is classified as an ICBM.

"This is a big deal: It's an ICBM, not a 'kind of ICBM,'" said Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia program at the James Martin Center

for Nonproliferation Studies. "And there's no reason to think that this is going to be the maximum range."

[North Korea at top of agenda as U.S., South Koreans hold summit]

David Wright, senior scientist for the Union of Concerned Scientists, calculated in a published analysis that the Hwasong-14's demonstrated capability exceeded 4,100 linear miles, based on estimates released Tuesday.

"That range would not be enough to reach the Lower 48 states or the large islands of Hawaii, but would allow it to reach all of Alaska," Wright said.

North Korea's apparent accomplishment puts it well ahead of schedule in its years-long quest to develop a true ICBM. The Hwasong-14 tested Tuesday could not have reached the U.S. mainland, analysts say, and there's no evidence to date that North Korea is capable of building a miniaturized nuclear warhead to fit on one of its longer-range missiles. But there is now little reason to doubt that both are within North Korea's grasp, weapons experts say.

"In the past five years, we have seen significant, and much more

rapid than expected, development of their ballistic-missiles capability," said Victor Cha, a former director of Asian affairs for the George W. Bush administration's National Security Council. "Their capabilities have exceeded our expectations on a consistent basis."

While U.S. intelligence officials have sought, with some success, to disrupt North Korea's progress, Pyongyang has achieved breakthroughs in multiple areas, such as the development of solid-fuel rocket engines and mobile-launch capabilities, including rockets that can be fired from submarines. Early analysis suggests that the Hwasong-14 uses a new kind of indigenously built ballistic-missile engine, one that North Korea unveiled with fanfare on March 18. Nearly all the country's previous ballistic missiles used engines based on modifications of older, Soviet-era technology.

"It's not a copy of a crappy Soviet engine, and it's not a pair of Soviet engines kludged together — it's the real thing," Lewis said. "When they first unveiled the engine on March 18, they said that the 'world would soon see what this means.' I think we're now seeing them take that basic engine design and execute it for an ICBM."

On July 4, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping called on North Korea, South Korea and the United States to embrace a Chinese de-escalation plan designed to defuse tensions over Pyongyang's missile program. Russia's and China's presidents call on North Korea, South Korea and the U.S. to adopt a de-escalation plan to defuse tensions over Pyongyang's missile program. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

[North Korean missiles getting an important boost — from China]

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

In announcing the test in a special TV broadcast Tuesday, North Korean officials proclaimed that the country had achieved an ICBM capability that would safeguard the communist government from attacks by the United States and other adversaries. According to U.S. analysts, leader Kim Jong Un has long calculated that nuclear-armed ICBMs are the best deterrence against threats to his survival, as any perceived aggression against him could trigger a retaliatory strike targeting U.S. cities.

"As the dignified nuclear power who possesses the strongest intercontinental ballistic rocket which is capable of hitting any part of the world along with the nuclear weapons, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will fundamentally terminate the U.S. nuclear war threats and blackmail and credibly protect the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and the region," a government spokeswoman said in a bulletin read on state-run television.

The spokeswoman said that the missile's trajectory was deliberately set "at the highest angle" to avoid harming nearby countries.

That claim rang true to U.S. analysts, who agreed the high arc was probably intended to avoid the possibility of hitting Japanese territory. Moreover, the rocket's flight path would help North Korea secure another objective: secrecy. By sending the spent engine splashing into the deep waters of the Sea of Japan, Pyongyang ensured it would be hard, if not impossible, for U.S. and Japanese divers to retrieve the parts.

POLITICO

U.S. general in South Korea: Only self-restraint is keeping us from war

By Louis Nelson

3-4 minutes

"Self-restraint, which is a choice, is all that separates armistice and war. As this Alliance missile live fire shows, we are able to change our choice when so ordered by our Alliance national leaders," Gen. Vincent Brooks, the commander of U.S. Forces Korea, Combined Forces Command and the United Nations Command. "It would be a grave mistake for anyone to believe anything to the contrary."

The only thing holding the U.S. and South Korea back from renewing their war against North Korea is "self restraint," the commander of U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula said in a statement released Tuesday, a barrier that he said could be removed at any time.

"Self-restraint, which is a choice, is all that separates armistice and war. As this Alliance missile live fire shows, we are able to change our choice when so ordered by our Alliance national leaders," Gen. Vincent Brooks, the commander of U.S. Forces Korea, Combined Forces Command and the United Nations Command. "It would be a grave mistake for anyone to believe anything to the contrary."

Story Continued Below

North Korea launched its first ever intercontinental ballistic missile Tuesday, a key step in its long-held ambition to join the ranks of the world's nuclear-armed states. North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un vowed on Wednesday that his nation would never surrender its nuclear

program, according to an Associated Press report, and urged his nation's scientists to "frequently send big and small 'gift packages' to the Yankees."

Based on its flight time and the trajectory of Tuesday's launch, the range of the missile tested Tuesday by North Korea could extend as far as Alaska, putting U.S. shores within reach of the often-belligerent and unpredictable Kim regime.

The U.S., Japan and South Korea all requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, to be held Wednesday, in response to the missile launch. The U.S. and South Korea also engaged in missile drills — the type of joint exercises to which Pyongyang so often objects — in the

wake of North Korea's missile launch.

"Despite North Korea's repeated provocation, the ROK-U.S. Alliance is maintaining patience and self-restraint," Gen. Lee Sun-jin, the chairman of South Korea's joint chiefs of staff, said a statement, referring to his nation by the abbreviation of its official name, the Republic of Korea. "As the combined live fire demonstrated, we may make resolute decisions any time, if the Alliance Commanders in Chief order. Whoever thinks differently is making a serious misjudgment."

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Lawmakers demand stronger Trump response after North Korean missile test

By Annie Karni

7-9 minutes

This picture taken and released Tuesday by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency

shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reacting after the test-fire of the intercontinental ballistic missile.

Following a round of tweets about North Korea late Monday, Trump spent Tuesday at his golf club.

Republican and Democratic lawmakers on Tuesday called on President Donald Trump to increase pressure on North Korea and China, after Pyongyang announced its first-ever test of an intercontinental ballistic missile that could reach the United States.

Trump said little about the latest international provocation that will further complicate his meetings with world leaders later this week at the G-20 in Hamburg, Germany. He started the Fourth of July in his comfort zone, at the Trump National Golf Club.

Story Continued Below

On Monday night, in a pair of almost playful tweets poking at the North Korean dictator and calling out his neighbors, Trump expressed hope that China's President Xi Jinping would take the lead against North Korea.

"North Korea has just launched another missile," the president wrote on Twitter. "Does this guy have anything better to do with his life? Hard to believe that South Korea and Japan will put up with this much longer. Perhaps China will put a heavy move on North Korea and end this nonsense once and for all!"

But that response didn't cut it for lawmakers of both parties, as well as experts in the region, who on Tuesday demanded a more forceful reaction from the White House, and a real strategy related to both China and North Korea, to deal with the first-ever ICBM test.

"Instead of vague Twitter bluster, President Trump should answer North Korea's dangerous test with a coherent strategy of direct diplomacy with Pyongyang and increased economic sanctions pressure from China," said Sen. Edward Markey, who is the top Democrat on the East Asia Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "Each additional test will bring North Korea closer to the capability of delivering a nuclear weapon to American cities."

Added Republican Sen. Deb Fischer, who chairs the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces: "We must bring greater pressure to bear on North Korea, and its international patrons, China and Russia.... But we should have no illusions that they will solve

this problem for us."

Other lawmakers reacted on Twitter, calling for a stronger response. "House acted to increase sanctions; a good first step but more must be done," tweeted Republican Rep. Adam Kinzinger of Illinois.

New York Rep. Gregory Meeks, a Democrat, called for "additional pressure on China" in a holiday appearance on CNN's New Day.

On Tuesday, the White House did not say whether it had coordinated with U.S. allies, or whether it was taking any steps to respond to the regime. In the evening, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson condemned the missile launch and said it represented "a new escalation of the threat to the United States" and said the administration plans to "enact stronger measures" in response.

But the White House's own silence on Tuesday – Trump did not mention North Korea in brief holiday remarks he gave at a military picnic on the South Lawn at the White House – was in line with how the administration has reacted in the past to North Korea's missile tests.

In April, for instance, after North Korea fired an intermediate range ballistic missile into the sea off the Korean peninsula, Tillerson released a bizarrely cryptic message in response: "The United States has spoken enough about North Korea," he said. "We have no further comment."

The strategy has flummoxed experts following the region. "There really is a value to communicating resolve and unity with our allies," said Adam Mount, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and an expert on nuclear security. "The Trump administration has

blustered at times, and at other times they've appeared to take the military option off the table." National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said in April that the administration hopes not to use military force to respond to North Korea.

"If they have a strategy, I've seen no evidence of it," said Mount. "They've been contradictory on nearly every plank of their stated strategy."

Projecting a confusing strategy is, actually, Trump's strategy, according to White House officials, who often talk about how the president likes to keep foreign nations guessing on his actions. "You're not going to see him telegraphing how he's going to respond to any military or other situation going forward," White House press secretary Sean Spicer told reporters in April, while answering questions about possible responses to North Korea.

In early January, weeks before his inauguration, Trump said on Twitter that he would prevent North Korea from developing a nuclear weapon capable of reaching the United States -- the very weapon that was thought to be tested on Monday. "North Korea just stated that it is in the final stages of developing a nuclear weapon capable of reaching parts of the U.S.," the president-elect tweeted on Jan. 2. "It won't happen!"

The latest test comes days ahead of Trump's high-stakes meetings at the G-20, where he will meet with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, South Korean president Moon Jae-In, and Xi.

In recent weeks, the Trump administration has applied sanctions on a Chinese bank, a Chinese company and two

individuals in an effort to ratchet up pressure on the world superpower to crack down on North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The pressure, so far, has only increased tension between the United States and China but has not appeared to show any movement in China's actions toward North Korea. The New York Times reported on Monday that Trump told Xi in a phone call that he was prepared to take on North Korea alone if necessary.

On Tuesday, Republican lawmakers said it wasn't enough. "I commend the Trump Administration for its sanctions last week against entities aiding Pyongyang, including a Chinese financial institution, but this should be only a first step," Sen. Cory Gardner said in a statement Tuesday. "If China fails to act, as it has to date, its relationship with the United States cannot remain the same.... We need to use every diplomatic and economic tool we have now to prevent nuclear war."

Experts in the region said the administration needs to look elsewhere for help, including South Korea, given China's intransigence to be an ally when it comes to the North.

"I'm not convinced Trump ever learned the value of an alliance," said Mount. "We're in a world where we have to deter and contain North Korea over the long run. If you're looking to tighten economic pressure on North Korea, you need a partner. Seoul should be the first stop, not Beijing."

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issuing threats, conducting military exercises, ratcheting up diplomatic sanctions, leaning on China, and most recently, it seems likely, committing cybersabotage.

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For his part, Trump has also tweeted that North Korea is "looking for trouble" and that he intends to "solve the problem." His administration has leaked plans for a "decapitation strike" that would target Kim, which seems like the very last thing a country ought to announce in advance.

None of which, we should all pray, will amount to much. Ignorant of the

long history of the problem, Trump at least brings fresh eyes to it. But he is going to collide with the same harsh truth that has stymied all his recent predecessors: There are no good options for dealing with North Korea. Meanwhile, he is enthusiastically if unwittingly playing the role assigned to him by the comic-book-style foundation myth of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

From Our July/August 2017 Issue

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How to Deal With North Korea

Mark Bowden

44-56 minutes

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Thirty minutes. That's about how long it would take a nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launched from North Korea to reach Los Angeles. With the powers in Pyongyang working doggedly toward making this possible—building an ICBM and shrinking a nuke to fit on it—analysts now predict that Kim Jong Un will have the capability before

Donald Trump completes one four-year term.

About which the president has tweeted, simply, "It won't happen!"

Though given to reckless oaths, Trump is not in this case saying anything that departs significantly from the past half century of futile American policy toward North Korea. Preventing the Kim dynasty from having a nuclear device was an American priority long before Pyongyang exploded its first nuke, in 2006, during the administration of George W. Bush. The Kim regime detonated four more while Barack Obama was in the White House. In the more than four decades since Richard Nixon held office, the U.S. has tried to control North Korea by

The myth holds that Korea and the Kim dynasty are one and the same. It is built almost entirely on the promise of standing up to a powerful and menacing foreign enemy. The more looming the threat—and Trump excels at looming—the better the narrative works for Kim Jong Un. Nukes are needed to repel this threat. They are the linchpin of North Korea's defensive strategy, the single weapon standing between barbarian hordes and the glorious destiny of the Korean people—all of them, North and South. Kim is the great leader, heir to divinely inspired ancestors who descended from Mount Paektu with mystical, magical powers of leadership, vision, diplomatic savvy, and military genius. Like his father, Kim Jong Il, and grandfather Kim Il Sung before him, Kim is the anointed defender of all Koreans, who are the purest of all races. Even South Korea, the Republic of Korea, should be thankful for Kim because, if not for him, the United States would have invaded long ago.

Even failed tests move North Korea closer to its goal—possessing nuclear weapons capable of hitting U.S. cities.

This racist mythology and belief in the supernatural status of the Mount Paektu bloodline defines North Korea, and illustrates how unlikely it is that diplomatic pressure will ever persuade the present Dear Leader to back down. Right now the best hope for keeping the country from becoming an operational nuclear power rests, as it long has, with China, which may or may not have enough economic leverage to influence Kim's policy making—and which also may not particularly want to do so, since having a friendly neighbor making trouble for Washington and Seoul serves Beijing's interests nicely at times.

American sabotage has likely played a role in Pyongyang's string of failed missile launches in recent years. According to David E. Sanger and William J. Broad of *The New York Times*, as the U.S. continued its covert cyberprogram last year, 88 percent of North Korea's flight tests of its intermediate-range Musudan missiles ended in failure. Given that these missiles typically exploded, sometimes scattering in pieces into the sea, determining the precise cause—particularly for experts outside North Korea—is impossible. Failure is a big part of missile development, and missiles can blow up on their own for plenty of reasons, but the percentage of failures certainly suggests sabotage. The normal failure rate for developmental missile tests, according to *The Times*, is about 5

to 10 percent. It's also possible that the sabotage program is not computer-related; it might, for instance, involve more old-fashioned techniques such as feeding faulty parts into the missiles' supply chain. If sabotage of any kind is behind the failures, however, no one expects it to do more than slow progress. Even failed tests move Pyongyang closer to its announced goal: possessing nuclear weapons capable of hitting U.S. cities.

Related Story

Mapping the Threat of North Korea

Kim's regime may be evil and deluded, but it's not stupid. It has made sure that the whole world knows its aims, and it has carried out public demonstrations of its progress, which double as a thumb in the eye of the U.S. and South Korea. The regime has also moved its medium-range No-dong and Scud missiles out of testing and into active service, putting on displays that show their reach—which now extends to South Korean port cities and military sites, as well as to the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station in Iwakuni, Japan. In mid-May, the regime successfully fired a missile that traveled, in a high arc, farther than one ever had before: 1,300 miles, into the Sea of Japan. Missile experts say it could have traveled 3,000 miles, well past American forces stationed in Guam, if the trajectory had been lower. Jeffrey Lewis, an arms-control expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, wrote in *Foreign Policy* in March:

North Korea's military exercises leave little doubt that Pyongyang plans to use large numbers of nuclear weapons against U.S. forces throughout Japan and South Korea to blunt an invasion. In fact, the word that official North Korean statements use is "repel." North Korean defectors have claimed that the country's leaders hope that by inflicting mass casualties and destruction in the early days of a conflict, they can force the United States and South Korea to recoil from their invasion.

This isn't new. This threat has been present for more than 20 years. "It is widely known inside North Korea that [the nation] has produced, deployed, and stockpiled two or three nuclear warheads and toxic material, such as over 5,000 tons of toxic gases," Choi Ju-hwal, a North Korean colonel who defected, told a U.S. Senate subcommittee in 1997. "By having these weapons, the North is able to prevent itself from

being slighted by such major powers as the United States, Russia, China, and Japan, and also they are able to gain the upper hand in political negotiations and talks with those superpowers."

For years North Korea has had extensive batteries of conventional artillery—an estimated 8,000 big guns—just north of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), which is less than 40 miles from Seoul, South Korea's capital, a metropolitan area of more than 25 million people. One high-ranking U.S. military officer who commanded forces in the Korean theater, now retired, told me he'd heard estimates that if a grid were laid across Seoul dividing it into three-square-foot blocks, these guns could, within hours, "pepper every single one." This ability to rain ruin on the city is a potent existential threat to South Korea's largest population center, its government, and its economic anchor. Shells could also deliver chemical and biological weapons. Adding nuclear ICBMs to this arsenal would put many more cities in the same position as Seoul. Nuclear-tipped ICBMs, according to Lewis, are the final piece of a defensive strategy "to keep Trump from doing anything regrettable after Kim Jong Un obliterates Seoul and Tokyo."

Video: The North Korea Crisis, Explained

To understand how the standoff between Pyongyang and the world became so dire, it helps to go back to the country's founding.

How should the United States proceed?

What to do about North Korea has been an intractable problem for decades. Although shooting stopped in 1953, Pyongyang insists that the Korean War never ended. It maintains as an official policy goal the reunification of the Korean peninsula under the Kim dynasty.

As tensions flared in recent months, fanned by bluster from both Washington and Pyongyang, I talked with a number of national-security experts and military officers who have wrestled with the problem for years, and who have held responsibility to plan and prepare for real conflict. Among those I spoke with were former officials from the White House, the National Security Council, and the Pentagon; military officers who have commanded forces in the region; and academic experts.

From these conversations, I learned that the U.S. has four broad strategic options for dealing with North Korea and its burgeoning nuclear program.

1. *Prevention*: A crushing U.S. military strike to eliminate Pyongyang's arsenals of mass destruction, take out its leadership, and destroy its military. It would end North Korea's standoff with the United States and South Korea, as well as the Kim dynasty, once and for all.

2. *Turning the screws*: A limited conventional military attack—or more likely a continuing series of such attacks—using aerial and naval assets, and possibly including narrowly targeted Special Forces operations. These would have to be punishing enough to significantly damage North Korea's capability—but small enough to avoid being perceived as the beginning of a preventive strike. The goal would be to leave Kim Jong Un in power, but force him to abandon his pursuit of nuclear ICBMs.

3. *Decapitation*: Removing Kim and his inner circle, most likely by assassination, and replacing the leadership with a more moderate regime willing to open North Korea to the rest of the world.

4. *Acceptance*: The hardest pill to swallow—acquiescing to Kim's developing the weapons he wants, while continuing efforts to contain his ambition.

Let's consider each option. All of them are bad.

1 | Prevention

An all-out attack on North Korea would succeed. The U.S. and South Korea are fully capable of defeating its military forces and toppling the Kim dynasty.

For sheer boldness and clarity, this is the option that would play best to President Trump's base. (Some campaign posters for Trump boasted, finally someone with balls.) But to work, a preventive strike would require the most massive U.S. military attack since the first Korean War—a commitment of troops and resources far greater than any seen by most Americans and Koreans alive today.

What makes a decisive first strike attractive is the fact that Kim's menace is growing. Whatever the ghastly toll in casualties a peninsular war would produce today, multiply it exponentially once Kim obtains nuclear ICBMs. Although North Korea already has a million-man army, chemical and biological weapons, and a number of nuclear bombs, its current striking range is strictly regional. A sudden hammer blow before Kim's capabilities go global is precisely the kind of solution that might tempt Trump.

Being able to reach U.S. territory with a nuclear weapon—right now the only adversarial powers with that ability are Russia and China—would make North Korea, because of its volatility, the biggest direct threat to American security in the world. Trump's assertion of "America First" would seem to provide a rationale for drastic action regardless of the consequences to South Koreans, Japanese, and other people in the area. By Trumpian logic, the cost of all-out war might be acceptable if the war remains on the other side of the world—a thought that ought to keep South Koreans and Japanese up at night. The definition of "acceptable losses" depends heavily on whose population is doing the dying.

The brightest hope of prevention is that it could be executed so swiftly and decisively that North Korea would not have time to respond. This is a fantasy.

An American first strike would likely trigger one of the worst mass killings in human history.

"When you're discussing nuclear issues and the potential of a nuclear attack, even a 1 percent chance of failure has potentially catastrophically high costs," Abe Denmark, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia under Barack Obama, told me in May. "You could get people who will give you General Buck Turgidson's line from *Dr. Strangelove*," he said, referring to the character played by George C. Scott in Stanley Kubrick's classic film, who glibly acknowledges the millions of lives likely to be lost in a nuclear exchange by telling the president, "I'm not saying we wouldn't get our hair mussed."

Kim's arsenal is a tough target. "It's not possible that you get 100 percent of it with high confidence, for a couple of reasons," Michèle Flournoy, a former undersecretary of defense in the Obama administration and currently the CEO of the Center for a New American Security, told me when we spoke this spring. "One reason is, I don't believe anybody has perfect intelligence about where all the nuclear weapons are. Two, I think there is an expectation that, when they do ultimately deploy nuclear weapons, they will likely put them on mobile systems, which are harder to find, track, and target. Some may also be in hardened shelters or deep underground. So it's a difficult target set—not something that could be destroyed in a single bolt-from-the-blue attack."

North Korea is a forbidding, mountainous place, its terrain perfect for hiding and securing

things. Ever since 1953, the country's security and the survival of the Kim dynasty have relied on military stalemate. Resisting the American threat—surviving a first strike with the ability to respond—has been a cornerstone of the country's military strategy for three generations.

And with only a few of its worst weapons, North Korea could, probably within hours, kill millions. This means an American first strike would likely trigger one of the worst mass killings in human history. In 2005, Sam Gardiner, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel who specialized in conducting war games at the National War College, estimated that the use of sarin gas alone would produce 1 million casualties. Gardiner now says, in light of what we have learned from gas attacks on civilians in Syria, that the number would likely be three to five times greater. And today North Korea has an even wider array of chemical and biological weapons than it did 12 years ago—the recent assassination of Kim's half brother, Kim Jong Nam, demonstrated the potency of at least one compound, the nerve agent VX. The Kim regime is believed to have biological weapons including anthrax, botulism, hemorrhagic fever, plague, smallpox, typhoid, and yellow fever. And it has missiles capable of reaching Tokyo, a metropolitan area of nearly 38 million. In other words, any effort to crush North Korea flirts not just with heavy losses, but with one of the greatest catastrophes in human history.

Pyongyang, April 15, 2017: North Korean ballistic missiles pass through Kim Il Sung Square during a military parade. In recent years, the rate at which the Kim regime has launched test missiles has increased. (STR / AFP / Getty)

Kim would bear the greatest share of responsibility for such a catastrophe, but for the U.S. to force his hand with a first strike, to do so without severe provocation or an immediate and dire threat, would be not only foolhardy but morally indefensible. That this decision now rests with Donald Trump, who has not shown abundant capacity for moral judgment, is not reassuring.

If mass civilian killings were not a factor—if the war were a military contest alone—South Korea by itself could defeat its northern cousin. It would be a lopsided fight. South Korea's economy is the world's 11th-largest, and in recent decades the country has competed with Saudi Arabia for the distinction of being the No. 1 arms buyer. And behind South Korea stands the

formidable might of the U.S. military.

But lopsided does not necessarily mean easy. The combined air power would rapidly defeat North Korea's air force, but would face ground-to-air missiles—a gantlet far more treacherous than anything American pilots have encountered since Vietnam. In the American method of modern war, which depends on control of the skies, a large number of aircraft are aloft over the battlefield at once—fighters, bombers, surveillance planes, drones, and flying command and control platforms. Maintaining this flying armada would require eliminating Pyongyang's defenses.

Locating and securing North Korea's nuclear stockpiles and heavy weapons would take longer. Some years ago, Thomas McNerney, a retired Air Force lieutenant general and a Fox News military analyst who has been an outspoken advocate of a preventive strike, estimated with remarkable optimism that eliminating North Korea's military threat would take 30 to 60 days.

But let's suppose (unrealistically) that a preventive strike did take out every single one of Kim's missiles and artillery batteries. That still leaves his huge, well-trained, and well-equipped army. A ground war against it would likely be more difficult than the first Korean War. In David Halberstam's book *The Coldest Winter*, he described the memories of Herbert "Pappy" Miller, a sergeant with the First Cavalry Division, after a battle with North Korean troops near the village of Taejon in 1950:

No matter how well you fought, there were always more. Always. They would slip behind you, cut off your avenue of retreat, and then they would hit you on the flanks. They were superb at that, Miller thought. The first wave or two would come at you with rifles, and right behind them were soldiers without rifles ready to pick up the weapons of those who had fallen and keep coming. Against an army with that many men, everyone, he thought, needed an automatic weapon.

Today, American soldiers would all have automatic weapons—but so would the enemy. The North Koreans would not just make a frontal assault, either, the way they did in 1950. They are believed to have tunnels stretching under the DMZ and into South Korea. Special forces could be inserted almost anywhere in South Korea by tunnel, aircraft, boat, or the North Korean navy's fleet of miniature submarines. They could wreak havoc on American and South Korean air operations and

defenses, and might be able to smuggle a nuclear device to detonate under Seoul itself. And for those America Firsters who might view Asian losses as acceptable, consider that there are also some 30,000 Americans on the firing lines—and that even if those lives are deemed expendable, another immediate casualty of all-out war in Korea would likely be South Korea's booming economy, whose collapse would be felt in markets all over the world.

So the cost of even a perfect first strike would be appalling. In 1969, long before Pyongyang had missiles or nukes, the risks were bad enough that Richard Nixon—hardly a man timid about using force—opted against retaliating after two North Korean aircraft shot down a U.S. spy plane, killing all 31 Americans on board.

Jim Walsh is a senior research associate at the MIT Security Studies Program and a board member of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. I talked with him this spring, as tensions between North Korea and the U.S. escalated. "I had a friend who just returned from Seoul, where he had a chance to talk with U.S. Forces Korea—uniformed military officers—and he asked them, 'Do you have a capability to remove North Korea's nuclear weapons?' And the response was 'Can we use nuclear weapons or not?'"

Putting aside the irony of using nuclear weapons to prevent the use of nuclear weapons, the answer Walsh got in that scenario was still: No guarantee.

"If we don't get everything, then we have a really pissed-off adversary who possesses nuclear weapons who has just been attacked," Walsh said. "It's not clear even with nukes that you could get all the artillery. And if you did use nukes, is that something South Korea is going to sign up for? There's three minutes' flight time from just north of the DMZ to Seoul. Do you really want to be dropping nuclear weapons that close to our ally's capital? Think of the radioactive fallout. If you don't take out all the batteries, then you have thousands of munitions raining down on Seoul. So I don't get how an all-out attack works." Even if a U.S. president could get Americans to support such an attack, Walsh added, the South Koreans would likely object. "All the fighting is going to happen on Korean soil. So it seems to me the South Koreans should certainly have a say in this. I don't see them signing off."

Especially not now, with the election in May of Moon Jae-in as president. Moon is a liberal who has said he might be willing to reopen talks with

Pyongyang and, far from endorsing aggressive action, has criticized the recent deployment around Seoul of America's thaad (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missiles, which are designed to intercept incoming missiles.

These aren't the only problems with a preventive strike. To be effective, it would depend on surprise, on delivering the maximum amount of force as quickly as possible—which would in turn require a significant buildup of U.S. forces in the region. At the start of the Iraq War, American warplanes flew about 800 sorties a day. An all-out attack on North Korea, a far more formidable military power than Saddam Hussein's Iraq, would almost certainly require more. In order to resist a ground invasion of South Korea, the U.S. would need to bolster the assets currently in place. U.S. Special Forces would need to be positioned to go after crucial nuclear sites and missile platforms; ships would have to be stationed in the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea. It's highly improbable that all of this could happen without attracting Pyongyang's notice. One of the things North Korea is better at than its southern neighbor is spying; recruiting and running spies is much easier in a free society than in a totalitarian one.

But suppose, just for argument's sake, that a preventive strike could work without any of the collateral damage I've been describing. Suppose that U.S. forces could be positioned secretly, and that President Moon were on board. Suppose, further, that Pyongyang's nukes could be disabled swiftly, its artillery batteries completely silenced, its missile platforms flattened, its leadership taken out—all before a counterstrike of any consequence could be made. And suppose still further that North Korea's enormous army could be rapidly defeated, and that friendly casualties would remain surprisingly low, and that South Korea's economy would not be significantly hurt. And suppose yet further that China and Russia agreed to sit on the sidelines and watch their longtime ally fall. Then Kim Jong Un, with his bad haircut and his legion of note-taking, big-hat-wearing, kowtowing generals, would be gone. South Korea's fear of invasion from the North, gone. The menace of the state's using chemical and biological weapons, gone. The nuclear threat, gone.

Such a stunning outcome would be a mighty triumph indeed! It would be a truly awesome display of American power and know-how.

What would be left? North Korea, a country of more than 25 million

people, would be adrift. Immediate humanitarian relief would be necessary to prevent starvation and disease. An interim government would have to be put in place. If Iraq was a hard country to occupy and rebuild, imagine a suddenly stateless North Korea, possibly irradiated and toxic, its economy and infrastructure in ruins. There could still be hidden stockpiles of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons scattered around the country, which would have to be found and secured before terrorists got to them. "Success," in other words, would create the largest humanitarian crisis of modern times—Syria's miseries would be a playground scuffle by comparison. Contemplating such a collapse in *The Atlantic* back in 2006, Robert D. Kaplan wrote that dealing with it "could present the world—meaning, really, the American military—with the greatest stabilization operation since the end of World War II."

How long would it be before bands of armed fighters from Kim's shattered army began taking charge, like Afghan warlords, in remote regions of the country? How long before they began targeting American occupation forces? Imagine China and South Korea beset by millions of desperate refugees. Would China sit still for a unified, American-allied Korea on its border? Having broken North Korea, the U.S. would own it for many, many years to come. Which would not be easy, or pretty.

The ensuing chaos and carnage and ongoing cost might just make America miss Kim Jong Un's big-bellied strut.

Which brings us to the second option.

2 | Turning the Screws

What if the United States aimed to punish Pyongyang without provoking a full-on war—to leave Kim Jong Un in power and the North Korean state intact, but without a nuclear arsenal?

Given all the saber-rattling in Washington, but also the enormous downsides to a preventive strike, this middle route seems to be the most likely option that involves using force. The strategy would be to respond to the next North Korean affront—a nuclear test or missile launch or military attack—sharply enough to get Pyongyang's full attention. The strike would have to set back the regime's efforts significantly without looking like the start of an all-out, preventive war. If Kim responded with a counterattack, another, perhaps more devastating, American blow would follow. The hope is that this process might convince him that the

U.S., as Trump has promised, will not allow him to succeed in developing a weapons program capable of threatening the American mainland.

This pattern of dealing with North Korea is an amped-up version of what Sydney A. Seiler, a North Korea expert who spent decades at the CIA, the National Security Council, and elsewhere, has called the "provocation cycle": Pyongyang does something outrageous—such as its first successful nuclear test, in 2006—and then, having inflamed fears of war, offers to return to disarmament negotiations. When Pyongyang returned to talks in 2007, the Bush administration agreed to release illicit North Korean funds that had been frozen in Macau's Banco Delta Asia bank—effectively rewarding Kim for his nuclear defiance.

Baengnyeong Island, South Korea, April 24, 2010: A crane salvages the South Korean warship Cheonan, which sank following a mysterious explosion near the disputed sea border with North Korea, leaving 46 crew members dead. (Jin Sung-chul / AP)

The Obama administration attempted to break this cycle. When North Korea sank the South Korean warship *Cheonan* with a torpedo in 2010, killing 46 of the vessel's 104 crew members, South Korea imposed a near-total trade embargo on the North—the most serious response short of a military strike—and refused to reenter disarmament talks without a formal apology. Obama pursued a policy of "strategic patience," using no force but also offering no concessions to restore good feelings and in fact working through regional allies to further isolate and punish Pyongyang. By stepping out of the provocation/charm cycle, the hope was that North Korea would behave like a more responsible nation. It didn't work, or hasn't worked—some feel that the effects of economic sanctions have yet to fully play out. Conservatives, and Donald Trump, tend to regard "strategic patience" as a failure. So why not radically turn the screws? The way to stop someone from calling your bluff is to stop bluffing.

An opening salvo would likely hit important nuclear sites or missile launchers. Perhaps the most tempting and obvious target is the nuclear test site at Punggye-ri, which made news in April when satellite images looking for signs of an expected underground detonation instead found North Korean soldiers playing volleyball. Another major piece of the nuclear program is the reactor at Yongbyon, which produces plutonium. Hitting

either site would do more than send a message; it would impede Kim's bomb program (although North Korea already has stockpiles of plutonium). The strikes themselves would be risky—radioactive material might be released, which would certainly draw widespread (and justified) international condemnation. Targeting missile launchers would entail less risk, but would require a larger and more complex mission, given the number of launchers that would need to be destroyed and the defenses around them.

Choosing how and where to strike would be a delicate thing. If the U.S. went after all or most of North Korea's launchers at once, it might look to Pyongyang like an all-out attack, and trigger an all-out response. Targeting too few would advertise a reluctance to fully engage, which would just invite further provocation.

Key to the limited strike is the pause that comes after. Kim and his generals would have time to think. Some analysts feel that, in this scenario, he would be unlikely to unleash a devastating attack on Seoul.

But the threat of Seoul's destruction by North Korean artillery "really constrains people, and it's really hard to combat," says John Plumb, a Navy submarine officer who served as a director of defense policy and strategy for the National Security Council during the Obama administration. "If I were the Trump administration, I would be looking at the threat to incinerate Seoul and trying to figure out how real it is. Because to me, it's become such a catchphrase, and it almost—it starts to lose credibility. Attacking Seoul, a civilian population center, is different from attacking a remote military outpost. It's dicey, there's no doubt about it."

The problem with trying to turn the screws on Pyongyang is that once the shooting starts, containing it may be extremely difficult. Any limited strike would almost certainly start an escalating cycle of attack/counterattack. Owing to miscalculation or misunderstanding, it could readily devolve into the full-scale peninsular war described earlier. For the strategy to work, Pyongyang would have to recognize America's intent from the outset—and that is not a given. The country has a hair-trigger sensitivity to threat, and has been anticipating a big American invasion for more than half a century. As Jim Walsh of MIT's Security Studies Program points out, just because America might consider an action limited doesn't guarantee North Korea will see it that way.

And once the violence begins, North Korea would have an advantage, in that its people have no say in the matter. The death and misery of North Koreans would just be one more chapter in decades of misrule. The effects of North Korean strikes in the free society to the south would be a far different thing. The introduction of thead missiles earlier this year brought thousands of protesters into the streets, where they clashed with police. It would be much harder for Moon and Trump to stoically absorb punishment in any protracted test of wills. And North Korea would have more to lose by folding first. For Kim and his generals, the endgame would require abandoning the linchpin of their national-defense strategy.

Pyongyang is, if anything, inclined to exaggerate threat. According to a 2013 analysis by Scott A. Snyder, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, the regime “thrives on crisis and gains internal support from crisis situations.” Trump may believe it serves his purposes to be seen as dangerously erratic, but he is surrounded by relatively responsible military and congressional leaders and is presumably bound to act in concert with South Korea, which would be loath to act rashly. The American president can fulminate all he likes on Twitter, but he has constraints. Kim does not. His inner circle is regularly thinned by one-way trips to the firing range; lord help anyone who—forget about voicing an objection—fails to clap and cheer his pronouncements with enough enthusiasm. His power is absolute, and pugnacity is central to it. He may be one of the few people on Earth capable of out-blustering Trump. And he has repeatedly backed up his words with force, from the sinking of the *Cheonan* in 2010 to the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island that same year, in response to South Korean military exercises there. It takes far less than an actual military strike to set him off. Kim recently threatened to sink the U.S.S. *Carl Vinson*, which arrived in the region in April.

Sinking an aircraft carrier is hard. Kim’s forces would first have to find it, which, despite satellite technology, is not easy. Neither is hitting it, even for a very sophisticated military. But suppose North Korea did manage to find and attack an aircraft carrier. If tensions can be cranked this high just by sailing a carrier into Korean waters, imagine how fast things might escalate when actual shooting starts.

“If I am sitting in Pyongyang, and I think you are coming after me, I’ve got minutes to decide if this is an all-out attack, and if I wait, I lose,”

Jim Walsh told me. “So it’s use nuclear weapons or lose them—which makes for an itchy trigger finger. The idea that the U.S. and South Korea are going to have a limited strike that the North Koreans are going to *perceive* as limited, and that they are willing to stand by and let happen, especially given the rhetorical context in which this has been playing out, complete with repeated, stupid statements about ‘decapitation’—I can’t see it happening.”

Even if Kim did perceive limited intent in a first strike, he would readily and correctly interpret the effort as an assault on his nuclear arsenal, and perhaps the initial steps on a road to regime change. Under those circumstances, with the fate of Seoul in the balance, which side would likely blink first?

Maybe Kim would. It’s possible. But given the nature of his regime and his own short history as Dear Leader, it would have to be considered a small chance. More likely is that a limited-intent first strike would slide quickly into exactly what it was designed to prevent.

3 | Decapitation

The third option has Hollywood appeal: Target Kim Jong Un himself and overthrow the dynasty.

South Korean Defense Minister Han Min-koo said earlier this year that his country was preparing a “special brigade” to remove the North’s wartime command structure. During military exercises in March, U.S. and South Korean troops took part in a rehearsal for a strike like this. That same month, the South Korean newspaper *Korea JoongAng Daily* reported that a U.S. Navy seal team had been deployed to train for just such a mission. In May, the North Korean government announced that it had foiled an assassination plot hatched by the CIA and South Korea’s National Intelligence Service.

The latter two claims have been officially denied, but decapitation is almost certainly being considered. The U.S.—South Korea war strategy, OPLAN 5015, portions of which have leaked to the South Korean press, calls for strikes targeting the country’s leaders. Any U.S. plot would be a breach of long-standing American policy—an executive order bans the assassination of foreign leaders. But such an order can be rewritten by whoever presides in the White House.

A former senior adviser to the White House on national security, who asked not to be named, told me recently: “Decapitation does seem to be a way to get out of this

problem. If a new North Korean leader could arise who is willing to denuclearize and be somewhat of a normal actor, it might lead us out. But there are so many wild cards involved that I’ve been reluctant to endorse that approach so far.”

For a plot against Kim to succeed, it would most likely have to be initiated from inside Kim’s circle. It would be exceedingly difficult, even for a suicidal team of special operators, to get close enough to Kim to kill him, given the closed nature of the North Korean state and the security that surrounds him. Unless it came during a scheduled public appearance (when defenses would be on high alert), an aerial attack by cruise missile or drone would depend on accurate and timely intelligence regarding his whereabouts, something that only an insider could provide. Americans have successfully hunted down and killed al-Qaeda and Islamic State leaders with the aid of drones, which can conduct long-term, detailed surveillance and provide timely precision strikes. But the use of drones for these purposes depends on complete control of airspace. They are slow-moving and electronically noisy, so they are relatively easy to shoot down—and North Korea’s air defenses are robust.

Pyongyang, April 15, 2017: Kim Jong Un arrives for a military parade marking the 105th anniversary of the birth of his grandfather Kim Il Sung. The Kim regime displayed a panoply of new missiles for the occasion—but the test-firing of a missile the next day failed, perhaps as a result of American sabotage. (STR / AFP / Getty)

If China were sufficiently fed up with its belligerent neighbor, however, it might be capable of recruiting conspirators in Pyongyang. Money or the promise of power might be enough to turn someone in Kim’s inner circle, where his practice of having people executed is bound to have sown ill will and a desire for revenge. But the tyrant’s menace cuts both ways. It would be a terribly risky undertaking for anyone involved.

The consequences could also be disastrous: Given the reverence accorded Kim, his sudden death might trigger an automatic military response. And what guarantees are there that his replacement wouldn’t be worse?

Without some sense of what would follow, in both the short and long term, decapitation would be a huge gamble. You don’t play dice with nukes.

4 | Acceptance

Unless Kim Jong Un is killed and replaced by someone better, or some miracle of diplomacy occurs, or some shattering peninsular conflict intervenes, North Korea will eventually build ICBMs armed with nuclear warheads. In the words of one retired senior U.S. military commander: “It’s a done deal.”

Acceptance is likely because there are no good military options where North Korea is concerned. As frightening as it is to contemplate a Kim regime that can successfully strike the United States, accepting such a scenario means living with things only slightly worse than they are right now.

Pyongyang has long had the means to all but level Seoul, and weapons capable of killing tens of thousands of Americans stationed in South Korea—far more than those killed by al-Qaeda on September 11, 2001, an atrocity that spurred the U.S. to invade two countries and led to 16 years of war. Right now North Korea has missiles that could reach Japan (and possibly Guam) with weapons of mass destruction. The world is already accustomed to dealing with a North Korea capable of sowing unthinkable mayhem.

Every option the United States has for dealing with North Korea is bad. But accepting it as a nuclear power may be the least bad.

Pyongyang has been constrained by the same logic that has stayed the use of nuclear arms for some 70 years. Their use would invite swift annihilation. In the Cold War this brake was called mad (mutual assured destruction). In this case the brake on North Korea would be simply ad: assured destruction, since any launch of a nuclear weapon would invite an annihilating response; even though its missiles might hit North America, it cannot destroy the United States.

There is already a close-to-even chance that, in the 30 minutes it would take a North Korean ICBM to reach the West Coast of the United States, the missile would be intercepted and destroyed. But the other way of looking at those odds is that such a missile would have a close-to-even chance of hitting an American city.

This is terrible to ponder, but Americans lived with a far, far greater threat for almost half a century. Throughout the Cold War, the U.S. faced the potential for complete destruction. I was one of the kids who performed civil-defense drills in the 1950s, ducking under my school desk while sirens wailed. During the Cuban missile

crisis, the possibility seemed imminent enough that I plotted the fastest route from school to home. The threat of nuclear attack is a feature of the modern world, and one that has grown far less existential to Americans over time.

It is expensive to build an atom bomb, and very hard to build one small enough to ride in a missile. It is also hard to build an ICBM. But these are all old technologies. The know-how exists and is widespread. Preventing a terrorist group from acquiring such a weapon may be possible, but when a nation—whether North Korea or Iran or any other—commits itself to the goal, stopping it is virtually impossible. A deal to halt Iran's nuclear program was doable only because that country has extensive trading and banking ties with other nations. The Kim regime's isolation means that no country besides China can really apply meaningful economic pressure. Persuading a nation to abandon nuclear arms depends less on military strength than on the collective determination of the world, and a decision made by the nation in question. What's needed is the proper framework for disarmament—the right collection of incentives and disincentives to render the building of such a weapon a detriment and a waste—so the country decides that abandoning its pursuit of nukes is in its best interest.

It is hard to imagine Pyongyang making such a decision anytime soon, but creating a framework that renders that decision at least conceivable is the only sensible way forward. This is not a hopeless strategy. Over the years Pyongyang, in between its threats and provocations, has more than once dangled offers to freeze its nuclear progress. With the right inducements, Kim very well might decide to change direction. Or he might die. He's an obese young man with bad habits, a family history of heart trouble, and a personal record of poor health. In such a system, things might

change—for better or worse—overnight.

Moon Jae-in, South Korea's new president, wants to steer his country away from confrontation with Pyongyang, and possibly open talks with Kim. This is likely to put him at odds with Donald Trump, but reduces the chances of the U.S. president doing something rash. China has also expressed more willingness to put pressure on Kim, although it has yet to act emphatically on this. And time might allow the working-out of a peaceful path to disarmament. Better to buy time than to risk mass death by provoking a military confrontation.

"I don't think now is the time we should be substituting a policy of strategic haste for one of strategic patience—and I was a critic of strategic patience," Jim Walsh said.

For all these reasons, acceptance is how the current crisis should and will most likely play out. No one is going to announce this policy. No president is going to openly acquiesce to Kim's ownership of a nuclear-tipped ICBM, but just as George W. Bush quietly swallowed Pyongyang's successful explosion of an atom bomb, and just as Barack Obama met North Korea's subsequent nuclear tests and missile launches with strategic patience, Trump may well find himself living with something similar. If there were a tolerable alternative, it would long ago have been tried. Sabotage may continue to stall progress, but cannot stop it altogether. Draconian economic pressure, even with China's help, is also unlikely to curb Pyongyang's quest.

"The North Koreans have demonstrated a strong willingness to continue this program, regardless of the price, regardless of the isolation," says Abe Denmark, the former deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia under Obama. "To be frank, my sense is that their leadership really could not care less about the country's economic situation or the living

standards of their people. As long as they are making progress toward nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and they can stay in power, then they seem to be willing to pay that price."

In short, North Korea is a problem with no solution ... except time.

True, time works in favor of Kim getting what he wants. Every test, successful or not, brings him closer to building his prized weapons. When he has nuclear ICBMs, North Korea will have a more potent and lethal strike capability against the United States and its allies, but no chance of destroying America, or winning a war, and therefore no better chance of avoiding the inevitable consequence of launching a nuke: national suicide. Kim may end up trapped in the circular logic of his strategy. He seeks to avoid destruction by building a weapon that, if used, assures his destruction.

His regime thrives on crisis. Perhaps when he feels safe enough with his arsenal, he might turn to more-sensible goals, like building the North Korean economy, opening trade, and ending its decades of extreme isolation. All of these are the very things that create the framework needed for disarmament.

But acceptance, while the right choice, is yet another bad one. With such missiles, Kim might feel emboldened to move on South Korea. Would the U.S. sacrifice Los Angeles to save Seoul? The same calculation drove the U.K. and France to develop their own nuclear weapons during the Cold War. Trump has already suggested that South Korea and Japan might want to consider building nuclear programs. In this way, acceptance could lead to more nuclear-armed states and ever greater chances that one will use the weapons.

With his arsenal, Kim may well become an even more destabilizing force in the region. There is a good chance that he would try to negotiate from strength with Seoul

and Washington, forging some kind of confederation with the South that leads to the removal of U.S. forces from the peninsula. If talks were to resume, Trump had better enter them with his eyes open, because Kim, who sees himself as the divinely inspired heir to leadership of *all* the Korean people, is not likely to be satisfied with only his half of the peninsula.

There is no sign of panic in Seoul. Writing for *The New York Times* from the city in April, Motoko Rich found residents busy with their normal lives, eating at restaurants, crowding in bars, and clogging some of the most congested highways in the world. In a poll taken before the May election, fewer than 10 percent of South Koreans rated the North Korean nuclear threat as their top concern.

"Since I have been living here for so long, I am not scared anymore," said Gwon Hyuck-chaee, an elderly barber in Munsan, about five miles from the DMZ. "Even if there was a war now, it would not give us enough time to flee. We would all just die in an instant."

Although in late April Trump called Kim "a madman with nuclear weapons," perhaps the most reassuring thing about pursuing the acceptance option is that Kim appears to be neither suicidal nor crazy. In the five and a half years since assuming power at age 27, he has acted with brutal efficiency to consolidate that power; the assassination of his half brother is only the most recent example. As tyrants go, he's shown appalling natural ability. For a man who occupies a position both powerful and perilous, his moves have been nothing if not deliberate and even cruelly rational.

And as the latest head of a family that has ruled for three generations, one whose primary purpose has been to survive, as a young man with a lifetime of wealth and power before him, how likely is he to wake up one morning and set fire to his world?

the Atlantic North Korea Crisis: U.S. and South Korea Respond

Krishnadev Calamur
5-6 minutes

The U.S. and South Korea conducted a ballistic-missile drill Wednesday, a day after North Korea tested a missile that experts say could reach Alaska.

"Self restraint, which is a choice, is all that separates armistice and war," General Vincent Brooks,

commander of U.S. forces Korea, said in a joint statement with General Lee Sun Jin, the chairman of South Korea's joint chiefs. "As this Alliance missile live fire shows, we are able to change our choice when so ordered by our Alliance national leaders. It would be a grave mistake for anyone to believe anything to the contrary."

Related Story

How to Deal With North Korea

As we reported Tuesday, North Korea said it tested an intercontinental ballistic missile, making it, in the words of its state-run television, "a full-fledged nuclear power ... capable of hitting any part of the world." The announcement said the Hwasong-14 missile reached an altitude of 2,802 kilometers (1,731 miles) and traveled 933 kilometers (580 miles)

for 39 minutes before hitting a target in the Sea of Japan. South Korean and Japanese officials said the missile traveled 578 miles (930 kilometers), "greatly exceeded" an altitude of 2,500 kilometers (1,500 miles), and flew for around 40 minutes.

ICBMs, which are fitted with nuclear warheads, have a minimum range of 5,500 kilometers (3,400 miles), and many experts said Tuesday that while North Korea's test was its best ever, the missile may not have

technically been an ICBM—though the U.S. State Department in its statement condemning the test referred to it as an ICBM. Still, David Wright, co-director and senior scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said in a blog post that the missile could “reach all of Alaska.” Unnamed intelligence officials later told U.S. media that the rocket launched Tuesday was likely to have been a two-stage ICBM, a dramatic increase in North Korea’s military capabilities.

There are a number of reasons the U.S. and its allies in the region are worried by North Korea’s actions: North and South Korea are technically still at war because the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armistice not a peace treaty; in the decades since, North Korea has increased its military capabilities with a particular emphasis on its

missile and nuclear-weapons programs; attempts to negotiate with Pyongyang over the years have failed, with the North Korean leadership repeatedly shown to cheat on its international obligations; and Pyongyang’s ultimate goal, an ICBM that would firmly place the continental United States in its crosshairs, has over the years resulted in missile and nuclear tests that have worried South Korea and Japan, not to mention the U.S. military, which has a large presence in both those countries.

The joint U.S.-South Korean ballistic-missile fire exercise in the Sea of Japan was intended to demonstrate the alliance’s commitment against North Korea’s military ambitions. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in a statement Tuesday that the U.S. “will never accept a nuclear-armed

North Korea” and he said “any country that hosts North Korean guest workers, provides any economic or military benefits, or fails to fully implement UN Security Council resolutions is aiding and abetting a dangerous regime.” Although he didn’t specifically name them, thousands of North Koreans work in China, Russia, and other countries, and are a valuable source of foreign exchange for the leadership in Pyongyang, which is the target of myriad international sanctions. On Wednesday, the UN Security Council will meet to discuss Pyongyang’s latest action.

China and Russia are seen as pivotal to any diplomatic solution to the North Korean crisis. Both are veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council; they are both close to the North Korean leadership; and while both want to see a de-escalation of tensions on

the Korean Peninsula, they are wary of both chaos in North Korea and an ascendant U.S.-South Korea-Japanese alliance in the region. President Trump, who has gone from saying China, North Korea’s main diplomatic and financial backer, wasn’t doing enough to resolve the crisis to saying China’s leadership was helping, on Wednesday said:

Trump has previously said that North Korea’s plans to develop a nuclear weapon that can reach the U.S. “will not happen”—though its not exactly clear what steps the U.S. will take to prevent what many security experts say is all but inevitable.

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : The Way Forward on North Korea

Board

5-6 minutes

President Trump is learning the complexity of contending with North Korea’s commitment to becoming a nuclear power. Al Drago for The New York Times

President Trump seems to have absorbed at least one piece of advice from Barack Obama: North Korea’s nuclear program is a problem in urgent need of a solution. That was driven home on Tuesday when the North tested a missile that appeared to be capable of striking Alaska.

Mr. Trump may also be learning another lesson, that he can’t rely on China alone to force North Korea to rein in its nuclear program. What he hasn’t grasped is that a solution will eventually require direct dialogue with the North.

Mr. Trump has long insisted it is up to China, the North’s main food and fuel provider, to force North Korea to abandon its nuclear program, with its dozen or more nuclear weapons. And after a meeting with President Xi Jinping at Mar-a-Lago in April, Mr. Trump seemed confident that

The Editorial

China would do so. But the intervening weeks have proved that China remains reluctant to exert the kind of pressure that could force the North to denuclearize. Beijing fears tough sanctions could destabilize North Korea, leading to the collapse of its government, chaos, a surge of refugees across the border and absorption of the country by South Korea, an American ally.

After Mr. Trump acknowledged in a recent tweet that depending on China “has not worked out,” his administration took steps that reflected his annoyance. It approved a \$1.4 billion arms sale to Taiwan, which China considers a renegade province; it imposed sanctions on a Chinese bank accused of acting as a conduit of illegal North Korean financial activity; and an American naval destroyer passed near disputed territory claimed by China in the South China Sea. There is now talk of Washington moving on steel tariffs, which would be aimed partly at China.

Nudging China to ratchet up the pressure on North Korea is not a bad thing. But an outright break between the United States and China would very likely embolden North Korea. In a sign that neither leader wants to escalate tensions, Mr. Trump called Mr. Xi on Sunday

to discuss North Korea, and Mr. Xi accepted the call. Mr. Trump warned Mr. Xi that America was prepared to act on its own in pressuring Pyongyang.

After the North’s missile test, the United States and South Korea held their own missile launch exercises. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson also announced plans to use traditional diplomatic tactics, including asking the United Nations Security Council to enact stronger sanctions and urging countries where North Korean workers are employed to stop “abetting a dangerous regime.” Mr. Trump spoke Monday about North Korea with the Japanese prime minister, held talks last week with the South Korean president and plans a dinner with both men in Germany on Thursday.

One hopeful sign has been an unofficial meeting between North Koreans and Americans in Oslo in May that included Joseph Yun, a senior United States diplomat, which led North Korea to release Otto Warmbier, an American student it had detained unjustly and treated outrageously. Mr. Warmbier died June 19 after being returned home in a coma. North Korea needs to give a full account of what happened. But contacts between officials of both countries should

continue, both to seek the release of three other Americans and to build a foundation for future negotiations over the North’s nuclear and missile programs.

For Mr. Trump and other political leaders, negotiating with North Korea is anathema. It has one of the world’s worst human rights records. But sanctions have not ended the nuclear threat, and military action against the North would put millions of South Koreans, and 38,000 American troops, at risk. Negotiations, however, did lead to a deal in 1994 that froze the North’s program for nearly a decade.

Some of America’s most experienced nuclear experts, like George Shultz, former secretary of state; William Perry, former defense secretary; and Siegfried Hecker, former director of Los Alamos National Laboratory, recently wrote to Mr. Trump urging him to begin talks as the “only realistic option” to prevent North Korea’s potential use of nuclear weapons. And 60 percent of Americans, regardless of political affiliation, agree with them. There is no indication that Mr. Trump has a better strategy.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Editorial : The North Korean Missile Crisis

July 4, 2017 1:09 p.m. ET 256 COMMENTS

4-5 minutes

Tuesday by launching what looks to be its first intercontinental ballistic missile. The symbolism of launching on America’s Independence Day was surely no accident, but the technical feat is more consequential. The speed of North Korea’s progress toward

threatening the U.S. with a fleet of nuclear-tipped ICBMs requires an urgent response.

Tuesday’s missile, dubbed the Hwasong-14, has an estimated range of 6,700 kilometers, which puts Alaska within range. America’s

lower 48 states may still be out of reach, but the test shows the North has overcome most of the obstacles to a long-range missile. The apparent success will provide more data on the remaining problems, such as a warhead capable of

North Korea continued to defy the protests of world leaders on

withstanding extremes of temperature and vibration.

One crucial question is whether the new missile is based on the Hwasong-12, an intermediate-range missile successfully tested on May 14. As we wrote at the time, that rocket was apparently a single-stage design and thus a good candidate to become the first stage of an ICBM. The regime has heretofore used engines cobbled together from Russian and Chinese missiles for its ICBM program.

The Hwasong-12 was designed from scratch, and its new engine is more sophisticated than anything the regime had produced. If the North has now attached a second stage, the U.S. will have to advance the estimates of when Los Angeles and Chicago could come under direct threat.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Habib

5-6 minutes

Updated July 4, 2017 12:49 p.m. ET

U.S.-backed Syrian forces have breached the wall surrounding Raqqa's heavily fortified Old City, marking a significant advance in the battle to drive Islamic State out of a city it used to run its empire and plan attacks abroad, the American military said Tuesday.

The Syrian Democratic Forces made the breakthrough on Monday after the U.S.-led coalition battling Islamic State conducted airstrikes on the wall, according to the U.S. Central Command. The Kurdish-led SDF fighters came under heavy fire as they entered, Central Command said.

The advance is the SDF's deepest yet into Raqqa. If the city falls, it would be one of the biggest achievements in about four years of war against Islamic State led by the Pentagon and its coalition of Western and Arab allies.

Although coalition forces have now entered Raqqa's Old City, Islamic State is still putting up very tough resistance, a coalition spokesman said, portending a drawn-out battle for the city.

The Washington Post

By Louisa Loveluck and Aaseen Shwan

The Trump Administration now has some hard decisions to make as it contemplates its Korea options. More sanctions put the Kim regime under pressure and thus are worth doing, but they can't be relied on to disarm the North in time. Like its allies South Korea and Japan, the U.S. will soon be vulnerable to attack by a regime that has an estimated 20 nuclear warheads as well as chemical and biological weapons. A pre-emptive U.S. military attack can't be ruled out but risks a nuclear counterstrike on South Korea if even one North Korean missile survives.

China, the dovish new South Korean government and the U.S. left are pressing for more disarmament talks in return for a "freeze" on Pyongyang's nuclear programs. But three U.S. administrations have tried

diplomacy and failed. The freeze would be phony and the North would break out again when it feels its demands for more money and recognition aren't being met.

The best option is a comprehensive strategy to change the Kim regime, as former Undersecretary of State Robert Joseph has argued. Washington must strengthen deterrence and build out missile defenses, revive the Bush Administration's antiproliferation dragnet, convince countries in the region to cut their ties with North Korea, consider shooting down future Korean test missiles, and spread news about the regime's crimes to people in the North.

The U.S. will also have to recognize that Beijing is part of the problem. North Korea's trade with China grew by 37.4% in the first quarter, contributing to an economic

miniboom. Chinese companies are cashing in on the North's mineral resources and cheap labor while supplying the dual-use materials and technology for its nuclear and missile programs.

The U.S. has held out hope that China's leaders would see that a nuclear-armed North Korea isn't in its interests. But Beijing's behavior suggests that it hopes the North Korean threat will drive the U.S. out of Northeast Asia. Only a much tougher strategy aimed at toppling the Kim regime, with or without China's help, has a chance of eliminating a threat that puts millions of American lives at risk.

U.S.-Backed Forces Squeeze Islamic State by Breaching Raqqa Wall

Noam Raydan and Maria Abi-Habib

The spokesman declined to say when Raqqa city might be completely recaptured.

But as coalition forces advance toward the city's more urbanized core, the fighting will likely become more protracted as it has when Islamic State has been uprooted in U.S.-backed military campaigns from Libya to Iraq.

"There is still tough fighting to be done," the coalition spokesman said. "ISIS fighters are putting up stiff resistance," he added, saying the militants have booby trapped the city and surrounding areas with explosives, making it slow going.

Islamic State has suffered a series of defeats in both Syria and Iraq that have eaten away at its territorial foothold in its core caliphate, or religious empire. The group is all but banished from Mosul, Iraq—the largest city it had captured in the Middle East—after more than eight months of battles.

Some of the last remaining residents streamed out of Mosul's old city on Tuesday as Iraqi troops, backed by U.S. Special Forces, continued to inch forward.

The SDF, a mixed Kurdish and Arab force, launched the long-awaited offensive to retake Raqqa in early June, more than three years after Islamic State took the city that became known as its de facto capital of its self-declared caliphate

in Syria. The U.S. has said the militants used the area as a staging ground for terrorist attacks on Europe and that the loss of it would be a major blow to Islamic State.

Across Syria and Iraq, hundreds of U.S. Special Forces are supporting local partners, advising them in battle and calling in airstrikes.

Islamic State's key leadership has already moved on further east to Deir Ezzour province, specifically to Mayadeen, a small city there. Oil-rich Deir Ezzour is still mostly in Islamic State hands and the group is expected to put up a tough fight there after the Raqqa and Mosul offensives are over.

Damascus and its allies, namely Iran, Russia and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, are likely to take Islamic State's holdouts in Deir Ezzour, making the battle for Raqqa likely to be the last significant urban territory U.S.-allied forces will wrest away from Islamic State.

The extremist militants also still hold several strategically important towns in Iraq and a stretch of the Iraq-Syria border.

In Raqqa, Islamic State has used the Old City wall as a fighting position and planted mines and other explosives at several breaks in it, the U.S. military said. The military added that it was gauging airstrikes to try to preserve as much

as possible of the historic 2,500-yard wall.

The spokesman of the Manbij Military Council, which is fighting under the umbrella of the SDF in southern Raqqa, said this advance was "huge and a victory." He said the forces that entered the Old City seized a strategic outpost from Islamic State, an ancient, fortified palace known as Qasr al-Banat.

"We are certain of victory. It is inevitable, but we cannot give a specific time," Sharfan Darwish said. "ISIS is completely besieged."

The spokesman also claimed that some ISIS fighters have handed themselves over to the SDF.

"Their morale is collapsing," he said.

An estimated 200,000 people are trapped in Raqqa amid heavy bombardment, and civilian casualties will likely rise as street-to-street urban warfare intensifies.

Residents interviewed last month said that many civilians have found it difficult to escape the city given incessant coalition airstrikes and the dangerous minefields Islamic State has planted. The militants have banned civilians from leaving.

Write to Maria Abi-Habib at maria.habib@wsj.com

Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as 'Islamic State's 'Capital' Is Breached.'

Islamic State mounts final stand for Mosul as bloodied and dazed civilians flee

5-7 minutes

MOSUL, Iraq — Iraqi forces edged through the final roads and

alleyways of Islamic State territory in the city of Mosul on Tuesday as

dazed and malnourished civilians were evacuated to safety.

The militants are cornered in a sliver of land in the western Old City, and commanders say they expect to declare victory against the Islamic State here by the end of the week.

Gen. Sami Al-Aridhi, a commander with the Counter Terrorism Service, said his troops were advancing on foot through the Old City's winding maze of streets.

"It's a battle inside alleyways against an enemy that commits to no ethics," he said.

Elite Iraqi rapid-response units were calling in U.S.-led coalition airstrikes at close quarters Tuesday as Iraqi special forces moved door to door, evacuating civilians who had cowered in their homes through the final, terrifying assault.

Dozens of those families crossed the Tigris River in the beds of pickup trucks as the temperature soared to 122 degrees Fahrenheit.

Disembarking to meet aid workers at an abandoned fairground, the families looked exhausted. Some were holding back tears. Others crouched over their bags and cried.

"There was no food, no water; we had nothing. We were so scared," said Hana'a

Ashifa, a mother of four evacuated from the Old City early Monday. "When we finally heard the security forces, my mother looked at me, picked up our white flag and said, 'It's time to go.'"

More than 400,000 people have fled Mosul's western districts since May 10, according to the United Nations. Tens of thousands more are still thought to be trapped.

Mosul was the largest city in the Islamic State's shrinking caliphate, and its recapture by Iraqi forces has been supported by a prolonged campaign of coalition airstrikes.

[U.S.-backed forces breach the wall of Raqqa's Old City in the heart of the ISIS capital]

Commanders said Tuesday that fighting in the Old City is now taking place at such close quarters that Iraqi special forces have been able to lob grenades at the militants.

In July 2014, the Islamic State leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, stood in the pulpit of Mosul's medieval Great Mosque of al-Nuri, declaring a "caliphate" spanning parts of Syria and Iraq and calling sympathizers to join it.

On Thursday, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared an end to the group's "state of falsehood" after militants destroyed the mosque as Iraqi forces closed in.

Bustle has returned to much of the city's east, with shops reopened across the relatively undamaged eastern quarters. Hardware and sweets shops ran a steady trade Tuesday as the sound of U.S.-led coalition airstrikes echoed in the distance.

That sense of security remains fragile. Local police said this week that while they had foiled several attacks by Islamic State sleeper cells in Mosul's eastern quarters, the militants have also launched counterattacks in the more recently recaptured west.

"With the fighting intensifying, we know they will send more," said Lt. Col. Mazin Abdullah, a spokesman.

Aid groups said this week that hundreds of civilians had been killed or wounded in the fight for the Old City.

"They have been caught between aerial bombardment, artillery, snipers and car bombs. They live in fear; they hide in their homes without food or water," said Iolanda Jaquemet, a spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

That fight was visible on the bodies of women and children freed Tuesday. Shrapnel had laced the faces of several young girls. Parents described shelling that had hit their homes directly, wounding

those inside without options for treatment.

"Our medical teams have been treating 50 to 60 casualties per day. The hospitals are overwhelmed," Jaquemet said.

The United Nations warned last month that Islamic State fighters are using the last civilians under their control as human shields. Residents say the militants have shot families as they tried to flee, leaving bodies to rot in the baking heat.

Dwindling food and water supplies have weakened those still trapped in homes and basements. Many of the babies evacuated to east Mosul this week appeared malnourished.

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Some were unresponsive to their mother's affections, seemingly too weak to move.

"I saw so many bodies. I lost children. I lost my husband," cried one woman, clutching her child tight as she shepherded older boys and girls to a patch of shade.

"We have walked out of hell."

Mustafa Salim in Baghdad contributed to this report.



U.S. Commandos Running Out of ISIS Targets

Kimberly Dozier
07.05.17
1:00 AM ET

9-11 minutes

U.S. special operations forces have removed roughly 50 top ISIS leaders off the battlefield since President Donald Trump took office, down from 80 killed in the last six months of the Obama administration, according to figures obtained by The Daily Beast.

"The pace and the way they have gone about going after these HVT's [High-value targets] hasn't changed," said coalition spokesman Col. Ryan Dillon of the U.S. special operations' campaign to take ISIS commanders off the Iraqi and Syrian battlefields.

Those closest to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi have been hit hardest. "Most of them were killed in the last year of the Obama administration," he said. "If there was a block chart of Baghdadi and all of his bubbas, we are hitting the fifth- and sixth-string leaders of the organization."

Coalition air strikes have increased under Trump, rising from an average of roughly 440 a month in the last six months of 2016 to just under 800 a month now, as coalition forces have liberated most of Mosul in Iraq, and breached ISIS' Syrian capital of Raqqa. But the lower numbers of high-value targets killed points to the deadly success of the strategy built by the Obama White House.

Trump's changes to the campaign so far have been tactical—namely, giving the military more autonomy to strike, including special operators. But the effectiveness of the current Obama-era strategy of attacking ISIS via local forces together with allies calls into question whether there's a need for more dramatic revision.

That's presented a dilemma for those working on the Trump anti-ISIS strategy and slowed its public unveiling, U.S. officials tell The Daily Beast. The White House has asked defense officials to come up with new ideas to help brand the Trump campaign as different from its predecessor, according to two U.S. officials and one senior administration official. They spoke

on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive debates.

The senior administration official described Trump's plan as "relying even more" on special operations working together with local partner forces. "But that's nuanced, like most of the suggested changes" and doesn't easily translate to a talking point, he said. That could help explain why Trump has twice missed his own deadline for unveiling the new anti-ISIS strategy.

The White House and the Pentagon declined to comment.

The Obama administration's anti-ISIS plan included nine lines of effort, including using diplomatic and economic pressure to reduce ISIS' ability to sustain its rule and spread its ideology. The Obama White House had already stepped up the number of advisers on the ground in Iraq and Syria, and established a special operations task force in Iraq with major outposts in Syria to help guide local forces, as part of the larger coalition effort. Small teams of U.S. forces have embedded with local units and Turkish troops inside Syria, and with

Iraqi and Kurdish troops in Iraq to help make them more effective.

Special operators have also launched multiple solo raids that have decimated ISIS' leadership ranks.

"These figures underscore the fact that the Obama administration waged an aggressive war against ISIL [another name for ISIS], guided by a comprehensive strategy that put the group on the path to lasting defeat," said former Obama official Ned Price in an email. "It is no surprise that the Trump administration has largely adopted our strategy despite hallmark bluster from President Trump about a purportedly more aggressive strategy we have yet to see."

The main gripe from military and intelligence professionals about the last White House was that President Barack Obama delayed or deferred making tough decisions on Syria that meant territory was lost—or that forces friendly to the U.S. made other alliances when they couldn't get weapons or other supplies rapidly enough from the Americans.

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The other complaint was that the White House itself was involved in individual tactical decisions like whether to put U.S. special operations forces in harm's way to strike a target, though Obama veterans have consistently pushed back against that complaint, saying some raids and other types of strikes can have strategic blowback.

Trump's changes thus far have also been tactical rather than adjusting the overall campaign strategy. He's dropped the alleged micromanagement of the Obama administration in favor of granting more authority to Pentagon chief Jim Mattis, who in turn gave it to his commanders in the field.

Trump "delegated authority to the right level to aggressively and in a timely manner move against enemy vulnerabilities," Mattis told reporters in May, adding that Trump also "directed a tactical shift from shoving ISIS out of safe locations in an attrition fight to surrounding the

enemy in their strongholds so we can annihilate ISIS," and prevent foreign fighters from escaping.

Coalition spokesman Dillon said that's meant U.S. advisers have had been able to react more autonomously on the battlefield, moving where their partner forces need them rather than calling to higher headquarters for permission.

"Previous authorities had placed some limits on the placement of U.S. advisors, as well as the availability of some of our fire support assets to provide sustained fires in our operations to defeat ISIS, particularly in Syria," Dillon added, referring to the addition of Apache attack helicopters to pound ISIS defenses.

In other areas where ISIS and other militants hold sway, that expanded authority has meant more operations against al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen, including the one wherein Navy SEAL Senior Chief Ryan Owens was lost to enemy gunfire.

Bombing against enemy targets in Afghanistan has increased, with more strikes in the first six months of the Trump administration than in all of 2016, including the "Mother of all bombs," dropped on ISIS caves there. But U.S. military spokesman Capt. Bill Salvin in Kabul said that's related to the "expanded authorities granted to General Nicholson by President Obama in June of last year," to support the Afghan National Army.

"From Jan. – Jun. 2016 we conducted just over 200 kinetic strikes total," he emailed from Kabul. "From June 17 - Dec 31, we conducted more than 800 strikes."

Trump has approved widening the war against al-Shabab in Somalia, declaring parts of the country an area of active hostility. But there's only been one acknowledged strike in Somalia since then, which cost the life of Navy SEAL Senior Chief Kyle Milliken.

And while there's a higher pace of strikes in Iraq and Syria, there are simply fewer ISIS fighters to hit, coalition spokesman Dillon said. He estimated there are about 5,000 ISIS fighters remaining in pockets throughout Iraq and up to 10,000 still in Syria. That's down from a high of between 20,000 to 30,000 foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria at the start of the crisis, many of whom joined the fight after ISIS captured large parts of both countries in 2014.

"At the high water mark in early 2015, there was an estimated 1,500 into Iraq and Syria a month," Dillon said. "Now less than a 100 foreign fighters entering a month." So as U.S. forces and their allies take enemies off the battlefield, there's a limited pool to replace them.

Recent announced kills include a May 11 strike that killed ISIS' external operations planner Abu Asim al-Jazaeri and a May 31 strike that killed chief ISIS cleric Turki al-Binali, a confidante to ISIS leader al-Baghdadi. Both were killed in

Mayadin, a town where many ISIS senior leaders escaped prior to U.S. allies encircling ISIS' once-de facto capital of Raqqa. A June 16 strike took aim at ISIS' attempts to manage its network elsewhere, killing Fawaz al-Rawi, a financier with networks through North Africa and the Mideast.

Many senior leaders have tried to flee to other countries, to start ISIS operations anew, or they've tried to melt back into the local populations for a long-term guerilla-style fight. That harder-to-win, less tangible fight, spanning multiple countries and continents, will be the real test for whatever Trump's team eventually unveils.

For those in the trenches, the most refreshing change is that many no longer feel constrained when asking for more troops or resources if they feel they are necessary. Troop numbers were a constant source of conflict between the Pentagon and the Obama White House, which wanted to draw troops down to force Afghan forces to take the brunt of the fight, while U.S. commanders feared the local force wasn't ready. So commanders worked around the Obama-ordered threshold of just under 8,500 troops by sending a brigade's combat troops but leaving behind their supporting mechanics and hiring contractors at greater cost to do the same jobs.

"It's more intellectually honest now," one senior defense official said.



Ex-Judge Chosen by U.N. to Gather Evidence of Syria War Crimes

Nick Cumming-Bruce

5-6 minutes

Victims of a suspected chemical weapons attack in Syria in April. A legal team created by the United Nations will begin gathering evidence that could lead to trials for war crimes. Ammar Abdullah/Reuters

GENEVA — After more than six years of atrocities in Syria that have been exhaustively documented by human rights investigators, a former French judge will take on the task of preparing evidence that may eventually lead to war crimes trials.

The judge, Catherine Marchi-Uhel, was appointed late Monday by the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, to lead the legal team, being established in Geneva, that will collect and preserve evidence of crimes for use by courts or an international tribunal.

The legal team, the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism, was created by a General Assembly resolution in December despite fierce resistance from Russia, which had repeatedly used its veto as a permanent member of the Security Council to block criminal investigations of the conflict.

The selection of Ms. Marchi-Uhel surprised some human rights experts, who had thought citizens of Security Council permanent members and countries that are part of the international coalition fighting the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq would be excluded. They said that Russia, or other critics of Syrian war crimes inquiries, could question the impartiality of someone from a country, like France, that is both a member of the Council and involved in the conflict.

Still, diplomats and others praised the appointment of a lawyer with Ms. Marchi-Uhel's broad international experience. She was

the principal legal adviser for the international tribunal in the former Yugoslavia, and was a judge on a United Nations-Cambodian tribunal charged with prosecuting crimes committed during the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. In France, she served on a court trying the most serious crimes and was a legal adviser to the Foreign Ministry.

Catherine Marchi-Uhel, a former judge in France, has been chosen to lead the team preparing evidence. Tang Chhin Sothy/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The legal team is expected eventually to have about 50 staff members, but so far has received only about half the \$13 million its work was expected to cost in its first year, with contributions from 29 European countries, led by the Netherlands and Germany. Most of the nations are European, and only two Arab countries, Qatar and Kuwait, are on the list of donors.

Still, investigations of war crimes are slowly gathering momentum. Sweden has prosecuted a member of an armed Syrian opposition group, and Germany, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland have opened Syrian war crimes investigations. Spain's national court is also considering hearing a case filed against high-ranking members of President Bashar al-Assad's security services.

The legal team in Geneva will make the task of national prosecutors significantly easier, and possibly cheaper, by analyzing and prepackaging the huge volume of raw evidence of atrocities accumulated by the United Nations and other investigations.

Data at their disposal is expected to include a list, drawn up by the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria, of individuals implicated in possible war crimes and crimes against humanity. That list is believed to include Mr. Assad and key figures in his government.

Lawyers say the results of the team's work will not come fast or be particularly visible, but its creation is a significant milestone in efforts to break the impunity that has kept

Syria's war criminals free.

"It builds the momentum for prosecutions at the national level which otherwise would be less feasible, if not impossible," said Andrew Clapham, an international

law professor at Geneva's Graduate Institute.

"It also sends a message to those who are continuing to commit atrocities on the ground that the world is watching, and they may not

be able to live out their lives casually or in comfort," he added.



Tillerson Ready to Let Russia Decide Assad's Fate

David Francis | 2 hours ago

7-8 minutes

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told the U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres during a private State Department meeting last week that the fate of Syrian leader Bashar Al-Assad now lies in the hands of Russia, and that the Trump administration's priority is limited to defeating the Islamic State, according to three diplomatic sources familiar with the exchange.

The remarks offer the latest stop on a bumpy U.S. policy ride that has left international observers with a case of diplomatic whiplash as they try to figure out whether the Trump administration will insist that Assad step down from power. Nearly three months ago, Tillerson had insisted that Assad would have to leave office because of his alleged use of chemical weapons.

Tillerson's assurances to Guterres signaled the Trump administration's increasing willingness to let Russia take the driver's seat in Syria, throwing geopolitics to the wayside to focus on defeating ISIS.

He also signaled that U.S. military action against Assad's forces in recent months is intended to achieve only limited tactical goals—detering future chemical weapons attacks and protecting U.S. backed-forces fighting the Islamic State in Syria—not weakening the Assad government or strengthening the opposition's negotiating leverage.

Tillerson's position reflects a recognition that Syria's government, backed by Russia and Iran, is emerging as the likely political victor in the country's six year long civil war. It also marks a further retreat from the 2012 U.N.-brokered Geneva Communiqué — signed by Russia, the United States, and other key powers — which called for the establishment of a transitional government with members of the

regime and the opposition. The Geneva pact, according to the Obama administration and other Western allies, was to result in Assad's departure from power. (Though the Obama administration softened its own demand that Assad step down during its final year in power).

A State Department official declined to comment on Tillerson's private discussion with Guterres, but insisted that the U.S. remains "committed to the Geneva process" and supports a "credible political process that can resolve the question of Syria's future. Ultimately, this process, in our view, will lead to a resolution of Assad's status."

"The Syrian people should determine their country's political future through a political process," the official added.

The decision to cede ground to Russia on the question of Assad's future comes on the eve of President Donald Trump's first face-to-face meeting next week with President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Hamburg, Germany. It also comes at a time when the Trump administration is seeking to repair relations with the Kremlin despite a series of scandals that have plagued the White House since Trump's election.

Tillerson said earlier this month that Trump tasked him with repairing the broken U.S.-Russia relationship. The secretary of state has also cautioned Congress that new sanctions against Russia for its alleged role in interfering in the U.S. election could undercut efforts to cooperate with Moscow on Syria.

"The President asked me to begin a re-engagement process with Russia to see if we can first stabilize that relationship so it does not deteriorate further," Tillerson said during a visit to New Zealand in early June. From there, he said, he would "begin to rebuild some level of trust" with Moscow.

Less than two months after he was sworn in, Tillerson made clear that he had little interest in using American muscle to force the Syrian leader from office. Assad's future, he said in late March, "will be decided by the Syrian people." His remarks were reinforced by Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, who told a group of wire service reporters "our priority is no longer to sit there and focus on getting Assad out."

But then Tillerson reversed course in April, saying that "steps are underway" for an international effort to oust Assad after his regime carried out chemical weapons attack against civilians, killing dozens. Days later, at a G7 summit in Italy, Tillerson repeated the warning that Assad's reign was "coming to an end."

"The process by which Assad would leave is something that requires an international community effort both to first defeat ISIS within Syria, to stabilize the Syrian country to avoid further civil war and then to work collectively with our partners around the world through a political process that would lead to Assad leaving," he said.

But Tillerson made clear to Guterres that the U.S. was once again shifting gears. "What happens to Assad is Russia's issue, not the U.S. government's," one source said Tillerson told the U.N. chief in last week's meeting. Tillerson's message, the official added, was that "the U.S. government will respond to the terrorist threat," but that it is largely agnostic about "whether Assad goes or stays."

Tillerson's retreat suggests the State Department is willing to skirt the ethical morass of what to do about the Assad regime as it navigates the dense thicket of conflicting alliances fighting in Syria.

"The reason the United States is involved in Syria is to take out ISIS," State Department Spokeswoman Heather Nauert told reporters

Wednesday. "That's why we care and that's why we are there."

Fred Hof, former State Department special advisor for transition in Syria, called the Trump administration's stance on Russia in Syria "confusing."

He pinned the blame on Trump's lack of a coherent, overarching national security strategy. "There's no hymnal that's supposed to guide how everybody sings," he said. "The fact that there are multiple voices and stances coming out on this doesn't surprise me."

On ceding Assad's fate to Russia: "It is one thing to walk away from the problem and say let the Russians take care of it," he said. "It's another thing to assume you can actually get somewhere policy-wise by relying on the Russians to deliver good results."

Former senior U.S. officials are vexed by how the Trump administration is ceding political ground on Syria to the Kremlin for almost nothing in return. "The things we're hearing coming out of the administration have mainly to do with what the U.S. might offer Russia, and not the other way around," said Evelyn Farkas, former deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia.

Moscow stands to benefit the most from a slew of contradictory Syria messages coming out of Washington, according to Farkas. Without a clear agenda going into the meeting next week with Putin at the G20, she said, "there's a danger the president will get outfoxed."

Correction, July 3, 2017: Fred Hof is former State Department special advisor for transition in Syria with the rank of ambassador. A previous version of this article incorrectly stated he was former U.S. ambassador to Syria.

Photo credit: ALEXANDER NEMENOV/AFP/Getty Images



Ignatius : Working with Russia might be the best path to peace in Syria

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

5-7 minutes

TABQA, Syria

When Donald Trump meets Vladimir Putin this Friday in

Hamburg, the two presidents should have in the back of their minds the insignia worn by the Syrian Democratic Forces militia, which is the United States' main ally here.

The patch shows a map of Syria bisected by the sharp blue line of the Euphrates River.

The Euphrates marks the informal "deconfliction" line between the

Russian-backed Syrian regime west of the river, and the U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led SDF to the east. In the past several weeks, the two powers negotiated a useful adjustment of the line — creating a roughly 80-mile arc that stretches south, from near this battlefield city on Lake Assad, to a town called Karama on the Euphrates.

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U.S.-Russian agreement on this buffer zone is a promising sign. It allows, in effect, for the United States and its allies to clear the Islamic State's capital, Raqqa, while Russia and the Syrian regime take the city of Deir al-Zour, to the southeast. The line keeps the combatants focused on the Islamic State, rather than sparring with each other.

What Trump and Putin should discuss at the Group of 20 summit is whether this recent agreement on the separation line is a model for wider U.S.-Russian cooperation in Syria. This broader effort would seek to defeat the Islamic State; stabilize a battered, fragmented Syria; and, eventually, discuss a political future. But is it practical?

Russian-American cooperation on Syria faces a

huge obstacle right now. It would legitimize a Russian regime that invaded Ukraine and meddled in U.S. and European elections, in addition to its intervention in Syria. Putin's very name is toxic in Congress and the U.S. media these days, and Trump is blasted for even considering compromise.

Against these negatives, there's only one positive argument: Working with Russia may be the only way to reduce the level of violence in Syria and to create a foundation for a calmer, more decentralized nation that can eventually recover from its tragic war.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis are said to favor exploring options with Russia. "We see the potential for it," a senior State Department official said Tuesday. "So far Russia is working in earnest with us on the effort."

But there's a contrary view among some hawkish National Security Council staffers and members of Congress. They argue that working with Russia would empower its allies, Iran and the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad, and give a green light for their future role in Syria.

An extreme version of this view argues that the United States

should mount a military campaign to block Iran and its Shiite militia allies in Iraq and Syria from obtaining a corridor across southeast Syria that would link Iran to Lebanon. This militant stance ignores two practical points: Iran already has such a corridor, but it doesn't stop the United States or Israel from attacking dangerous arms shipments; and an assault on Shiite militias might draw the United States into a long, costly war that could spread across the Middle East.

It's worth examining the process that established the Euphrates arc of deconfliction, because it shows how different Russia's public and private actions have been. A Russian official initially suggested the Euphrates boundary about 18 months ago, according to a U.S. official. But it wasn't formalized, so the two countries had been operating on an ad hoc basis.

This rough deconfliction system worked at three levels. There was daily phone consultation between colonels, supplemented by occasional contacts at the one-star level between the U.S. headquarters in Baghdad and Russian headquarters near Tartus, Syria. Big issues went to the U.S. commander, Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, and his Russian

counterpart, Col. Gen. Sergei Surovikin.

A crisis arose last month when several Syrian tanks pushed north of what U.S. commanders believed was the informal line of separation. When this small Syrian force was backed by a Syrian Su-22 fighter jet, the United States shot down the plane. The Russians announced that they were suspending contacts, and "for a few hours, it looked pretty hairy," recalls one U.S. official. But the Russians quietly resumed talking, and by late June, the two sides had agreed on the formal arc, with precisely delineated coordinates.

Similar U.S.-Russian cooperation has been calming tensions the past few weeks in southwest Syria. Those talks have been backed by Israel and Jordan, which border the zone. That, too, is a potential model for how de-escalation can work.

Cooperating with the Russians in Syria would be distasteful, given their past actions. But spurning them would keep this volatile country at the flash point and almost certainly make things worse rather than better for all sides.

POLITICO What Trump Gets Right About the Middle East

By Steven A.

Cook

10-13 minutes

When President Donald Trump wanted to jump-start Middle East peace talks, he did something utterly unconventional: He sent his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, to bang Israeli and Palestinian heads together. Kushner—predictably, given that he has no relevant experience—quickly failed, setting off a round of snickering among longtime Mideast hands.

It was embarrassing for the White House. But in a larger sense, Trump's decision to dive into the peace process was reassuring: The man who ran the most unconventional presidential campaign, promising to disrupt the establishment and speak truth to power, had sent his most trusted representative halfway around the world on the most conventional of foreign policy missions—a mission impossible that all American presidents undertake at one point or another.

Story Continued Below

There are plenty of reasons to be concerned about this administration's unorthodox approach to foreign policy. Trump's record of unforced errors so far is pretty grim, ranging from his campaign's alleged ties to the Kremlin, to the White House's invitation to Philippine strongman and proud murderer Rodrigo Duterte, to the president's surly approach to Washington's NATO allies. And Trump's tweets in early June all but taking credit for several Arab countries' decision to cut ties with Qatar threatened to undermine his own efforts to build an anti-extremism and anti-Iran coalition of Muslim and Arab countries.

But setting aside the Qatar fiasco, the truth is that Trump's Middle East policy is not universally bad. In fact, in many ways, it reflects a sound understanding of what the United States can achieve in the region and, importantly, what it cannot. The administration's recent effort to pressure Iran and Russia on Syria, for instance, seems to reflect the return of a more traditional American approach to the Middle East—and one we could be better off with.

In a much-hyped speech delivered to officials from over 50 Arab and Muslim countries in Saudi Arabia in May, Trump said, "We are not here to lecture—we are not here to tell other people how to live, what to do, who to be, or how to worship." To many forms and varieties of commentator, this was a cynical abdication of American values and another Trumpian assault on human decency and good taste, made worse by the fact that people like Egypt's strongman, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, gleefully welcomed the president's words. It was everything Trump's outraged critics said it was—but in this case the president happened to be right. It would be wonderful for the peoples of the Middle Eastern if democracy broke out across the region, but the record of the past 16 years indicates that U.S. efforts to promote more open and just societies has not worked. The Trump administration seems to understand this and has pragmatically shifted American policy to achievable goals like rolling back the Islamic State and challenging Iran's efforts to extend its influence around the region.

Attempts at social engineering in the Middle East have a long history

of failure. In July 1798, a French military contingent landed in the Egyptian port of Alexandria. Its mission was to protect French trade, expand France's influence in the Mediterranean and weaken British access to the Indian subcontinent. Western colonizing missions in the region also were often "civilizing" missions. More than half a century later, Egypt's leader, Ismail Pasha, employed decommissioned officers from the Union and Confederate armies to train the Egyptian military. In almost a decade of service, they did much more than instruct Egypt's officer class. They also worked on education reform and taught Egyptians technical skills.

The French and American expeditions in the late 18th and mid-19th centuries were the forerunners of sorts of the economic and military assistance the United States has poured into Egypt since the late 1970s. The logic behind this aid—aside from buying peace between Egypt and Israel—was straightforward: Economic assistance would help generate economic growth, which would give the Egyptian regime and its leader legitimacy, making it less likely that

there would be a revolution or instability in a country that was critically important to American goals in the Middle East. The military aid was meant to ensure that the Egyptian officer corps could both defend the country without threatening Israel and support the prevailing political system.

It was not until President George W. Bush's "Freedom Agenda" that the United States used its assistance to promote democratic change in Egypt and the rest of the region. By the time Bush announced the strategy in 2003, the September 11 attacks had already created a near bipartisan consensus on the importance of encouraging democratic change in the Middle East. The effort met with resistance from Saudi and Egyptian leaders especially, who characterized American efforts as a neocolonial project that violated the sovereignty of their countries. By 2006—with Iraq burning, Hamas' victory in the Palestinian elections, and leaders like Egypt's Hosni Mubarak continuing to jail opponents, intimidate the news media and rig elections—it seemed clear that Bush had over-estimated American leverage and moral suasion. A 2009 internal audit by the U.S. Agency for International Development found that from 2004 to 2008, the "impact of USAID/Egypt's democracy and governance programs was unnoticeable." This was, however, less of a problem with assistance programs than the Egyptian government, which was determined to undermine American efforts to promote reform.

That is why the uprisings and protests in 14 Arab countries that began in

December 2010 seemed to many within the policy community to be a golden opportunity for the United States to help Middle Easterners' own efforts to build new societies. But the policy prescriptions and recommendations that emerged from the so-called Blob of experts and former government officials—calling for the United States to persuade a host of countries across the world to invest politically and financially in democratic transitions, for instance—were overly ambitious and largely hollow.

Yet lack of imagination was not the main problem. Any American effort to forge more democratic and open political systems in the region was bound to fail because the sense of purpose and joy on display in the famous squares of the Middle East masked deeply divided societies. The uprisings did not produce any leader or group of leaders who provided satisfactory answers to questions about identity, the proper form of government, the relationship between the individual and the state, and the role of religion in society. In the debates over these big ideas, the national unity that seemed to hold during the protests quickly gave way to existential struggles over the heart and soul of Arab countries. Under these circumstances, it did not matter whether U.S. government officials or policy intellectuals were uniquely insightful or singularly creative. They never really had a chance.

It mattered little to those on the ground whether President Barack Obama co-authored an op-ed in the *Washington Post* with Tunisia's president and offered that country the status of "major non-NATO ally," or that Secretary of State John

Kerry demanded that Syria's Bashar Assad must go, or that Obama withheld military equipment from Egypt. Sisi repressed people anyway, and Assad and his allies continued spilling blood at a shocking rate. Tunisia was more receptive to the United States, but its limited success has had less to do with U.S. policy than the wisdom of some Tunisian leaders and a good deal of luck. The uprisings and their subsequent failure, or lack of success, were an Arab story. For all its power, the United States was relegated to surfing the news cycles as it tried to manage competing demands from Middle Eastern capitals, European allies and the peanut gallery in Washington.

Whether by insight or accident, Trump has signaled that he and his administration understand the limits of American power in the Middle East and will thus pursue a policy that goes back to basics—ensuring the free flow of energy, helping to secure Israel, preventing any single country (except the United States) from dominating the Persian Gulf, fighting terrorism and countering proliferation. Admittedly most of what the administration has done so far, besides firing cruise missiles at Syria for Assad's use of chemical weapons, has been rhetorical. But at least the president's words demonstrate some insight into the nature of domestic struggles in the Middle East and how irrelevant the tools of American diplomacy are to resolving them.

Focusing on Washington's core interests is the wisest path—if only because there is no other. The social engineering projects of the past have done little to change the direction of politics in the region,

where authoritarianism remains the norm. The effort to promote democracy also diverted funds away from areas like health, education and infrastructure, where the United States through USAID could actually make a difference in the lives of people in theregion. There is no sign that Trump wants to invest more in these areas, which is a mistake, but at least he seems to understand intuitively that there is little he can do to alter the behavior of the region's strongmen. It is hard to come to grips with this given the terrible nature of Middle Eastern governments, and, of course, the president did not need to embrace their leaders as he did on his recent visit to Riyadh. Still, confronted with the choice of continuing to push democracy among resistant allies or working with them to confront mutual threats like the Islamic State and Iran, Trump appears to have taken the correct course.

Napoleon Bonaparte's three-year occupation of Egypt was a failure. The American soldiers left in the late 1870s, disheartened and distrusted. As for their missions to alter the social, political and cultural practices of their Egyptian subjects, the French and Americans can claim little in the way of a legacy. The same can be said for the invasion of Iraq and the Freedom Agenda, Washington's more recent "civilizing" mission.

While Trump gets a lot wrong about the world, he is right that promoting democratic change in the Middle East is likely to fail. The world is rarely, if ever, the way idealists want it to be.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Senators Criticize Tillerson Over Afghanistan Policy

Jessica Donati
4-5 minutes

July 4, 2017 3:09 p.m. ET

KABUL—U.S. senators visiting Kabul on Tuesday including Republican John McCain criticized Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's handling of policy in the country, saying his lack of a strategy could undermine an anticipated U.S. troop surge and that the foreign service there was woefully understaffed.

Last month, President Donald Trump gave the Pentagon unilateral authority to send thousands more American troops to Afghanistan at its discretion, clearing the way for the U.S. military to intensify its fight against the Taliban and Islamic State extremists in the country.

A State Department spokeswoman had no immediate comment.

Sen. McCain said the U.S. public wouldn't tolerate continued American casualties in the country without a clear direction for policy in the region.

"When they're dying and wounded, that's when the American people want to know what the strategy is and when they're coming home," he said.

Three U.S. soldiers were killed in Afghanistan last month. Some 2,400 U.S. troops have been killed in Afghanistan since a U.S.-led coalition ousted the Taliban from power in 2001. There now are fewer than 9,000 U.S. troops in the country, mentoring local forces and conducting counterterrorism missions.

The Pentagon is weighing plans to send between 3,000 and 5,000 troops to bolster Afghanistan's more than 16-year war, as government control continues to slip in areas including the capital. A decision on the total number of soldiers who will deploy is expected later this month.

The U.S. government says the surge in troops would help break a stalemate with the Taliban and induce them to engage in a dialogue for peace.

But the Trump administration has yet to outline its political goals for the country, where the Taliban insurgency has made rapid gains since most foreign forces were withdrawn in 2014, creating instability that has led groups including Islamic State to flourish.

"You're not going to win this war just through more bombing. You're

going to win the war through a whole government approach," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, part of the bipartisan delegation that has been visiting the region. "On the State Department side, on our side, we are woefully understaffed... I see a lack of focus that is very unnerving."

Before leaving office earlier this year, former President Barack Obama declared an end to major military operations in Afghanistan and dramatically scaled back the U.S. military presence in the country.

Last month, a massive truck bomb near central Kabul's heavily-fortified diplomatic enclave killed some 150 people and wounded hundreds more. It was followed by smaller suicide bombings and violent protests by Afghans who said President Ashraf Ghani wasn't doing enough to protect them.

June was also among the deadliest months in years for U.S. troops in the country.

Two separate insider attacks saw Afghan forces turn on their U.S.

**The
New York
Times**

For Iran, Qatar Crisis Is a Welcome Distraction

Thomas Erdbrink
7-8 minutes

Doha, the capital of Qatar, on Sunday. The diplomatic fallout between Qatar and several other Persian Gulf nations has eased the buildup of pressure against Iran. Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

TEHRAN — Iran's leaders have been noticeably restrained in their response to the Qatar crisis, and for good reason, analysts say. Not only have they welcomed it, they would be happy to see it quietly drag on.

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates cut diplomatic and commercial ties with Qatar last month for what they said was its financing of terrorism and working too closely with Iran.

They then delivered a list of 13 demands that Qatar has dismissed as a grave infringement on its sovereignty and threatened further sanctions if those were not met. On Sunday, they extended the deadline to meet the demands by 48 hours to late Tuesday.

For Tehran's clerical leaders, the confrontation between putative Persian Gulf allies came at a particularly auspicious time — when the entire Sunni Arab world seemed lined up against them after President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia in May.

"They wanted to weaken us," Mashallah Shamsolvaezin, an Iranian journalist, said with a chuckle, "but now they are losing themselves."

While Iran and Qatar share one of the largest gas fields in the world and have diplomatic relations, Qatar is of little or no strategic value to Iran.

About the most that Tehran has had to say about the situation was a

mentors, killing a total of three U.S. soldiers and wounding another seven during both a training exercise in northern Balkh province and an operation in eastern

mild remark from President Hassan Rouhani, who told the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, that "Iran's airspace, sea and ground transport links will always be open to Qatar, our brotherly and neighbor country."

President Trump arriving in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May. After the visit, Iran was preparing to face off against a united bloc of wealthy gulf nations. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

After Mr. Trump's visit, however, Tehran was preparing to face a united bloc of wealthy, militarily well-equipped Persian Gulf nations ready to isolate Iran with the enthusiastic backing of the United States. Saudi Arabia had bought \$100 billion worth of American weapons and had formed a close partnership against Tehran with Mr. Trump.

The United States, Saudi Arabia and Israel were painting Iran as the primary source of instability in the region, a nation supporting terrorist groups in Yemen, Lebanon and Gaza and fighting on behalf of the government of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria. The road to ratcheting up the pressure on Iran — a sectarian rival hated by the Saudi kingdom for its version of political Islam — seemed open.

Then they started fighting among themselves.

A Qatari news report, subsequently dismissed by the Qatari government as fake, was said to have quoted the emir as saying he wanted to ease tensions with Iran. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates reacted furiously, starting a diplomatic and trade blockade against the gas-rich nation, handing over the list of 13 demands — "demand 13: agree to all our demands"— and even forbidding their citizens to wear Barcelona soccer jerseys because they bear

Nangarhar province, where Islamic State's Afghan affiliate is based.

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

the name of their sponsor, Qatar Airways.

One of those demands is that Qatar close a Turkish military base, which would alienate Turkey, a NATO member and an ally of Saudi Arabia in Syria. "Instead of making an Arab NATO, they are only making more enemies," said Hamidreza Taraghi, a hard-line analyst in Iran. "In the end, only America is benefiting, selling all those weapons to those countries."

But even there, the Persian Gulf confrontation is creating some nervous moments for the Pentagon, which is running the Syria air campaign out of a major base in Qatar.

It was a familiar turn of events for the clerics in Tehran, whose regional competition with Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries sometimes means just waiting for the Saudis to shoot themselves in the foot, analysts here say.

That strategy seems even more appropriate with the rise of Mohammed bin Salman, 31, the recently named Saudi crown prince, who is developing a reputation for impulsive foreign policy moves that do not work out as planned. He is the architect of the Saudi war in neighboring Yemen, which was supposed to be a blitzkrieg that would end in two days but is dragging into its third year and has caused a horrific humanitarian crisis.

President Hassan Rouhani told Qatar's emir that "Iran's airspace, sea and ground transport links will always be open to Qatar, our brotherly and neighbor country." Tima Agency, via Reuters

Now, the crown prince is seen as the driving force behind the effort to isolate Qatar.

Meanwhile, Iranian news outlets have gleefully reported how the country is reaping fees for the

Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as 'Senators Criticize Tillerson On Policy.'

increased use of its airspace by Qatar Airways.

Over the years, Iran has usually preferred to play the long game, lying low and working with local proxies rather than going for quick victories.

When, for instance, Mr. Assad was threatened by forces backed by Saudi Arabia, Tehran quietly drip fed first hundreds and now thousands of troops into the conflict. It drew on numerous sources, especially the battle-hardened soldiers of the Lebanese Shiite militia, Hezbollah; Shiite militias from Iraq; and Afghans conscripted into the Iranian armed forces.

Qatar cannot expect support beyond the planeloads of food it has already been sent, analysts say. It is cherry season in Iran, so most probably the Qataris are now chewing on those, some people suggest here.

"Our interests are best served if there is no war, conflict or any further tensions in our region," said Hossein Sheikholeslam, an adviser to Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif. "We try to act rationally, because the opponents in the region are young and unripe and irrational in their approach with Qatar."

Watching from the sidelines, while enemies fight, can have benefits. "It's like Kuwait, when Saddam Hussein invaded it in 1990 — our enemy makes a move and weakens himself," Mr. Taraghi, the hard-line analyst, said.

The only thing Iran did in that case was to open its airspace when Mr. Hussein needed a safe haven for his fighter jets when the United States invaded. He sent over 100 warplanes. The Iranians said, 'Thank you' — and never returned them.

"We just remained neutral and won," Mr. Taraghi said.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Dubowitz: Confront Iran the Reagan Way

Mark Dubowitz
6-7 minutes

July 4, 2017 3:51 p.m. ET

One message of President Trump's is popular at home with his political

base and embraced abroad by key Middle Eastern allies: The Islamic Republic of Iran is imperialist, repressive, and—unless we adopt a new strategy—on its way toward possessing nuclear weapons. To keep the threat at bay, Mr. Trump should take a page from the

playbook Ronald Reagan used against the Soviet Union.

In the early 1980s, President Reagan shifted away from his predecessors' containment strategy toward a new plan of rolling back Soviet expansionism. The cornerstone of his strategy was the

recognition that the Soviet Union was an aggressive and revolutionary yet internally fragile regime that had to be defeated.

Reagan's policy was outlined in 1983 in National Security Decision Directive 75, a comprehensive strategy that called for the use of all

instruments of American overt and covert power. The plan included a massive defense buildup, economic warfare, support for anti-Soviet proxy forces and dissidents, and an all-out offensive against the regime's ideological legitimacy.

Mr. Trump should call for a new version of NSDD-75 and go on offense against the Iranian regime. The administration would be wise to address every aspect of the Iranian menace, not merely the nuclear program. President Obama's myopic focus on disarmament paralyzed American policy.

Under Mr. Obama's deeply flawed nuclear accord, Tehran does not need to cheat to reach threshold nuclear-weapons capabilities. Merely by waiting for key constraints to sunset, the regime can emerge over the next decade with an industrial-size enrichment program, a near-zero breakout time, an easier clandestine path to a nuclear warhead, long-range ballistic missiles, access to advanced conventional weaponry, greater regional dominance, and a more powerful economy, increasingly immunized against Western sanctions. You could call this scenario the lethal Iranian end-state.

A new national security directive must systematically dismantle Iranian power country by country in the Middle East. The Europeans, traumatized by foreign fighters returning from Syria and massive refugee flows, may support a tougher Iran policy if it means Washington finally gets serious about Syria. The early signs of the return of American power are promising: 59 Tomahawk missiles launched in response to the Assad regime's most recent chemical attack, military strikes at Iran-backed militias in southern Syria, the downing of a Syrian fighter plane and Iranian-made drones, and 281 Syria-related sanctions in five months.

Washington should demolish the Iranian regime's terrorist networks and influence operations, including their presence in Europe and the United States. That means working closely with allied Sunni governments against Iranian subversion of their societies. The American offensive has already begun: CIA Director Mike Pompeo is putting the agency on an aggressive footing against these global networks with the development of a more muscular covert action program.

All of Washington's actions to push back against Tehran hinge on

severely weakening the Iranian regime's finances. Robust measures should target the regime's praetorians, the Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, a dominant force in Iran's economy. New sanctions legislation designating the IRGC for terrorism—which the Senate recently passed with 98 votes—and the more than 40 Iran-related sanctions imposed this year are a good start. But much more is still needed: The IRGC's transfer to Hezbollah of industrial-size missile production capability based on Lebanon soil could trigger the next Israel-Hezbollah war. Massive economic sanctions on Iran to stop these transfers may be the only way to head off this war.

Last but not least, the American pressure campaign should seek to undermine Iran's rulers by strengthening the pro-democracy forces that erupted in Iran in 2009, nearly toppling the regime. Target the regime's soft underbelly: its massive corruption and human-rights abuses. Conventional wisdom assumes that Iran has a stable government with a public united behind President Hassan Rouhani's vision of incremental reform. In reality, the gap between the ruled and their Islamist rulers is expanding.

The odds that a moderate government will emerge in Tehran before the nuclear deal's restrictions expire are poor. Washington needs to block the Islamic Republic's pathways to gaining nuclear-tipped missiles. While aggressively enforcing the nuclear agreement, the administration should present revised terms for a follow-on deal. These must address the current accord's fundamental flaws, including the sunset provisions that give Tehran a clear pathway to nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them, and the inadequate access to Iranian military sites that blocks effective verification.

The administration should present Iran the choice between a new agreement and an unrelenting American pressure campaign while signaling that it is unilaterally prepared to cancel the existing deal if Tehran doesn't play ball.

Only six years after Ronald Reagan adopted his pressure strategy, the Soviet bloc collapsed. Washington must intensify the pressure on the mullahs as Reagan did on the communists. Otherwise, a lethal nuclear Iran is less than a decade away.

Mr. Dubowitz is chief executive of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

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Trump-Putin Will Talk Against Backdrop of Broader Russian Mischief

Gerald F. Seib

5-7 minutes

July 3, 2017 10:59 a.m. ET

When President Donald Trump meets Russian leader Vladimir Putin late this week, many will be watching to see whether they discuss alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election.

That much is obvious. Less obvious, but more important, is how any Russian meddling in the American presidential-election season—whatever form it may have taken—fits into a much larger tale. This is the tale of a systematic Russian effort to disrupt democratic and capitalist systems internationally, using an updated version of tactics Mr. Putin learned in the bad old days of the Soviet KGB.

In fact, one of the dangers in the current hyperpartisan American debate over Russia's role in the 2016 presidential election is that it is blurring this larger picture. If the 2016 election was the tip of an iceberg, the rest of the iceberg warrants serious attention.

A useful reminder of the breadth of the problem comes in the form of "The Kremlin Playbook," a publication released last October by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a centrist American think tank, and the Center for the Study of Democracy, a European public-policy institute. In retrospect, it was a remarkably prescient look at the controversies that have mushroomed since the American election that came a month later.

The Playbook is an in-depth study of Russian efforts to use overt and covert tactics over a period of a decade to expand its economic and

political influence in five Central and East European nations. A group of regional leaders from such nations warned President Barack Obama in a 2009 letter—which also looks prescient now—that Russia was conducting "overt and covert means of economic warfare, ranging from energy blockades and politically motivated investments to bribery and media manipulation in order to advance its interests...."

The Russian strategy, the study finds, isn't ad hoc. Rather, it is the implementation of a doctrine developed by Russian Gen. Valery Gerasimov called "new generation warfare." One European analyst called that "primarily a strategy of influence, not of brute force" aimed at "breaking the internal coherence of the enemy system."

The strategy, as it has unfolded in Central and Eastern Europe, proceeds along two parallel tracks, the study found. The first track is

economic. Russia seeks to find business partners and investments that allow it to establish an economic foothold, which in turn produces economically influential patrons and partners who have a vested interest in policies friendly to the Kremlin. That is a particularly fruitful endeavor in Europe, where many nations depend on Russian energy supplies.

The goal on this track is to cultivate "a network of local affiliates and power-brokers who are capable of advocating on Russia's behalf."

The second track, perhaps more relevant to the U.S., is designed to disrupt prevailing democratic political patterns. The goal, the Playbook says, is "to corrode democracy from within by deepening political divides and cultivating relationships with aspiring autocrats, political parties (notably nationalists, populists and

Euroskeptics groups), and Russian sympathizers."

On this track, the effort is designed in part to advance parties and figures sympathetic to Russia. But the broader goal is simply to disrupt the process, create confusion and discord, and discredit democratic systems both in targeted countries and in the eyes of Russian citizens, who are told the chaos to their West shows they shouldn't long for a Western-styled democratic system at home.

A key tool in this effort, the report says, is a "war on information" campaign that uses disinformation

and propaganda to disable opponents and foment nationalist and anti-Western sentiment. "Toward this end, Russia exploits existing political pressure points such as migration and economic stagnation, blames Western and U.S. operations for all negative international dynamics (such as the attempted July 2016 coup in Turkey), and discredits the current state of Western democracy," the report says.

Remember that this was written before Mr. Trump won the American presidency and the investigations into Russian influence went into

high gear. The findings are about a broader pattern of Russian behavior, not about what it might have done in the U.S. political system.

Yet these findings present a backdrop for both the current debate over Russia's 2016 U.S. activities, as well as Mr. Trump's meeting with Mr. Putin on the sidelines of the G-20 meeting in Germany this week.

Heather A. Conley, a senior vice president of CSIS and one of the authors of *The Kremlin Playbook*, says the months since its publication have brought "an

acceleration" of Russian influence-seeking, ranging from a plot against the prime minister of Montenegro to interference in the French election to cyberattacks in Ukraine.

The goal, she says, "is disruption, to create governmental policies that accommodate Russian interests," first in ending Western economic sanctions and then in building a broader sphere of influence. She adds: "We continue to be unprepared."

Write to Gerald F. Seib at jerry.seib@wsj.com



Robert Mueller: Probe Could Focus on Russian Organized Crime

Eric Tucker / AP

6-8 minutes

(WASHINGTON) — The U.S. government has long warned that Russian organized crime posed a threat to democratic institutions, including "criminally linked oligarchs" who might collude with the Russian government to undermine business competition.

Those concerns, ever-present if not necessarily always top priorities, are front and center once more.

An ongoing special counsel investigation is drawing attention to Russian efforts to meddle in democratic processes, the type of skullduggery that in the past has relied on hired hackers and outside criminals. It's not clear how much the probe by former FBI Director Robert Mueller will center on the criminal underbelly of Moscow, but he's already picked some lawyers with experience fighting organized crime. And as the team looks for any financial entanglements of Trump associates and relationships with Russian officials, its focus could land again on the intertwining of Russia's criminal operatives and its intelligence services.

Russian organized crime has manifested itself over the decades in more conventional forms of money laundering, credit card fraud and black market sales. Justice Department prosecutors have repeatedly racked up convictions for those offenses.

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In recent years, though, the bond between Russian intelligence agencies and criminal networks has been especially alarming to American law enforcement officials, blending motives of espionage with more old-fashioned greed. In March, for instance, two hired hackers were charged along with

two officers of Russia's Federal Security Service in a cyberattack on Yahoo in 2013.

It's too early to know how Russian criminal networks might fit into the election meddling investigation, but central to the probe are devastating breaches of Democratic email accounts, including those of the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman. U.S. authorities have blamed those hacks on Russian intelligence services working to discredit Clinton and help Trump — but have said the overall effort involved third-party intermediaries and paid Internet trolls.

Former law enforcement officials say Russian organized crime has been a concern for at least a couple of decades, though not necessarily the most pressing demand given finite resources and budget constraints. The threat is diffuse and complex, and Russia's historic lack of cooperation has complicated efforts to apprehend suspects. And the responsibility for combatting the problem often falls across different divisions of the FBI and the Justice Department, depending on whether it's a criminal or national security offense — a sometimes-blurry boundary.

"It's not an easy thing to kind of grasp or understand, but it's very dangerous to our country because they have so many different aspects, unlike a traditional cartel," said Robert Anderson, a retired FBI executive assistant director who worked counterintelligence cases and oversaw the criminal and cyber branch.

"You have to know where to look, which makes it more complicated," he added. "And you have to understand what you're looking for."

Federal prosecutors continue to bring traditional organized crime cases, such as one last month in New York charging 33 members

and associates of a Russian crime syndicate in a racketeering and extortion scheme that officials say involved cargo shipment thefts and efforts to defraud casinos. But there's a heightened awareness about more sophisticated cyber threats that commingle the interests of the government and of criminals.

"An organized criminal group matures in what they do," said retired FBI assistant director Ron Hosko. "What they once did here through extortion, some of these groups are now doing through cyberattack vectors."

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Within the Justice Department, it's been apparent since the collapse of the Soviet Union that crime from that territory could affect national security in Europe and the U.S. Acting FBI director Andrew McCabe was years ago a supervisory special agent of a task force created to deal with Eurasian organized crime.

A 2001 report from the Justice Department's National Institute of Justice, a research arm, called America "the land of opportunity for unloading criminal goods and laundering dirty money." It said crime groups in the region were establishing ties to drug trafficking networks, and that "criminally linked oligarchs" might work with the government to undermine competition in gas, oil and other strategic markets.

Three months later came the Sept. 11 attacks, and the FBI, then under Mueller's leadership, and other agencies left no doubt that terrorism was the most important priority.

"I recall talking to the racketeering guys after that and them saying, 'Forget any focus now on organized crime,'" said James Finckenauer, an author of the report.

Besides cyber threats, Justice Department officials in recent years have worried about the effect of unchecked international corruption, creating a kleptocracy initiative to recover money plundered by government leaders for their own purposes.

In 2014, then-Attorney General Eric Holder pledged the Justice Department's commitment to recouping large sums believed to have been stolen during the regime of Viktor Yanukovich, the Ukrainian president chased from power that year.

That effort led to an FBI focus on Paul Manafort, the Trump campaign chairman who did political consulting work on behalf of Yanukovich's pro-Russia political party and who remains under scrutiny now.

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But those same foreign links have also made cases hard to prove in court.

In many instances, foreign criminal hackers or those sponsored by foreign governments — including China, Iran and Russia — have remained out of reach of American authorities. In some cases, judges have chastised U.S. authorities for prosecutorial overreach in going after international targets.

A San Francisco federal judge, for instance, in 2015 dismissed an indictment involving two Ukrainian businessmen who'd been accused of bribing an official at a United Nations agency responsible for creating standards for machine-readable international passports.

The judge said he couldn't understand how the government could apply a foreign bribery law to conduct that had no direct connection to the U.S.

Months of Russia controversy leaves Trump 'boxed in' ahead of Putin meeting (UNE)

https://www.facebook.com/abbydphillip

8-10 minutes

WARSAW — President Trump promised voters that he would strike "a great deal" with Russia and its autocratic president, Vladimir Putin. He has repeatedly labeled an investigation of Russian meddling in the U.S. election as "a hoax," and he even bragged to Russian officials about firing the FBI director leading the probe.

Now nearly six months into his presidency, Trump is set to finally meet Putin at a summit this week in Hamburg after a stop here in Warsaw — severely constrained and facing few good options that would leave him politically unscathed.

If Trump attempts to loosen sanctions against Russia for its involvement in the conflict in eastern Ukraine or its interference in the 2016 U.S. election, Congress could defy him by pursuing even stronger penalties. And if he offers platitudes for Putin without addressing Russia's election meddling, it will renew questions about whether Trump accepts the findings of his own intelligence officials that Russia intended to disrupt the democratic process on his behalf.

"The president is boxed in," said Nicholas Burns, who was U.S. ambassador to NATO under President George W. Bush. "Why would you give Putin any kind of concession at the first meeting? What has he done to deserve that?"

He added, "If you try to curry favor, offer concessions, pull back on the pressure, he'll take advantage. He'll see weakness in a vacuum."

Senators introduced a provision on June 12 meant to punish Moscow for its alleged meddling in the 2016 election, its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea and its support for the government of Syria. Senators introduced a provision on June 12 meant to punish Moscow for its alleged meddling in the 2016 election. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

Already, Moscow is clamoring for the Trump administration to return two Russian compounds in the United States that were seized by the Obama administration in retaliation for Russian meddling in

the election. And the Trump administration signaled in May that it would be open to returning the properties.

Yet in the Senate, there is a rare near-unanimity in favor of tough sanctions against Russia. Last month, the Senate voted 97 to 2 for a bill that would put new sanctions in place for Russia's election meddling and would constrain Trump's ability to lift existing penalties. The White House was forced to step up its lobbying of Republicans in the House to slow the progress of a similar measure.

Among the foreign policy experts who support Trump's push for improved relations with Russia, there is growing frustration that the current political climate and Trump's actions have made that goal all but impossible.

"It has been extraordinarily difficult for Trump, even if he had the means to do so, to do what is in the vital national interest, that is, improve relations with Russia," said Jack Matlock, who was ambassador to the Soviet Union under President Ronald Reagan. "Treating them as if they are enemies is absolutely absurd, and yet it permeates much of the attitude in Congress."

The Trump administration, meanwhile, has been moving on multiple fronts to soften the U.S. stance on Russia.

[Trump is struggling to stay calm on Russia, one morning call at a time]

Trump wants Russia's cooperation on a number of issues, including the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria and Russia's use of North Korean laborers whose pay goes directly to the regime in Pyongyang, despite its nuclear weapons program.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has tried to ward off Congress from imposing more sanctions on Russia for its involvement in Ukraine, saying that getting tough now could hamper cooperation on other issues like fighting the Islamic State. Tillerson also said last month that the administration is not necessarily wedded to the Minsk agreement to end the fighting in Ukraine if something else would meet the same goals. That's a shift in position since March, when he told a meeting of NATO foreign ministers that the United States would not ease sanctions until Russia meets its Minsk commitments.

"The president asked me to begin a re-engagement process with Russia to see if we can first stabilize that relationship so it does not deteriorate further, and then can we identify areas of mutual interest where perhaps we can begin to rebuild some level of trust and some level of confidence that there are areas where we can work together," Tillerson said during a visit to New Zealand in June. "The president has been clear to me: 'Do not let what's happening over here in the political realm prevent you from the work you need to do in this relationship.'"

Despite Trump's consistent overtures to Putin, however, U.S.-Russia relations have not improved since he took office.

Putin has strongly denied any interference in the 2016 election and has accused U.S. politicians of Cold War-era hysteria. Meanwhile, Russia's continued support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's massacre of his own citizens in the country's civil war has further engendered distrust among U.S. political leaders.

Paul Saunders, who directs the U.S.-Russia program at the Center for the National Interest, said the level of mutual distrust and hostility is as bad as it was during the height of the Cold War.

"Without progress on Ukraine, I don't see how one would ease sanctions," he said. "And it's not like Russia is going to send special forces to Damascus to arrest Assad and deliver him to The Hague or to President Trump."

[Inside Trump's anger and impatience — and his decision to fire Comey]

Trump, who has been criticized for his overly warm posture toward Putin, has not indicated how he will approach the meeting this week.

In recent months, Trump has done little to hide his frustration that his effort to pivot toward Russia has been hampered by congressional and FBI investigations, which he views as a "witch hunt" being carried out by his political enemies.

At an Oval Office meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Russian Ambassador Sergei Kislyak in May, Trump complained to the Russians about the ongoing probes into his campaign, suggesting that his firing of the FBI director, James B.

Comey, would ease the political pressure on his administration.

"I faced great pressure because of Russia," Trump told the men, according to the New York Times. "That's taken off."

Since that meeting, Trump's Russia-related troubles have only gotten worse. Shortly after Trump met with the Russian officials, special counsel Robert S. Mueller III was appointed to take over the Russia investigation and is now investigating whether Trump sought to obstruct the case by firing Comey, officials have told The Washington Post.

In light of the continued pressure from both parties, White House aides have sought to play down expectations for this first engagement between the two world leaders. But they have offered few clues about what will be on Trump's agenda, including whether he plans to raise the issue of Russia's election interference.

"There's no specific agenda," national security adviser H.R. McMaster said last week when asked whether Trump planned to confront Putin. "It's really going to be whatever the president wants to talk about."

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"As the president has made it clear, he'd like the United States and the entire West to develop a more constructive relationship with Russia," McMaster added. "But he's also made clear that we will do what is necessary to confront Russia's destabilizing behavior."

There is also a risk that Trump could choose to freelance in the meeting, diverting from the more balanced objectives that his advisers have laid out for the bilateral relationship. If Trump prioritizes his desire to build camaraderie with Putin as he has with other world leaders, it may put him at a stark disadvantage with a former KGB operative known for his unflagging focus on Russia's primacy.

"He has a tendency to ad-lib in these kinds of things," said former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul. "He's overly focused on 'having a good meeting.' He wants to be liked, and he wants to say things are successful."

"He should know and we should understand: Putin is coming with an agenda," added McFaul, who

served under President Barack Obama. "Putin is going to be prepared. If you are going to

freelance it, doesn't mean he's going to. He is a very effective interlocutor."

Morello reported from Washington.

POLITICO Democrats: Did Americans help Russia hack the election?

Cory Bennett

10-13 minutes

The cascade of investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 election includes a darker undercurrent from some senior Democrats: What if Moscow had American help?

Hillary Clinton, Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe and Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, have all stoked speculation that American insiders may have helped the Russians orchestrate their wide-ranging hacking and disinformation campaign — including with guidance on which political targets to exploit and what kinds of leaked information would most resonate with swing voters. The Democrats got backup from former FBI Director James Comey, who told lawmakers in June he was sure law enforcement would work to determine "if any Americans were part of helping the Russians."

Story Continued Below

But so far, no public evidence has surfaced that any Americans coordinated with Moscow's digital army in selecting targets for hacking, strategically deploying the purloined documents for maximum political impact — a point echoed by research firms investigating the election-year hacks.

And some Republicans say Democrats are playing a dangerous game by stoking such a charged storyline without evidence, saying that if it doesn't pan out it could unravel public acceptance of the whole notion of Russia meddling. Some also consider it a distraction from the more pressing discussion about protecting future elections.

Senate Intelligence Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.) said Democrats might be groping in the dark with their "insider" theory. "Maybe they're trying to pin the tail on some donkey here," he said.

But McAuliffe, a former DNC chairman, predicted that such evidence would emerge from the myriad probes. "Somebody had to give these people a road map," he said in an interview with POLITICO.

Clinton aired similar suspicions during a public appearance in May, pointing to the politically charged timing of WikiLeaks' October dumps

of stolen emails from her campaign chairman. "I think it is fair to ask, how did they know what messages to deliver?" Clinton said. "Who told them?"

The Democrats' hints follow months of leaks and other news reports indicating that U.S. investigators are pursuing evidence of undisclosed contacts between Russian officials and people in President Donald Trump's orbit, as well as recent stories in *The Wall Street Journal* alleging that a now-deceased GOP political activist had sought help from suspected Moscow-linked hackers in obtaining Clinton's deleted emails. Trump has repeatedly denounced what he calls the "phony collusion with the Russians story."

But any Americans who helped Russia wouldn't necessarily have been someone working for the Trump campaign, cyber-researchers and Democrats like McAuliffe have said. They say it could have been a political operative with an ax to grind, a disaffected American living overseas or even a rogue, zealous ideologue.

Proponents of the theory point to several instances they say raise serious questions about whether Moscow acted alone.

For starters, many are suspicious about the timing of WikiLeaks' Oct. 7 release of the first batch of hacked emails from Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta, which U.S. intelligence agencies believe Russian cyber thieves shuttled to the anti-secrecy organization. That release came about an hour after the Obama administration publicly blamed Russia for the digital intrusions of Clinton's campaign and the DNC.

The dump also came a mere 30 minutes after *The Washington Post* published its story detailing the level comments Trump had made during a 2005 conversation with an "Access Hollywood" reporter. The bombshell revelation threatened to sink Trump's campaign — making any countervailing narrative a welcome distraction.

At a Recode conference in May, Clinton called that dump "the best example" of possible insider direction. She noted that Trump-backing, far-right sites like Infowars almost immediately picked up on specific details from the cache of emails — even sharing a forged

transcript of a paid speech Clinton had supposedly given to Goldman Sachs.

"The Russians, in my opinion, and based on the intel and counterintel people I've talked to, could not have known how best to weaponize that information unless they had been guided," Clinton said.

Clinton and McAuliffe also pointed to an apparently fake document that, according to news reports, played a pivotal role in Comey's decision in July to make a public statement about the FBI investigation into Clinton's use of a private email server as secretary of State.

The document, a Russian intelligence analysis obtained by the U.S., alleged that then-Attorney General Loretta Lynch had promised the Clinton campaign that DOJ would not probe too deeply. Although the FBI determined that the information was false, anonymous officials quoted by the Post said it helped push Comey to make his public pronouncement without DOJ approval.

McAuliffe argued that only a savvy, American political insider would understand the importance of many of the people cited in the Russian intelligence document — including an obscure official at a Clinton-linked advocacy group and a low-profile Clinton campaign staffer. Such a person would also understand how the potential leak of such an email would undermine public confidence in the FBI investigation, the Virginia governor said.

"Some cyber hacker in Moscow in some basement sitting there doesn't know who these four players are ... and how they are interrelated," he told POLITICO during a recent interview at a National Governors Association gathering.

Kremlin agents couldn't have produced the counterfeit memo, McAuliffe insisted, "without some American political operative saying, 'If you have these four people talking to each other ... it will have a political impact.'"

Warner, meanwhile, has raised questions about the Facebook and Twitter users — whether real or fake — that U.S. intelligence agencies and researchers say Russia paid or created to promote narratives that flattered Trump and bashed Clinton. The Virginia

senator raised questions during two hearings about speculation that these trolls targeted voters in specific districts in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania — critical swing states that Trump flipped in his unexpected November victory.

"One of the things that seems curious is, would the Russians on their own have that level of sophisticated knowledge about the American political system, if they didn't at least get some advice from someone in America?" Warner asked during a hearing in March.

But witnesses told Warner that the United States' former Cold War rival could indeed have developed that level of knowledge on its own.

"If you do appropriate target audience analysis on social media, you can actually identify an audience in a foreign country or in the United States, parse out all of their preferences," replied Clint Watts, a former FBI agent who serves as a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Cybersecurity researchers agreed, telling POLITICO that Moscow's digital muscle could certainly be trained on such analysis.

"They have capabilities to actually pay attention to the tenor of what's being said on social media, even the tenor of what's being said in news sources," said Mike Buratowski, vice president of cybersecurity services at Fidelis, one of the firms tracking Russia's election-year influence campaign.

"Somebody had to give these people a road map," Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe said. | J. Scott Applewhite/AP

Additionally, most U.S. Census data is publicly released, while voter registration information is public record in many states and can be purchased from third-party companies. "I would bet lots and lots of money," Buratowski said, that Russia has data scientists "blasting through this stuff."

Several other digital security researchers who studied Russia's election meddling told POLITICO they had seen no evidence of Moscow trolls or digital agents receiving help from an American.

Republicans are latching onto that dearth of proof.

Idaho Republican Sen. Jim Risch, an eight-year veteran of the Intelligence Committee, pressed DHS and FBI officials about the lack of any public evidence showing American insider help — raising the issue after a series of questions highlighting the resource-rich investigation.

"I think the American people have a right to know this," Risch told the officials during a June hearing. "From all the work that your agencies did, all the people involved, all the digging you did through what the Russians had done and their attempts, did you find any evidence, direct or circumstantial — to any degree down to a

scintilla of evidence — that any U.S. person colluded with, assisted or communicated with the Russians in their efforts?"

The officials declined to comment, deferring to the DOJ probe that former FBI Director Robert Mueller is leading.

But if there was American help, Comey told lawmakers in early June, "Director Mueller will find that evidence."

Democrats have vowed that the Senate and House Intelligence committees will get to the bottom of the matter as well.

"That's a confluence of circumstances that can be

circumstantial or it can be potentially evidence of coordination," said Michael Bahar, who until May was the Democratic staff director for the House Intelligence Committee, which is conducting its own probe into election-year tampering. "And that's what the investigation has to look at."

Burr said at a hearing last week that his committee's primary mission is to produce a document that explains the Russian digital threat and informs countries around the world how to keep Moscow at bay in future elections. Such work, the Intelligence chairman said, "is vitally important to how this difficult time in our history ends."

Warner told POLITICO that he still has questions about American involvement. "That's the purpose of doing the investigation, to try to get those answers," he said.

"If there is something there, I think the committee — and my Republican colleagues as well — will acknowledge it," Warner said. "If there's nothing there, I'll be the first to stand up and say: 'We've asked all the questions. There was nothing there.'"

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Bershidsky : Putin's Meddling Will Be Good for U.S. Democracy

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11-13 minutes

Politics

Putin's 2016 trolling forced the nation to look in the mirror. It's a healthy exercise, if Americans refuse to look away.

As the so-called Trump-Russia story lurches on, one can see it in a few different ways: a witch hunt, the lead-up to Donald Trump's impeachment, a distraction from more important issues, a major national security threat to the U.S. It would be useful, however, to look beyond these partisan perceptions to the story's potential to make America great(er) again.

What we know about the Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election of 2016 exists on three levels of veracity. We know 100 percent that Russian propaganda outlets played on Trump's side against Hillary Clinton, helping spread and amplify reports that were hostile to her, including some that weren't true. We have strong circumstantial evidence that hackers who stole Democratic Party functionaries' emails were Russian or Russian-connected, and grounds to suspect that it was these hackers who provided the emails to Wikileaks (which also undermined Clinton by savoring the gradual release of the dump). We have no direct evidence of collusion or coordination between the Trump campaign and the Russian government in trying to beat Clinton and get Trump elected (though a potentially interesting report on this front emerged last week in the Wall Street Journal).

After months of multipronged investigation and concurrent leaks, that's both a lot and not much. Not much to fuel the Democrats' hopes of displacing Trump before the end of his term. Not much, also, to show for all the resources lavished on the investigations and their media coverage. A lot, however, to tell Americans where they stand as a country -- far more than before Russian President Vladimir Putin held his troll mirror to them in 2016.

Assuming U.S. intelligence agencies are correct in their attribution of the hacks and leaks, that's essentially what he did. The Russian propaganda backed up an existing marginal news and rumor culture, replete with racial stereotypes, conspiracy theories and the deep-seated hatred of progressive causes, and helped make it more prominent. The debate on fake news forced both liberal and conservative Americans out of their news silos to look at the radical fringes of each other's newsfeeds. The hacked emails of Democratic party officials presented an ugly picture of a cronyist insider culture that rejects outside contributions even when they can be useful, as in Senator Bernie Sanders' case, and that corrupts the people at the top, undermining their connection with the party's rank-and-file.

The mirror is still there. It's facing America as it digests the scandal and tries to come to terms with a president who looks a lot like a wheeler-dealer from 1990s Russia, someone defined by naked contempt for rules and conventions, a taste for gaudy luxury, and a default mode of pampered irascibility.

Faced with all that in a mirror for the first time, one can easily freeze in place, unsure what to do. Perhaps that's what happened to Barack

Obama when he read the intelligence reports tying the hacks and leaks to Russia. He could have backed the Clinton's campaign line -- that the revelations should be ignored because they were a hostile power's attack on the U.S. -- especially since he was actively campaigning for her. Obama refrained, more worried that Russia would try to hack the actual vote -- but Putin clearly didn't have that in mind. Hackers breached computers containing voter roll information in a number of states but stopped at that, perhaps preparing to witness Democrat-run fraud -- something the Kremlin believed would happen to push Clinton through. If they had discovered it, the image in Putin's troll mirror would have grown that much nastier.

The next impulse after the stupor is to break the mirror, to attack the troll holding it. That's what's happening now, as all things Russian grow toxic and legislators consider further sanctions to punish without much regard for the broader fallout. It's a mistake for a few reasons: trolls are resistant to this kind of punishment; U.S. attacks make Putin stronger at home; and his mockery of U.S. "paranoia" resonates with Russians and even, to some extent, with Europeans.

Europe has quickly learned its lessons from what it knows about Putin's attack on the U.S. The mainstream media and political activists in France and Germany organized to map and counteract the spread of fake news during election campaigns. Governments, particularly the German one, heaped pressure on social networks to curb the fakes. On Friday, the German parliament adopted a controversial law demanding that Facebook and other networks quickly remove hate speech and

false stories or face fines of up to 50 million euros (\$57 million).

When he ran for president, Emmanuel Macron made sure no sensitive information was passed back and forth on email. That's why hackers who penetrated his campaign's network couldn't find anything useful, and Macron's political enemies resorted to fakes in a failed last-ditch attempt to influence voting. Macron internalized the lessons of the Clinton campaign. With many of the same progressive ideas, he triumphed against stronger opposition than she faced as a savvy -- and a cleaner -- candidate.

For German politicians in this electoral cycle, it's a big advantage that they have nothing to hide and share a culture. I'll be surprised if attackers turn up anything useful on Chancellor Angela Merkel or her top rival Martin Schulz. But Germany wants to be doubly sure, thus the new law and the decision to build up a 13,000-strong cyber army to counter attacks.

What happened in the U.S. has made European democracies more resistant to propaganda, Russian or otherwise, and more savvy about cybersecurity. On a higher level, Trump's victory has forced these nations to look at themselves in the mirror -- and populist parties have dropped in the polls from Brest to Dresden.

If Putin gets credit for helping to elect Trump, he should get some for Europe's rejection of populism, too. European democracy is stronger today thanks to his trolling of the U.S. in 2016.

Is the U.S. stronger, though? During his Senate hearing, former FBI Director James Comey warned that the Russians "will be back." What

will the U.S. see if Putin tries the mirror trick again in a few years?

They will probably still see a bitterly divided country, but perhaps one that's more serious about its electoral choices, one less inclined to treat politics as winner-take-all sporting event -- an approach that yielded a frustrating, flawed choice in 2016. Next time around, voters will see honesty and decency as crucial assets, and perhaps the major parties will respond to this by selecting contenders who embody them more than Trump and Clinton did. Perhaps these contenders will also be savvier when it comes to cybersecurity and, in general,

modern communication. The global technology superpower needs leaders who are better, not worse, at technology than the average American.

Perhaps there will also be a more open public debate -- still contentious and aggressive, but, this time, informed by a better understanding of propaganda mechanisms and the way information spreads across social networks. The U.S. public may get smarter about how it processes information: It's getting more media literacy training than ever before.

Perhaps I'm overoptimistic and the U.S. won't learn anything from this experience except that Russians are evil. But I have faith in the U.S.: Even when I traveled the country during the 2016 election campaign, I felt its vibrant strength behind all the frustration and confusion. I rather think the lessons forced on the country by that campaign will sink in.

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No one will thank Putin the troll for that, and he doesn't want America's

thanks. If the U.S. public gets smarter about its political choices, Putin will be weakened: It will no longer be as easy for him to point to American democracy's flaws or to exploit them. Then, if he returns to his trolling as Comey predicted, he'll have to come up with something more sophisticated than what is essentially a cheap, simple influence campaign.

Help sometimes comes from enemies. Sometimes they provide it unwillingly. It takes a certain perceptiveness to recognize when that happens and accept the help.



Kendall : The Russia probe can't be fired

By David E. Kendall

6-8 minutes

President Trump is calling it a "witch hunt," lawmakers are applauding it and the Justice Department says it's in the "public interest," but what can the newly appointed special prosecutor really do and can he still be fired? Here are four things to know. Can the newly appointed special prosecutor still be fired? Here are four things to know. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

By David E. Kendall July 4 at 7:24 PM

David E. Kendall is an attorney at the Washington law firm Williams & Connolly LLP, where he represents former president Bill Clinton and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton.

President Trump is calling it a "witch hunt," lawmakers are applauding it and the Justice Department says it's in the "public interest," but what can the newly appointed special prosecutor really do and can he still be fired? Here are four things to know. Can the newly appointed special prosecutor still be fired? Here are four things to know. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

Donald Trump is used to pronouncing the words "You're fired." But if the president decides he wants to get rid of special counsel Robert S. Mueller III, he will find that a much more complicated

task than dispatching a contestant on "The Apprentice." Justice Department regulations will make it difficult, legally as well as politically, to abruptly short-circuit the pending investigation.

With Attorney General Jeff Sessions having recused himself from the probe into the Trump campaign and possible collusion with Russia, the deputy attorney general, Rod J. Rosenstein, appointed Mueller on May 17 to "conduct the investigation confirmed by then-FBI Director James B. Comey" when Comey testified before the House Intelligence Committee on March 20. Justice Department regulations also give Mueller the authority "to investigate and prosecute federal crimes committed in the course of, and with intent to interfere with, the Special Counsel's investigation, such as perjury, obstruction of justice, destruction of evidence, and intimidation of witnesses."

This assignment was not a casual gig, but an appointment made by the acting attorney general pursuant to federal law, which provides specific protections to ensure the independence of the special counsel. Justice Department regulations provide that a special counsel may be removed from office only by the "personal action" of the attorney general (in this case, Rosenstein, who is acting in that capacity) and only for good cause. There must be written findings of "misconduct, dereliction of duty, incapacity, conflict of interest" or "other good cause, including violation of Departmental policies." On paper at least, those are pretty strong safeguards to protect Mueller's freedom from unwarranted interference and obstruction.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

Now, could President Trump order Rosenstein to fire Mueller? Could he unilaterally and summarily rescind the Justice Department regulations that protect Mueller from being fired? Does he have inherent constitutional authority as president, as some have claimed, simply to ignore or suspend the regulations and, as head of the executive branch, fire Mueller himself and order the investigation closed?

Any of those steps would almost certainly result in the resignation of Rosenstein, and likely other Justice Department officials, reminiscent of the "Saturday Night Massacre," when President Richard Nixon ordered the firing of Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox. Attorney General Elliot Richardson resigned, having promised Congress not to dismiss Cox except for cause — much like the assurances Rosenstein has provided in his congressional testimony. Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus also refused the firing order and resigned, leaving the task to Solicitor General Robert Bork, who not only fired Cox but also retroactively rescinded the underlying Justice Department regulation creating the Office of the Watergate Special Prosecutor.

As with the Saturday Night Massacre, however, any move to fire Mueller would likely not be the end of the matter — or of the criminal investigation. In the uproar that ensued after Cox's firing, the remaining prosecutors in the office continued their work and a new special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, was selected. In this situation, even if the Trump Justice Department did not move to name a new special counsel, it would be remarkable, if

not unprecedented, for the president to order that a pending criminal investigation touching on his conduct be made to disappear altogether.

Moreover, Cox's firing triggered a lawsuit by members of Congress who claimed it interfered with their ability to get to the bottom of the Watergate matter. Even though Cox had by then returned to teaching at Harvard University, U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell ruled that "the firing of Archibald Cox in the absence of a finding of extraordinary impropriety was in clear violation of an existing Justice Department regulation having the force of law and was therefore illegal." In addition, Gesell found, abolishing the prosecutor's office was itself illegal: "An agency's power to revoke its regulations is not unlimited. Such action must be neither arbitrary nor unreasonable."

It boils down to this: When you're the target or subject of an investigation, even if you're the president of the United States, you don't get to call the balls and strikes as to whether there has been criminal conduct or the investigation is necessary. It's quite possible that a fair and thorough investigation will confirm the president's oft-stated belief that neither he nor his campaign was guilty of any improper activity. But for the present it's simply irrelevant that Trump feels guiltless and persecuted. The rule of law, not the whim of an elected official, no matter how lofty, defines both what the applicable legal standards are and who gets to make decisions about those standards. And that includes firing a special counsel.

GOP Senators Weigh Higher Health Premiums' Possible Effect on Midterms

Stephanie Armour and Kristina Peterson

7-8 minutes

Updated July 4, 2017 4:33 p.m. ET

Republican senators are confronting a political challenge that is increasingly hard to ignore as they engage with voters during the July Fourth recess: Under their health-care overhaul, average premiums for a midlevel insurance plan would jump by 20% next January.

That means many people who don't get insurance through work would see their premiums increase just a few months before the midterm elections, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. Premiums would fall in later years, in part because less-comprehensive plans would be offered by that time.

This highlights what some Republicans privately concede is a Catch-22 as GOP Senate leaders work to assemble a bill they can bring to the floor when Congress returns to Washington: Both passing a bill and not passing one carry political peril.

Yet Republicans' plight does resemble that of the Democrats seven years ago in many ways. Democrats were similarly caught between passing an unpopular bill not long before a new president's first midterm elections, or failing to honor a longtime promise after seizing control of Congress and the White House.

"Democrats were a lot smarter because they didn't have anything take effect until after the election," said Rep. Mark Amodei (R., Nev.), referring to the provisions of the 2010 Affordable Care Act.

"Tasked with honoring a promise seven years in the making, Republican leaders have instead put their caucus in a very big bind going into the midterm elections,"

said David Bozell, president of ForAmerica, a grassroots-oriented conservative group that opposes the Senate bill.

Many Democrats view passage of the ACA as a historic achievement, but they also suffered a political cataclysm in the 2010 midterms from which they arguably still haven't recovered.

The fate of Republican health-care efforts now may hinge on whether GOP leaders can persuade enough Republican senators that forging ahead is their best political bet. Like Democratic leaders in 2010, Republican leaders today are telling their members it is better to pass an imperfect, unpopular bill than to renege on such a big pledge.

The near-term premium increase only raises the stakes of that bet. In Blanco, Texas, for example, a 40-year-old would see premiums go up by \$494 in January under the Senate bill, according to an analysis of CBO data by the Century Foundation. In Nome, Alaska, premiums would rise by \$2,376.

Bigger impacts would hit in later years, when average premiums fall for plans that offer fewer benefits than required under the ACA, but spending cuts to Medicaid spending would accelerate, raising costs for many Americans, according to the CBO.

The political Catch-22 has made it harder for Republicans to unify around a single bill. GOP senators have split, with centrists saying the legislation guts too much of the current health law and conservatives pushing to abandon the bill altogether because they say it doesn't do enough to repeal the ACA.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) is trying to salvage the plan, which in its broad outlines would dismantle much of the ACA and set up a new system that would provide smaller tax

credits, deep cuts to Medicaid, and funding to stabilize markets.

Mr. McConnell scrapped plans to hold a vote last week after Republican centrists such as Susan Collins of Maine said they couldn't support the measure because it would leave too many people uninsured. Conservatives are also balking at the bill, and President Donald Trump on Friday tweeted that senators should repeal the ACA first and replace it later on.

Given these divisions, it is unclear whether Mr. McConnell can put together a revised bill and bring it to a vote after Congress returns next week. The reception senators are getting back home this week, and the success of private negotiations, will help determine the bill's fate.

The CBO's findings haven't made Mr. McConnell's job easier. Among other things, the CBO found that roughly 15 million fewer people would be insured under the Senate bill than the ACA in 2018, though many of those would have dropped insurance because they would no longer be required to have it. By 2026, the difference in the number of uninsured compared with the ACA would rise to 22 million.

The rise in premiums could give a boost to Democrats, who are otherwise playing defense on the 2018 Senate electoral battleground, with several vulnerable Democrats facing re-election in conservative states. Democrats need to retake three seats in the Senate and 24 in the House to seize control of those chambers.

Republicans say the ACA, often called Obamacare, is in a state of collapse and continues to harm consumers. Voters will remember that it was pushed through in a partisan way, they say.

"If Senate Democrats really wanted to fix our broken health-care system, they would drop their petty partisan games and offer actual solutions to the devastation that

Obamacare has caused to our health-care system," Katie Martin, spokeswoman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee, said recently.

Sen. Brian Schatz (D., Hawaii) said Republicans' efforts to blame Democrats won't stick "because they're the ruling party right now, and they've taken responsibility for health care." He added, "They have cobbled together such an ugly piece of legislation that they now have bad choices and worse choices."

Key to the premium increases is the repeal of an ACA provision much reviled by the GOP—the penalty on people who don't have health insurance. Ending that individual mandate would mean many healthier people would drop their insurance, leaving insurers with older and sicker people whose costs drive up premiums.

But the negotiations have proven rocky. Some conservative Republicans say the Senate bill fails to lower premiums enough for those who retain insurance. To address that, Sen. Ted Cruz (R., Texas) is championing an amendment saying insurers who offer at least one plan that meets ACA requirements could also offer a cheaper plan covering fewer benefits.

A number of conservative groups, including FreedomWorks, Tea Party Patriots and Club for Growth, say that wouldn't go far enough in scrapping the ACA.

Republican centrists, on the other hand, are insisting that many of the ACA's requirements stay in place, concerned that to strike them would remove important patient protections.

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Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as 'Higher Health Costs Challenge GOP.'

State Department Workers Vent Grievances Over Trump, Tillerson, Cite Longer-Term Issues

Felicia Schwartz

6-8 minutes

July 4, 2017 3:00 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Thousands of State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development

employees indicated in a survey they are worried about the future of their agencies, with some expressing particular concern about lack of support from the Trump administration and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

The findings are in a report for Mr. Tillerson compiled by a consulting

firm as he embarks on an effort to reorganize the State Department amid steep budget cuts. The Wall Street Journal reviewed a copy of the report, which is to be released to employees on Wednesday.

"I want to reiterate that we began this process with no preconceived notions about the outcome," Mr.

Tillerson will say in a video message accompanying the release of the report, according to a transcript. "Our goal is, and always has been, to address challenges to the way our department operates. Your honesty and candid input is deeply valued as we devote our

energy to building a better State Department.”

Many of the more than 35,000 State Department and USAID employees responding to the survey indicated longtime frustration with the way the agencies function, including poor technology and duplicative and redundant processes that make frequent workarounds necessary. They also cited pet projects created by ambassadors and Congress, according to the report reviewed by the Journal.

USAID employees in the report said they are particularly concerned about the consequences of a move to fully absorb USAID fully into the State Department, which officials are considering.

The 110-page report, which the State Department paid the consulting firm Insigniam about \$1.1 million to compile, includes feedback from 35,386 employees of the two interrelated agencies, or about 43% of those who received the survey, and also includes 300 employee interviews conducted in-person or by phone.

The report comes as President Donald Trump’s administration has yet to fill scores of senior State Department positions, which current and former officials say has hampered decision making. The department, which coordinates U.S. diplomatic policy around the world, is contending with threats from North Korea and Russia as it seeks to end long-running wars in the Middle East.

Aides said the critical nature of the results reflects Mr. Tillerson’s willingness to incorporate frank feedback into plans for the State Department.

“The first step in this is to give a platform to people to identify what needs to be fixed, the second stage is to give people a platform to fix it, and the third stage is to implement an improved design,” said R.C. Hammond, a senior adviser to Mr. Tillerson.

The report revealed a wariness among employees about the management at the State Department, including existing structures that are perceived as inefficient and the attitudes of the Trump administration.

“People do not speak optimistically about the future,” the report says. “The absence of a clear vision of the future allows room for speculation and rumor about what the future could bring, such as further USAID integration into DOS [Department of State] or the militarization of foreign policy.”

State Department employees indicated to Insigniam that they are concerned both about the Trump administration and about Mr. Tillerson’s leadership.

“People question if these two groups understand the role the Department of State plays in forwarding the interests of the United States in the world,” the report says.

One respondent quoted in the report said: “I am concerned that

the dramatic reduction in budget, paired with extended staffing gaps at the most senior level, will result in the loss of not only an exceptionally talented group of people from our ranks, but will hamper our impact to fulfill our mission for decades to come.”

Other than Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan, there are no Senate-confirmed senior political leaders working at the State Department’s headquarters in Washington.

Other themes in the survey included frustration with mechanisms that are supposed to hold employees accountable and outdated technology and structures.

“Whether it be models and policies for family-member participation, or medical leave for pregnancies, or a footprint based on a 20th century Cold War world which has evolved into the 21st century’s war on terror, much of what governs day-to-day work is not fit for purpose,” the report says.

Eliot Cohen, who served as State Department counselor during the George W. Bush administration and is now at Johns Hopkins University, said complaints about the department’s bureaucracy and technology are longstanding.

Still, he said, “I would expect them [employees] to be in an incredibly sour mood because of the Trump administration. If you look at the way [Mr. Tillerson] has dealt with subordinates and the hammering he has taken from the

administration...he has an ineffective team.”

Mr. Tillerson is expected to announce Wednesday that Mr. Sullivan will lead a working group to further examine five areas that were highlighted in the report: overseas operations, foreign-assistance programs, technology, staffing and administration.

Those groups will contribute to a report the State Department will submit to the Office of Management and Budget by Sept. 15 about how to reorganize.

State Department and USAID employees were asked to address Mr. Tillerson directly, which they did with varying degrees of seriousness. Some were “highly complimentary,” while others were “coarse and vulgar,” the report said.

“We will be left with only the resources to coordinate among ourselves and write reports,” said one employee, who wasn’t identified in the report. “It will be a short political win over long-term strategy.”

But another compared the State Department workforce to a Labrador retriever: “We want to jump in your lap and will be as loyal as the day is long.”

Write to Felicia Schwartz at Felicia.Schwartz@wsj.com

Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as ‘Employees Vent at State Department.’



Court Blocks EPA Effort to Loosen Obama-Era Emissions Standards

Jess Bravin
5-6 minutes

July 3, 2017 8:01 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—A federal appeals court Monday blocked the Environmental Protection Agency from loosening controls on emissions of methane and other greenhouse gases, setting back Trump administration efforts to rapidly dismantle former President Barack Obama’s climate-change policies.

Earlier this year, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt granted an industry request to suspend a June 2016 rule requiring oil and natural gas producers to fix leaks and take other steps to limit emissions from new or recently modified facilities. Mr. Pruitt suspended enforcement of the rule for two years.

On Monday, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia

Circuit found that while the EPA could re-examine the 2016 regulations, known as new source performance standards, Mr. Pruitt lacked authority to set the rule aside pending completion of the review.

The ruling marked a role reversal for Mr. Pruitt, who as Oklahoma attorney general made his name filing suit against Obama administration environmental policies he argued were unlawful.

Under the Administrative Procedure Act of 1946, federal agencies must follow a complicated series of steps, including providing public notice of proposed rules and inviting comments on them, before issuing regulations. Likewise, agencies must follow certain procedures before revoking regulations.

A three-judge D.C. Circuit panel found that the EPA had flouted those requirements in suspending the new-source rule.

“We are reviewing the opinion and examining our options,” an EPA spokeswoman said. Those options could include asking the full D.C. Circuit to review the panel’s 2-1 decision, or appeal to the Supreme Court.

A spokesman for the American Petroleum Institute, an industry group that intervened in the case, couldn’t immediately be reached.

“Donald Trump and Scott Pruitt’s attempt to delay the implementation of these crucial protections had no basis in law, and we are glad to see their effort to do the bidding of the fossil fuel industry fail,” said Joanne Spalding, chief climate counsel of the Sierra Club, one of six environmental groups that challenged the action.

According to the Environmental Defense Fund, another of the challengers, the regulation affects 18,000 oil and gas wells built or modified since September 2015. Suspending the rule, it said, could

result in the release of up to 17,000 tons of methane pollution, 4,700 tons of smog-forming volatile organic compounds and 362,000 pounds of benzene and other air pollutants.

Federal law mandates “that agencies use the same procedures when they amend or repeal a rule as they used to issue the rule in the first instance,” the D.C. Circuit said, citing a 2015 Supreme Court decision. The appeals court noted that its own 1992 precedent explained that “an agency issuing a legislative rule is itself bound by the rule until that rule is amended or revoked” and “may not alter [it] without notice and comment.”

The court rejected the Trump administration’s claim that the EPA held “inherent authority” to suspend the rule.

The panel also dismissed EPA and industry arguments that the final rule published in 2016 differed significantly from the initial proposal,

and that therefore the Obama administration had denied oil and gas producers their opportunity to comment during the rule-making process.

The Trump EPA sought to halt several aspects of the Obama rule, including the decision to regulate low-production wells; the requirement that a professional

engineer certify proper design of vent systems; the grounds for exempting pneumatic pumps from regulation; and an alternative method of proving compliance.

"The administrative record...makes clear that industry groups had ample opportunity to comment on all four issues on which EPA granted reconsideration, and

indeed, that in several instances the agency incorporated those comments directly into the final rule," the appeals court found. The court said the EPA action was "arbitrary, capricious" and "in excess of" its legal authority."

The unsigned decision carried the votes of Judges David Tatel and Robert Wilkins. In dissent, Judge

Janice Rogers Brown argued that the court lacked authority to review Mr. Pruitt's decision to suspend the rule while the review was under way.

Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as 'EPA Push on Emissions Standards Blocked.'

The New York Times Senate Republicans Lay Low on the Fourth, or Face Single-Minded Pressure (UNE)

Campbell Robertson, Dave Philipps, Jess Bidgood and Emily Cochrane

8-10 minutes

Senator Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, greeted a supporter on Tuesday along the Fourth of July parade route in Eastport. Sarah Rice for The New York Times

ALDERSON, W.Va. — In normal times, the Fourth of July parade is a fat pitch down the middle for the grinning politician. For instance, here was Senator Joe Manchin III, a Democrat facing re-election next year in a state that President Trump won by 42 points, waving unchecked among the firefighters, beauty queens and county commissioners who streamed up Maple Avenue.

Political disputes have never impinged on the festivities here, said Karen Lobban, 70, who has been involved with Alderson's parade in one way or another for all of its 56 years.

But, she added, "Things are different now."

Mr. Manchin's Republican colleague in West Virginia, Senator Shelley Moore Capito, was not here on Tuesday as she had been two years earlier. She released a YouTube message but had no public events for the day. The Republican senator next door in Ohio, Rob Portman, had none either. Nor did the two Republican senators in Iowa. The parades in Colorado proceeded without Senator Cory Gardner.

It is a tough summer for Senate Republicans, who are trying to combine a long-promised repeal of the Affordable Care Act with a replacement that has, in legislation drafted so far, been as popular as sunburn. Protesters have held sit-ins at Senate offices, phone lines have been jammed and editorial writers have blasted their states' congressional delegations. Planes have even flown admonitory, if occasionally poorly conceived, banners over state capitals.

Republican senators have had to decide whether public appearances

would be fruitful or the crowds hostile. Many lawmakers seem to have given up on town hall-style meetings and parades. Others are still braving them, knowing they may get an earful on the health care bills.

"Never before, in the 15 times that I've marched in this parade, have I had people so focused on a single issue," Senator Susan Collins of Maine, who rejected the latest version of the bill, said in an interview shortly after walking the parade route in Eastport, Me. "I think it's because health care is so personal."

On Tuesday, Ms. Collins and the few other Republican senators who ventured out — most of them opponents of the current bill, and most in rather remote locales — were largely rewarded with encouragement to keep fighting.

This may be promising for other senators who are not planning to stay in all week. Ms. Capito and Mr. Portman, for example, have public events set for the coming days. The delay in voting on the Senate bill, which Ms. Capito strongly rebuffed, has taken some of the heat off, though activists in West Virginia said signs had been readied for Tuesday's parades just in case.

Other Republicans will soon be out and about, and some already have been. Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana was met with chants of "Vote no!" in a Baton Rouge church on Friday as he discussed the state's recovery from the 2016 floods. Senator Jerry Moran of Kansas will hold three town hall-style meetings this week in the western part of the state, and Senator Charles E. Grassley of Iowa has scheduled nine as part of his annual tour of the state's 99 counties. Senator Patrick J. Toomey of Pennsylvania is holding a televised meeting on Wednesday, albeit with an invitation-only audience.

While the receptions they receive may vary, judging by those in the streets on Tuesday, the primary subject will not.

"Health care! Health care! Health care!" Hilary Georgia, a part-time resident of Eastport, cried as Ms. Collins passed the spectators in camp chairs unfolded before neat wooden houses.

Eastport, which is recognized as the easternmost city in the United States, draws a large and festive crowd on Independence Day, even though it is remote. So is Wrangell, Alaska, where Senator Lisa Murkowski, another key Republican in the health care debate, took part in a parade on Tuesday as well.

Senator Dean Heller of Nevada rode a horse on Tuesday in a Fourth of July parade in Ely. Kim Raff for The New York Times

There was no escaping politics, however. The reception for Ms. Collins was one of gratitude and fulsome thanks for her disapproval of the Senate bill, mixed with some anxiety over whether she would stick to her position.

"I'm still concerned because I know it keeps getting revised," said Kristin McKinlay, 44, an independent voter who is worried that a new bill could leave her without health insurance and stopped Ms. Collins to introduce herself because she had called the senator's office so many times. "I hope we have her commitment."

At a late-morning parade in Ely, a small city in northern Nevada surrounded for miles by only sagebrush and juniper trees, Senator Dean Heller, who has come out against the bill, rode down Aultman Street on a horse.

"Get in line behind Trump!" one man shouted, while an older man offered, "Thanks for protecting Medicare!" Generally, however, things remained subdued in Ely — perhaps in part because, as several people along the parade route said, residents were just surprised to see Mr. Heller there.

This was still more activity than anything done by Mr. Gardner of Colorado, who has not held a town hall-style meeting this year. Coloradans have noticed. In

February, hundreds gathered for a mock town hall-style meeting in Denver, where they addressed questions to a cardboard cutout of the senator. Last week, wheelchair-bound constituents occupied his office for 60 hours in protest of cuts proposed in the health bill, before being dragged out by the police.

Mr. Gardner's Fourth of July was devoid of public events, though on July 3, he could be seen on his front lawn in his hometown, Yuma, playing with squirt guns and smoke bombs with his children.

This was as combative as his holiday was likely to get. Even though one in four residents of Yuma County receives Medicaid assistance, and many would probably lose their health care coverage under the Senate bill, those who disagree around Yuma tend to keep quiet.

"I wanted to say something so bad, let him know what I thought," said a woman on a nearby porch, who gave her name only as Edna and identified herself as a 76-year-old lifelong Republican. She said several people in her family would lose coverage if the Affordable Care Act's expansion of Medicaid were rolled back, but when she ran into Mr. Gardner with his grandmother at the Yuma Days dance at the local high school a week ago, she let it drop.

"I went to school with his aunt," Edna said. "I see his mom and dad daily. We are all friendly. Am I going to boo at him in front of his grandmother in her wheelchair?"

There is also the question of whether talking to one's senators, much less yelling at them, will make much of a difference anyway, a pessimistic thought on a day celebrating the ideals of self-government.

"I think they've got their priorities mixed up," said Connie Christiansen, standing on the lawn of her family's house in Shell Rock, Iowa, having watched as Boy Scouts, tractors, ATVs and musicians — but no United States senators — passed by.

If she saw Mr. Grassley, she said, she would tell him to retire. She had simply forgotten about Iowa's other

senator, Joni Ernst.

Ms. Christiansen called her 25-year-old cousin, Maggie Cain, over with a

question: What do you think about talking to senators?

"I feel like it wouldn't really make a difference," Ms. Cain replied.

"See?" Ms. Christiansen said. "It doesn't make a difference how young you are. You feel the same. Helpless."

The
Washington
Post

At parades and protests, GOP lawmakers get earful about health care (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/davewei gel?fref=ts>

9-12 minutes

EASTPORT, Maine — For the 15th year, Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) spent July 4 marching through this town of 1,331, a short boat ride away from Canada. She walked and waved, next to marching bands and Shiner-driven lobster boats. Her constituents cheered — and then asked whether she would vote against repealing the Affordable Care Act.

"There was only one issue. That's unusual. It's usually a wide range of issues," Collins said in an interview after the parade. "I heard, over and over again, encouragement for my stand against the current version of the Senate and House health-care bills. People were thanking me, over and over again. 'Thank you, Susan!' 'Stay strong, Susan!'"

Collins, whose opposition to the Better Care Reconciliation Act helped derail last week's plans for a quick vote, is being lobbied to smother it and make Congress start over. Republicans, who skipped the usual committee process in the hopes of passing a bill quickly, are spending the Fourth of July recess fending off protesters, low poll numbers and newspaper front pages that warn of shuttered hospitals and 22 million people being shunted off their insurance. It was a bill, Collins said, that she just couldn't vote for.

"If you took a blank sheet of paper and said, 'How could we get a bill that would really hammer Maine,' this would be it," said Sen. Angus King (I-Maine), who walked ahead of Collins in the parade.

Few Republicans have responded like Collins, who let voters know where to find her. Last month, when Congress broke for the long holiday, just four of the Senate's 52 Republicans — Collins, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.), Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.), and Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) — announced appearances at Fourth of July parades. Just three — Cruz, Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) — said they would hold public town hall meetings. All have criticized the bill; three "no" votes would sink it.

See where the Senate health-care bill's subsidy cuts will affect Americans most

Still, the relative scarceness of the senators — more of them joined a delegation to Afghanistan this week than scheduled town halls — challenged the busy liberal "resistance" movement. Since the repeal debate began, protesters have made direct confrontations with elected officials a central part of their opposition to the Republican bill — copying what worked for tea party activists, who packed Democratic town halls during the lengthy 2009-2010 Affordable Care Act debate.

In the run-up to July 4, activists shared details of Republican appearances on sites created by the progressive group Indivisible ("Red, White, and You") and the crowd-sourced Town Hall Project. Democratic senators who spoke at a June 28 rally outside the Capitol repeatedly urged activists to make noise wherever they saw Republicans. It was the protesters, they said, who had repeatedly spoiled Republicans' plans to pass a bill and move on to tax restructuring. A president who had once floated a special session of Congress to repeal the Affordable Care Act had become distracted by feuds with the media. The "resistance," Democrats said, had not become distracted by anything.

"Thinking back to February recess, it was all we could do to keep up with your energy and follow all the incredible actions you took," Indivisible organizers wrote in a weekend fundraising message to supporters. "Over June, we were able to [move] methodically to target senators in specific states while also facilitating coordinated actions across the country. And as the delayed bill proves — THIS WORKS!"

Over the weekend, and on July 4, activists had only a few chances to prove it. In Kentucky, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) navigated around an estimated 85 protesters — many organized by Planned Parenthood — to tell Hardin County Republicans that he was still trying to solve the "Rubik's Cube" called the Better Care Reconciliation Act.

"Obamacare is a disaster," said McConnell, according to video captured by the Louisville Courier-Journal. "No action is not an option. But what to replace it with is very challenging."

McConnell did not explain how the Better Care Reconciliation Act might change, and some of the ideas floated to win votes have fallen flat with skeptical lawmakers. The idea of offering subsidies for cheaper plans that did not include the Affordable Care Act's "essential health benefits," favored by Cruz as a compromise, did not satisfy Collins.

"If you have a health savings account that is federally funded, that equals the deductible, that can work, but it has to be designed right," Collins said. "I don't want to see insurance that's not really insurance."

The Republicans' time-crunched effort to pass a health-care bill is hitting a lot of resistance in the Senate. The Post's Paige Cunningham explains five key reasons the party is struggling to move their plan forward. The Post's Paige W. Cunningham explains the key reasons why the party struggles to move a health-care plan forward. (Video: Jenny Starrs/Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

Yet with protesters kept outside, McConnell faced no interruptions or skeptical questions. Cruz faced something else in McAllen, Tex., a city on the Mexican border that had voted heavily for Hillary Clinton last year. Early Tuesday morning, as Cruz grabbed a microphone, protesters behind a short fence waved signs reading "No Transfer of Wealth 4 Our Health" and "No Repeal, No Medicaid Cuts." Supporters with Cruz gear tried, in vain, to drown them out.

"Isn't freedom wonderful?" Cruz asked. "In much of the world, if protesters showed up, they would face violent government oppression. In America, we've got something different."

In a follow-up interview with the Texas Tribune, Cruz characterized the protesters as members of "a small group of people on the left who right now are very angry."

Other Republicans used similar language to explain why cutting back on open forums made sense. Some have pivoted to call-in events, where there's no threat of moments caught on video going viral. Some have cited the shooting of House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) to argue that public forums would expose them and local police to unnecessary risks.

"The last thing we're going to do is give in to a lot of left-wing activists and media," Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) told a radio interviewer last month. "With these security situations, I don't know how any member of Congress can do a town hall."

The senators who did appear at Fourth of July events found ways to minimize the risks. Apart from Cruz, all appeared in fairly remote areas; Murkowski and Collins stopped by island towns far from the states' population centers.

Heller, the only Republican up for reelection next year in a state President Trump lost, made a horseback appearance in Ely, Nev., the largest town in a rural county that gave Trump a 53.5-point landslide. Reporters who made the trek heard something that has become rare: Well-wishers asking a senator to vote for the Republican bill. (Heller opposed the first version but is being lobbied to vote for a revision.)

"Glad I could help them get away from the east coast and to one of the most beautiful parts of NV," Heller tweeted at reporters after the Ely parade.

In Maine and Alaska, where Republican senators came out loud and early against the bill, residents applauded their lawmakers. Murkowski, who has criticized the Better Care Reconciliation Act for defunding Planned Parenthood and cutting Medicaid, was deluged by health-care questions as she walked a parade in the small town of Wrangell. Kirk Garbisch, 63, thanked her for being "the voice of reason" and slowing down the bill.

"She's looking at the issues and not just following party lines," he said. "There have been so few Republicans who can get in some good reason, rather than blindly following."

Murkowski was hearing that particular sort of praise again and again. She moved comfortably through a crowd gathered to watch children street-race and lumberjacks saw logs.

"Most people don't ask 'for or against,'" she said. "They just say, 'Make sure you're taking care of our interests.' In fairness for those that do the 'for or against,' everybody is pretty much [saying] they don't think this is good for us."

After the parades, there will be few chances for Better Care

**The
New York
Times**

After Years of Growth, Automakers Are Cutting U.S. Jobs (UNE)

Bill Vlasic

9-11 minutes

DETROIT — After a prolonged recovery that culminated in two years of record sales, the American auto industry is slowing down, with fewer buyers in dealer showrooms and fewer workers on the factory floor.

Automakers said this week that sales dropped in June for a sixth consecutive month, falling by 3 percent from a year ago, a trend that analysts do not see letting up anytime soon. And as demand falls, there is less work in the nation's auto-assembly plants — primarily those that build traditional passenger cars.

Last year, those plants hit a peak of 211,000 workers, a 55 percent increase since the depths of the recession in 2009. That figure has dropped by more than 2 percent so far this year, to 206,000 workers in April, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and could shrink further as sales continue to fall.

"There's been a consistent reduction in plant output in the last six months, and what is ahead in the next six months could be pretty startling," said Ron Harbour, an auto manufacturing expert at the consulting firm Oliver Wyman.

The decline signals at least a pause in Detroit's resurgence from the dark days of the financial crisis, which General Motors and Chrysler survived only through bankruptcy and bailouts. It's happening despite President Trump's promises to pressure automakers to save and create good-paying American factory jobs.

Workers at the General Motors assembly plant in Orion, Mich., listening to Mary Barra, the chief executive. Employment at the nation's auto-assembly plants is down more than 2 percent this year. Rebecca Cook/Reuters

Reconciliation Act critics to face their senators during the recess. Cassidy's town halls have passed and mostly focused on flood relief. Cruz's events in Texas, sponsored by the conservative group Concerned Veterans for America, require attendees to register first.

Activists are encouraging one another to get more ambitious — and creative. Protesters in Colorado got headlines for sitting down at one of Sen. Cory Gardner's (R-Colo.) offices and refusing to leave. The progressive Action Network urged

Industry analysts said consumers might be pulling back on spending because of tighter credit conditions and more expensive vehicle loans. "Higher interest rates and uncertainty around fiscal policies will slow economic growth, and may become headwinds for auto sales," said Charlie Chesbrough, an economist for the research firm Cox Automotive.

The impact on employment is uneven, however, reflecting the evolving tastes of American car buyers.

With low gas prices motivating buyers to trade in traditional cars for larger models, factories making trucks and sport utility vehicles are humming, with some producing around the clock on three shifts. Even as overall vehicle sales declined in June, sales of trucks and S.U.V.s rose about 4 percent from a year earlier.

That consumer trend is playing out in the opposite direction at plants building small and midsize cars, which are scaling back or shutting down entirely while they are converted to produce trucks and S.U.V.s.

What none of the automakers are doing is building new plants or adding a significant number of new jobs anytime soon.

"The industry has dramatically expanded employment in the United States in the last several years, but the growth is just not there anymore," said Harley Shaiken, a labor professor at the University of California, Berkeley.

Auto Sales Are Slowing

Seasonally adjusted annual rate

And companies are increasingly looking to build their less profitable car models outside the United States. Ford Motor, for example, said in June that it would move production of its Focus sedan to China from Michigan.

protesters to wage more sit-ins on Thursday.

The Health 202 newsletter

Your daily guide to the health-care debate.

In New York, two Long Island activist groups are planning "health-care cook-outs" close to the offices of Rep. Peter T. King (R-N.Y.) and Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.), under the motto "We can't let seniors, children and people with disabilities GET BURNED!" Topher Spiro, the vice president of health policy at the

The company had previously planned to move the car to a new plant in Mexico, but canceled the project after meeting stiff opposition from Mr. Trump.

Workers in the body shop of the Ford plant in Hangzhou, China. Ford said in June that it would move production of its Focus sedan to China from Michigan. Giulia Marchi for The New York Times

Ford's China move will not cost any American jobs, because Focus production in Michigan will be replaced by trucks and S.U.V.s.

But the decision could inflame trade tensions. And if falling sales over all in the United States continue to cut employment in American plants, it could spur protectionist measures by the Trump administration, like imposing border taxes on imported vehicles.

Scaling back jobs in car plants is part of a newfound discipline among automakers to avoid bloated payrolls and inventories when sales start slipping.

That is a big change from pre-recession times, when the domestic automakers were too often awash in overproduction, or saddled with union contracts that funneled idled workers into so-called job banks with nearly full pay and benefits.

That program was eliminated in subsequent labor pacts with the United Automobile Workers. Moreover, the Detroit companies have also hired large numbers of lower-wage, entry-level employees with less costly unemployment benefits.

Those moves have made it easier for the companies to scale back production based on changes in the market.

G.M., for example, has reduced the number of shifts at several of its domestic plants, the most recent reduction being its announcement of cutbacks at a factory in Kansas that makes the Chevrolet Malibu

Center for American Progress, urged activists on Twitter to keep organizing, whether or not Republicans would face them.

"Protesting Trumpcare this week is the pinnacle of democracy and patriotism," he wrote.

Weigel reported from Washington. Carpenter reported from Eastport, Maine. O'Malley reported from Wrangell, Alaska.

Read more at PowerPost

midsize sedan — a segment that is rapidly declining as more buyers gravitate to S.U.V.s.

A General Motors assembly plant in Kansas City, Kan., which makes the midsize Chevrolet Malibu sedan. G.M. recently announced cutbacks there. Orlin Wagner/Associated Press

"These decisions are always tough," said Alan Batey, the president of G.M.'s North American operations. "But at the end of the day we have to be disciplined about our production plans."

Fiat Chrysler, for its part, has eliminated production of compact and midsize cars altogether at factories in Michigan and Illinois, temporarily laying off workers as it retools the plants to produce S.U.V.s and trucks.

About 4,200 employees at the company's factory in Belvidere, Ill., recently returned to work after being temporarily laid off several months ago, and will begin producing a new S.U.V. model at the plant later this month.

The bright spots in the overall employment picture are the expansion of production at niche automakers like the electric-car company Tesla, and by foreign car companies including BMW, which is adding jobs at its sole United States plant, in South Carolina.

And automakers are hopeful that sales of larger vehicles will get even stronger in the remaining six months of this year, as has been the case in previous years. "Seasonal factors drive a much higher retail mix of trucks and utilities in the second half of the year, so it makes sense to make production adjustments on the car side," said James Cain, a spokesman for General Motors.

But few in the industry expect any major job growth anytime soon. G.M., for example, recently scaled back its projections for industry sales in the second half of this year,

and analysts are predicting that annual sales will fall below 17 million vehicles next year for the first time since 2014.

"We are beginning to enter a period we call the post-peak," said Jonathan Smoke, chief economist for Cox Automotive, which operates the auto-research sites Kelley Blue Book and Autotrader.

One factory that thrived after G.M.'s bankruptcy in

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
Elinson

9-12 minutes

July 4, 2017 10:59 a.m. ET

When the city of San Jose had trouble affording services such as road repair and libraries because of the cost of police pensions, it obtained voter approval to pare them. What happened next proved sobering for other cities in the same pickle. Hundreds of police officers quit. Response times for serious calls rose.

Faced with labor-union litigation, San Jose this year restored previous retirement ages and cost-of-living increases for existing police officers, and last month it gave them a raise.

Police pensions are among the worst-funded in the nation. Retirement systems for police and firefighters have just a median 71 cents for every dollar needed to cover future liabilities, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis of data provided by Merritt Research Services for cities of 30,000 or more.

The combined shortfall in the plans, which are the responsibility of municipal governments, is more than \$80 billion, nearly equal to New York City's annual budget.

Broader municipal pension plans have a median 78 cents of every dollar needed to cover future liabilities, according to data from Merritt. The 100 largest U.S. corporate pension plans have 85% of assets needed on hand, according to Milliman Inc. data as of March 31.

And yet any attempt to bring police pensions into line with today's municipal budgets and stock-market performance runs into the reality that many officers won't stand for it—and they often have the public behind them.

"They have extra clout because people love police," said Dallas

2009 was its small-car plant in Orion Township, Mich., north of Detroit.

The General Motors plant in Orion, Mich., is down to one shift of workers, with little hope of expanding production soon. Rebecca Cook/Reuters

The company invested more than \$500 million to refurbish the factory and begin producing subcompact cars. Last year it added production

Mayor Mike Rawlings. "I love police. You love police. An electrician—you don't have that emotional tie."

His city, like San Jose, found itself facing widespread police-officer resignations when it moved to cut their pensions. In Dallas, the situation became so difficult the state legislature stepped in this spring to work out a solution.

Police pensions were the first nonmilitary retirement systems to be created in the U.S., in second half of the 19th century. In later years, when municipal budgets were tight, augmenting pension promises in lieu of raises became a way governments could make peace with politically powerful police unions without incurring immediate new spending.

In the 1980s and 1990s, robust investment returns made governments' pension promises look affordable. By 2001, major police and firefighter plans followed by the Public Plans Database, which tracks 150 major state and local pension plans, had a median 101% of what they needed to pay for future obligations.

The 2008 financial crisis wiped out pension-plan earnings at the same time that it put stress on municipal budgets, leading some cities to contribute less to the plans each year than what actuaries calculated was needed.

Also, many cities continued to assume robust 1990s-era investment returns when they calculated annual pension contributions. Their pension debt grew as those returns failed to materialize and cities didn't adjust their contributions to the plans.

Memphis, Tenn., gambled it could cut police pensions without any impact on public safety. The city council voted in 2014 to end pensions for municipal workers, including the police, with 7.5 years of service or less, and replace the pensions with a hybrid plan combining pension and 401(k)-style benefits.

of its new battery-powered Chevrolet Bolt.

But demand for small, ultra-fuel-efficient cars has waned drastically with lower fuel prices. Despite its modern production technology, the Orion plant is down to one shift of workers, with little hope of expanding production soon.

Workers at the plant were heartened this year when G.M. added a small operation to convert

Ill-Funded Police Pensions Put Cities in a Bind (UNE)

In the following two years, about 100 officers affected by the changes left the force, out of a total of about 2,000. Homicides rose to a record 228 last year from 167 in 2014. Billboards erected by the police union around town read, "Welcome to Memphis: 228 homicides in 2016, down over 500 police officers." Memphis currently has 1,928 officers, down from 2,416 in 2012.

The city's mayor, Jim Strickland, has since pledged to increase police staffing. A spokeswoman for the city said enrollment in the police academy is increasing despite the reduced benefits package. Even so, city officials recently announced a \$6.1 million grant for retention bonuses. Meanwhile, the police union is trying to get certain benefits restored in court.

One of the first cities that tried to bring police pension costs down was San Jose, where former Mayor Chuck Reed asked voters to approve pension cuts as part of a 2012 ballot measure.

Among the hundreds of police officers who quit after voters said yes to the change was Tim Watermulder, who left to join the Oakland police department in 2013. It had been announced that the police-academy class in which he graduated would be the first to operate under a new system providing lower cost-of-living increases and a retirement age of 60 instead of 50.

"You start to see what police work is really like every day," said Mr. Watermulder, 35 years old, who fought in Iraq with the U.S. military before becoming a police officer. "I really started thinking about 'Can I do this job till I'm 60?'"

About 180 of 1,109 sworn officer positions in San Jose are currently vacant. San Jose has the lowest number of officers per capita among the nation's 35 largest cities, according to a Journal analysis of Federal Bureau of Investigation data from 2015, the most recent available.

Bolts into autonomous vehicles for testing purposes.

While it hardly added any new jobs, the autonomous-vehicle project was a welcome addition to a plant operating at well below capacity. "It's great to be a part of a product launch — even if it is a small one," said Lindsay Green, one of a handful of employees working on the self-driving prototypes.

Response times for the most serious calls rose to an average of 7.3 minutes last year from 6.1 minutes in fiscal 2011, according to the police department.

San Jose is still safe compared with many other cities, but its violent-crime rate jumped last year to the highest since 2008. "A lot of it had to do with us not having enough officers," said San Jose Police Chief Eddie Garcia. His advice to other cities seeking to shore up their finances by cutting police benefits: "Don't make a crisis into a bigger crisis."

Crime has risen in many cities in recent years, not just in those that have lost officers. Per capita homicide rates are up in 27 of the country's 35 largest cities since 2014, according to homicide data. The causes of such increases are hard to pinpoint, but there is little doubt "losing hundreds of officers would make a big difference in the ability to control crime," said Richard Rosenfeld, a criminologist at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

San Jose, to retain and recruit officers, has gone beyond rolling back changes it had tried to make in retirement ages and cost-of-living increases for existing police officers. Police got a 10% raise last month, to be followed by 3% raises in 2018 and 2019.

Since those measures were put in place, police-academy enrollment has risen sharply. "It looks like we're now on the right track," a city spokesman said.

Dallas has had an unusual struggle with the police-pension issue. The funding level of its plan for police and firefighters earlier this year fell to just 36%, among the lowest in the nation.

A trouble spot has been a plan created 25 years ago in an effort to keep experienced officers from leaving for police jobs elsewhere after they qualified for police pensions around age 50.

Officials figured they couldn't afford sufficient wage increases to keep

those officers, so instead they would sweeten pension benefits, said Steve Bartlett, who was mayor when the special fund was created.

That deal allowed officers who worked into their 50s to earn a pension and a salary at the same time. Terms provided for a guaranteed 8% to 10% return on the assets contributed to the plan, forcing the pension fund to make up the difference when market returns came in below that threshold. Officers who stuck around long enough could potentially accumulate \$1 million in the special fund.

"They said, 'Hey, the retirement is top notch. You may not be paid well

initially, but in the end you'll be a millionaire,'" said Brad Uptmore, a Dallas police officer for 10 years.

The promised return became harder to deliver after the financial crisis, as real-estate investments the fund made from Hawaii to Paris went sour and triggered more than \$500 million in losses.

Spooked by the losses and talk of benefit cuts, hundreds of police and firefighters quit, withdrawing \$500 million from the roughly \$3 billion fund and pushing it closer to insolvency.

The city sought help from the Texas legislature. In late May the state government approved a package

that requires the city to contribute an additional \$25 million to \$40 million a year to the pension plan while also cutting benefits.

Under the legislation, a police officer who is now 40 and retires in 2035 can get a pension that year of \$95,339, compared with \$109,583 under the old pension structure, according to a hypothetical calculated by the pension fund.

The changes may not be enough. The plan will still have less than half what it needs to cover its liabilities, according to an estimate provided by the fund to legislators. A review by S&P Global Ratings concluded that "more reforms will be needed."

Mayor Rawlings agreed the city has "much work ahead."

Many longtime Dallas police officers won't be around to see how the changes pan out, including Mr. Uptmore. He left to join the much smaller police department of Southlake, Texas, in the spring of last year—one of 336 Dallas officers who left in 2016.

"Once you realize there's no gold at the end of the rainbow, I think you stop pursuing that," Mr. Uptmore said.

Appeared in the July 5, 2017, print edition as 'police pensions Put Cities in Bind.'

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**
July 4, 2017 3:57
p.m. ET 153
COMMENTS

6-8 minutes

Editorial : Blue State Budget Breakdowns

Budget showdowns cast a pall over the holiday weekend in Connecticut, Illinois and New Jersey, and it couldn't happen to a nicer group of politicians. While all dysfunctional governments are dysfunctional in their own way, the three blue states are hitting the same progressive dead end.

In Illinois, Democrats spent the long weekend coaxing Republican legislators to join their suicide pact to raise taxes to plug a \$6 billion deficit and pay down a \$15 billion backlog of bills. And don't forget the \$130 billion unfunded pension liability—none of which will be solved by the \$5 billion tax hike. GOP Governor Bruce Rauner vetoed the bill on Tuesday but may be overridden.

After credit-rating agencies threatened to downgrade the state debt to junk, Mr. Rauner proposed raising the state's income tax to 4.95% from 3.75% and the corporate income rate to 9.5% from 7.75% for four years. In return he asked for a property tax freeze and modest reforms to workers compensation. Yet Mr. Rauner already signed off on a huge property tax hike in Chicago—homeowner bills have increased by a quarter in two years—to pay for teacher pensions.

The state legislature is controlled by public unions that refuse to compromise. But the budget crisis became more urgent after a federal judge on Friday ordered the state to make long overdue Medicaid

payments, which had been subordinated to pensions and worker pay. While states can't go bankrupt, Illinois is showing they can default—and that they will prioritize public workers over other creditors.

Pensions will consume about a quarter of Illinois's general fund this year. Nearly 40% of state education dollars go toward teacher pensions, and the state paid nearly as much into the State Universities Retirement System last year as it spent on higher education.

Anemic revenue and economic growth can't keep up with entitlement spending. The state's GDP has ticked up by a mere 0.8% annually over the last four years compared to 2% nationwide and 1.4% in the Great Lakes region. Since 2010 more than 520,000 Illinois residents on net have fled to other states. (See the nearby chart for some state comparisons.)

Democrats held veto-proof super majorities in the legislature during Mr. Rauner's first two years. But House Speaker Michael Madigan wants to force the Governor to repudiate his campaign promise not to raise taxes and make Republicans share political responsibility for the state's economic failures. Amid deteriorating public services, Mr. Madigan persuaded 15 House Republicans to back Mr. Rauner's tax hike a la carte, which spared 11 Democrats in conservative districts from having to take a tough vote. The state Senate followed Monday.

If Republicans override Mr. Rauner's veto without insisting on substantive reforms, they'll repeat the mistake of Connecticut's former Republican Governor Jodi Rell who

in 2009 raised the state's top rate to 6.5% from 5% while doing little to rationalize spending or fix the state's bankrupt political culture. See how well that turned out.

Democrats have since raised the Nutmeg State's top rate to 6.99%. Revenue and economic growth have slumped as high-earning residents have decamped for lower-tax climes. Hedge-fund managers are struggling to sell their palaces in Greenwich. The legislature's Office of Fiscal Analysis downgraded income-tax revenues this year by \$1.1 billion, and sales and corporate taxes are projected to fall by \$450 million.

Meanwhile, pension contributions have doubled since 2010 and along with retiree health care—most pay no deductible and a maximum \$15 co-pay—make up 20% of the budget. Democratic Gov. Dannel Malloy has ordered cuts to local aid while legislators debate how to close a \$5.1 billion budget gap.

Mr. Malloy wants to shift some of the teacher pension costs to cities, but Democratic legislators howl that this will further drive up the state's astronomical property taxes. The tax bill on a \$300,000 home in Hartford is \$22,287. Many Democrats would prefer to raise sales taxes, which shows that liberals will eventually come after everyone else after they tap out the wealthy.

For another example, see New Jersey where lame duck Republican Gov. Chris Christie has raided the not-for-profit health insurer Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield to finance rising state health-care costs. State residents were taken hostage this weekend when Mr. Christie ordered a shutdown of state beaches and

parks until Democrats passed a budget that requires Horizon to spend some \$300 million in "excess" reserves on expanded opioid treatment, among other public health services.

Democratic Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto resisted this tax on Horizon policy holders if only because they include state workers but then compromised with Mr. Christie to return "surplus" funds to enrollees. But the shakedown is a warning to Garden State taxpayers. Pension payments have doubled over the past two years and will triple over the next five. To pay the state's bills, Democratic gubernatorial candidate Phil Murphy has promised to soak the rich—then rinse and repeat. The state's top income-tax rate is already 8.97% and the Tax Foundation says its property taxes are the highest in the land.

Amid these blue state meltdowns, Maine's GOP Gov. Paul LePage suspended non-emergency government functions to impel his legislature to drop a lodging tax hike and roll back a voter initiative backed by the teachers union that increased the state's income tax this year by three percentage points to 10.15%, the highest in the Northeast. Temporarily closing the DMV was a small price to pay for preventing the kind of fiscal collapses that are occurring in Illinois, Connecticut and New Jersey.

To adapt Margaret Thatcher, the problem with progressive governance is you eventually run out of other people's money.

Editorial : If Trump takes a protectionist approach on steel, it could backfire

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11-14 minutes

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Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

July 4 at 7:24 PM

AS THE Friday start of the Group of 20 economic summit in Hamburg approaches, the Trump administration represents one of the chief sources of uncertainty in global trade. It has been just over two months since President Trump ordered a review of how steel imports affect American national security, which could usher in protectionist

measures on a wide range of products from a wide range of countries. The results of the review are due any day now; the United States' trading partners are right to fret about where it might lead, and despite the "America first" rhetoric surrounding Mr. Trump's move, Americans should be nervous, too.

It's not that all is well in the global market for steel. To the contrary, major governments, including President Barack Obama's administration, have long recognized that global overcapacity is creating unsustainable downward pressure on producers' prices and that China's bloated state-run industry is the locus of that overcapacity. Hence, the Obama administration imposed trade barriers on Chinese steel, which is one reason China's share of the U.S. market has been declining of late — though Chinese exporters are suspected of diverting some through cutout firms in Vietnam.

The question is whether a unilateral American invocation of the president's rarely used power to create national security exceptions to normal trade law is the right way

to deal with this situation. Probably not. Given China's relatively small U.S. market share, and the fact that anti-dumping and countervailing measures already apply to China, it is not clear what could be accomplished through new barriers to imports — unless they were applied to other steel exporters. And applying trade barriers to those other countries makes no sense, in national security terms, because most of them are at worst not hostile to the United States and in many cases are close U.S. allies. In fact, of the top 10 foreign steel suppliers, of which Canada is the largest, six are tied to the United States through NATO, NAFTA or bilateral defense treaties; two others, Taiwan and Brazil, are old U.S. friends.

The Daily 202 newsletter

PowerPost's must-read morning briefing for decision-makers.

In addition to being intellectually dishonest, asserting that steel imports pose a threat to U.S. national security could be internationally destabilizing. Global institutions such as the World Trade Organization are premised on the

concept that trade is in their members' mutual interest and that they will therefore rarely, if ever, seek exceptions to the rules based on subjective individual claims such as national security — as opposed to measurable violations such as dumping goods below production cost.

If the United States departs from that, other countries will be tempted to follow suit, potentially setting off spiraling global protectionism. Many U.S. exporters — such as those in agribusiness — would be vulnerable if that happened; so, too, would industries, such as auto manufacturing, that depend on a global supply chain. That is why steel-consuming companies in the United States, and many of his own more prudent advisers, are urging Mr. Trump not to act as if the U.S. national interest were equivalent to the narrow interests of the protection-craving steel industry. When it comes to trade policy, it's easy to shout "America first," but hard to define exactly what you mean by "America."

Editorial : The Supreme Court's modest decision on a controversial church-state question

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Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

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July 4 at 7:23 PM

DEPENDING ON whom you ask, the Supreme Court last week blew a hole in the wall between church and state — or issued a modest decision that calls for little more than reasonableness when the government interacts with religious groups. Who's right depends on what the court does from here and whether the justices can adopt

principles that allow for some curbs on public money flowing into religious activities.

The court considered the case of the Trinity Lutheran Church Child Learning Center, a Missouri preschool that was denied state funds to upgrade its playground surface, replacing coarse pea gravel with recycled tire rubber. Though Trinity Lutheran was near the top of the list of potential nonprofit grant recipients, a provision in the Missouri Constitution appeared to bar public grant money from going to religious institutions.

Affirming that "denying a generally available benefit solely on account of religious identity imposes a penalty on the free exercise of religion," the court repudiated the state's grant distribution policy. It "puts Trinity Lutheran to a choice: It may participate in an otherwise available benefit program or remain a religious institution," Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. wrote for the majority. Concurring, Justice Stephen G. Breyer compared the state's decision to cutting off churches from basic public safety

services such as police and fire protection.

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The question, then, is whether the court has signaled that a wide variety of public funding programs, including school vouchers, are constitutionally required to include religious institutions. Its broad language condemning the withholding of generally available funds to church organs such as Trinity Lutheran suggests a wide new legal avenue has opened for religious groups to demand a share of taxpayer money.

In fact, the court sent no such clear signal. Though the justices have ruled that, in this case, public money must flow directly to a church, the threat to the separation of church and state will remain relatively contained so long as the justices live up to some limits embedded in their reasoning.

Noting a past decision in which the court dealt more skeptically with claims from the religious side, Mr.

Roberts explained that the court ruled differently when the case concerned the trickier issue of public money funding an "essentially religious endeavor," such as training to join the Christian ministry. "Here, nothing of the sort can be said about a program to use recycled tires to resurface playgrounds," the chief justice noted. Picking up on this line of thinking, Mr. Breyer wrote, "I find relevant, and would emphasize, the particular nature of the 'public benefit' here at issue," stressing that he "would leave the application of the Free Exercise Clause to other kinds of public benefits for another day."

Between Mr. Roberts's and Mr. Breyer's words, a reasonable principle is identifiable: The government cannot deny churches public funding merely because they are churches, but the government may deny them funding if they would use it for religious endeavors. This principle should guide courts in future cases.

Vivian Yee

10-13 minutes

A figurine of Jesus in Najah Konja's home in Clarkston, Mich. Mr. Konja is among more than 100 Iraqi Christians in the Detroit area facing possible deportation under President Trump's clampdown on illegal immigration. Mark Felix for The New York Times

STERLING HEIGHTS, Mich. — A few Sundays ago, federal immigration agents walked through the doors of handsome houses here in the Detroit suburbs, brushing past tearful children, stunned wives and statuettes of the Virgin Mary in search of men whose time was up.

If the Trump administration prevails, more than 100 of these men may soon be deported, like the tens of thousands of other people rounded up this year as part of a national clampdown on illegal immigration.

But the arrests may have stunned this community more than most.

While President Trump was hurling verbal napalm at Mexico and vowing to keep out Muslims during his campaign, he was also promising to look out for people from these men's besieged corner of the world.

They are Christians from Iraq — a land that they and their families fled decades ago because, they say, to live as a Christian in Iraq is no life at all, and sometimes means death. They settled in Detroit and its suburbs, accumulating into what may now be the largest population of Chaldean Christians in the world. They opened businesses, founded a dozen Chaldean Catholic churches and rose in numbers and wealth.

Even so, they, too, are subject to American immigration law — despite what the Chaldean community took to be an ironclad promise from a president whose election many of them saw as a miracle from God, helped along by their donations, their prayers and blessings from religious leaders.

"Christians in the Middle East have been executed in large numbers. We cannot allow this horror to continue!" Mr. Trump said on Twitter in January, returning to a campaign-trail refrain that had captured Chaldean hearts and ballots across this stretch of Macomb and Oakland Counties. As the Chaldeans like to say, once with pride, now with fury,

the area helped tip Michigan to Mr. Trump in November.

Soon after the June 11 immigration raids, a local Chaldean noted the disconnect between tweet and deed. "Then why are you deporting them?" he wrote on Twitter, bracketing the question with a snarl of English, Aramaic and Arabic that would be unprintable in any language.

"Everyone thought this could not apply to us," said Nadine Yousif, a lawyer with CODE Legal Aid, a local organization coordinating the community's response to the raids.

Nahrain Hamama, center, with her children, from left, Brittany, Lauren, Lindsey and Christopher, at their home in West Bloomfield, Mich. Ms. Hamama's husband, Usama, was detained by federal immigration agents. Mark Felix for The New York Times

The immigration authorities give the same explanation they have given for the arrests of tens of thousands of Latinos and other immigrants without legal status since Mr. Trump took office: These people, too, are what the government refers to as "criminal aliens."

Though most of them came here legally, as refugees or through relatives who were American citizens, their green cards were revoked after criminal convictions on charges including theft, drug possession, rape and murder.

"The operation in this region was specifically conducted to address the very real public safety threat represented by the criminal aliens arrested," said Rebecca Adducci, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement official in Detroit.

The men had been allowed to stay, in some cases for decades, because the Iraqi government had refused to issue travel documents for them to return.

That changed in March, when Iraq agreed to begin accepting deportees in exchange for being dropped from the list of countries affected by Mr. Trump's revised travel ban, which barred citizens of several predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States.

Mr. Trump "broke his promise," said Nahrain Hamama, 54, whose husband has been detained.

If the administration reverses course, however, "then I would

consider voting for him again," she added.

Besides the 114 Iraqis arrested around Detroit, immigration agents have also picked up 85 Iraqis in other parts of the country since May, including Shiite Muslims and members of other religious and ethnic groups, such as Kurds and Yazidis.

A federal judge in Michigan last week blocked the government from deporting any of them for two weeks while he weighs whether he has the authority to hear their immigration cases.

The Iraqis argue that near-certain torture or even death awaits them in Iraq, where the Islamic State has targeted Christians, Shiites and other religious groups. Arabic-language news channels and social media regularly bring word of ancestral villages razed, Christian cemeteries shattered and Chaldean churches shuttered. Though their villages were recently liberated, most Christians have stayed away out of fear, taking refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Shenae Stevens, whose fiancé, Mr. Konja, was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents at their home in Clarkston. Mark Felix for The New York Times

Chaldeans, who practice Eastern Rite Catholicism, descend from the ancient Assyrians of what is now northern Iraq, where they are increasingly rare. Since 2007, nearly 30,000 Chaldeans have poured into the Detroit area, following waves of Iraqi Christian arrivals that began early in the last century and intensified after Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979. The number of Christians in Iraq has tumbled from about 1.4 million in 1987 to an estimated 250,000 last year, leaders of the community in the Detroit area said.

Many of the Michigan Chaldeans speak little or no Arabic. Tattoos of the Virgin Mary and crosses stipple their shoulders and wrists.

"The second they step foot out of the airport," after deportation to Iraq, "they're targets," said Wisam Naoum, a lawyer turned community activist.

Chaldeans had written off the Obama administration because of what they saw as its failure to accept more Iraqi Christian refugees. But Mr. Trump's original travel ban, issued in January, offered an implicit exception for

Christians in the Middle East, allowing persecuted religious minorities to enter as refugees even as it barred people from Muslim-majority countries.

(When Mr. Trump revised the travel ban, he dropped the exception in an attempt to neutralize lawsuits claiming that the ban discriminated against Muslims. The Supreme Court agreed last week to hear the case.)

It took only a day of arrests for Detroit's Chaldeans to lurch from security to panic.

"We anticipated they'd be picking up the worst of the worst," said Martin Manna, the president of the Chaldean Community Foundation, a social services organization, where even citizens and green card holders are calling to ask if they should worry. "Not people like Sam Hamama."

Usama Hamama, 54, a partner in a local supermarket who goes by Sam, was getting ready for church with his wife and four children when immigration agents knocked on the door of his spacious home in a quiet West Bloomfield subdivision. He had just enough time to collect his medications and say goodbye before being taken into custody.

Mr. Hamama, who arrived in the United States from Baghdad when he was 11, was convicted of a weapons possession charge after he flashed an unloaded gun during a road-rage confrontation with another driver in 1988. He was ordered deported in 1994.

His children view him differently. "I would never use the word 'felon' or 'criminal' or 'alien' for my dad," said Brittany Hamama, 20, his eldest child.

Nicole Sabatine, whose husband, Atheer Fawzi Ali, was detained in June. Mark Felix for The New York Times

Like many other Chaldeans, his wife was drawn to Mr. Trump by his opposition to abortion, his economic message and his promises of succor for Christians in the Middle East. But she could not bring herself to vote after Mr. Hamama warned her that their family could be snarled in Mr. Trump's immigration crackdown.

Another detainee, Najah Konja, was checking his emails over a cup of coffee on his back porch, looking out over the pond out back, when the doorbell sounded on June 11.

Mr. Konja, who goes by Nick, fled Iraq with his family at age 15, and later served 22 years in federal prison for selling cocaine. His green card was revoked, but since he could not be deported, he was able to stay, rise up the ranks at a chain of tobacco stores called Wild Bill's, become engaged and buy a house.

Unlike some other ex-felons, he said, he had bettered himself and contributed to the local economy. "I wasn't born here, but I'm more

American than them," said Mr. Konja, 55, speaking by phone from a jail in Port Huron, Mich.

Still, Mr. Konja and his family do not blame Mr. Trump. "A lot of this stuff, it probably doesn't even get to his desk," he said.

For other families, the separation from fathers and husbands has forced them into a rueful reckoning: The immigration crackdown they had always associated with other people had, somehow, leapt from

the southern border to their subdivisions.

"What's the difference between a Mexican and a Chaldean?" said Nicole Sabatine, whose husband, Atheer Fawzi Ali, 41, was detained in June. "When people, Mexicans, whatever, have kids here, taking their parent away is not the answer."

Mr. Ali's family fled Iraq in the early 1990s after his father, an army officer, defied an order from

Saddam Hussein. He lost his green card after breaking into a car as a teenager.

That Sunday in June, he had just enough time to say goodbye to his 12-year-old daughter, Natalia, before turning himself in.

"I'll always be there for you," he told her. "Even if I'm in Iraq."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Galston : Our Walled-Off Immigration Debate

William A. Galston

5-7 minutes

July 4, 2017 1:21 p.m. ET

Democratic analysts have begun a long-overdue review of their party's weakness among white working-class voters. Because postelection research has shown that immigration is important to these Americans, the review has brought to the surface a long-suppressed debate among Democrats about this contentious issue.

More than politics is at stake. The basic architecture of today's immigration policy was enacted more than half a century ago. Immigrants' share of the U.S. population has since tripled while economic opportunities for low-skilled workers have diminished. It is not unreasonable to ask whether a 1965 law is suitable for today's economy and society.

Among the Democrats weighing in is Stanley Greenberg, a veteran pollster who came to prominence in the mid-1980s for his study of "Reagan Democrats" in Macomb County, Mich. A month into the Trump presidency, Mr. Greenberg returned to Macomb County and interviewed white working-class Trump supporters who had previously voted for Barack Obama. "It was clear," he reports, "how

central concerns about immigration, borders, foreignness, and Islam were to their receptivity to his call to take back America. Many thought [Hillary] Clinton, on the other hand, wanted 'open borders.'" As they saw it, "Democrats have moved from seeking to manage and champion the nation's growing diversity to seeming to champion immigrant rights over American citizens'."

During a public event convened by the liberal magazine American Prospect, Mr. Greenberg was blunt about the political implications of his findings. "You can only succeed if people believe you want to manage immigration," he declared. Every center-left party in the West is struggling with this issue, he warned. "Sometimes it's fatal."

A week later, Peter Beinart of the Atlantic entered the fray. As recently as a decade ago, he pointed out, progressives were willing to entertain tough questions about immigration. In 2006 Paul Krugman wrote that "immigration reduces the wages of domestic workers who compete with immigrants" and that "the fiscal burden of low-wage immigrants is also pretty clear." His conclusion: "We'll need to reduce the inflow of low-skill immigrants." As recently as 2014, Mr. Krugman said that "if you don't feel conflicted about these issues, there's something wrong with you."

Also in 2006 a young senator declared: "When I see Mexican flags waved at pro-immigration demonstrations, I sometimes feel a flush of patriotic resentment. When I'm forced to use a translator to communicate with the guy fixing my car, I feel a certain frustration." That was Barack Obama.

By 2015 these economic and cultural doubts were out of bounds for Democrats with political aspirations. Early in his campaign Sen. Bernie Sanders was pilloried for suggesting that low-skilled immigrants would depress wages for American workers. He quickly retreated, even though the facts were mainly on his side. If he had been feeling brave, he might have cited a National Academies of Sciences report that found today's immigrant-headed families with children are disproportionately likely to rely on food stamps and Medicaid—and slower than their predecessors to learn English.

The constriction of Democratic debate is part of a larger problem facing today's upscale liberals, who are fixated on cultural issues. In October 2016, progressive stalwart Robert Kuttner wrote in the American Prospect that it is hard to tell white working-class voters to check their privilege when they are so much worse off than their parents. "The charge of political correctness, used so deftly by Trump, resonates with white workaday voters in part because

liberals seem to give priority to every other downtrodden group, from illegal aliens (sic) to transgender people to brown pelicans." The "sic" was Mr. Kuttner's.

In a recent issue of Foreign Affairs, two staunch liberal internationalists point to the politics of immigration as the principal obstacle to a sustainable balance between openness and national solidarity. "It is not bigotry," write Jeff Colgan and Robert Keohane, "to calibrate immigration levels to the ability of immigrants to assimilate and to society's ability to adjust."

A new immigration policy need not mean surrendering to nativism. A recent study by the Public Religion Research Institute found majorities of Republicans as well as Democrats who favor a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, provided that they meet certain conditions. By contrast, support for identifying and deporting them is low in every sector of the population.

Humane treatment for those already here is compatible with a fundamental shift from an immigration policy focused on family reunification to one that prizes education and skills and emphasizes the rapid attainment of English fluency. If both parties are willing to set aside obsolete preconceptions, this new bargain is within reach.

The Washington Post

Parker : Bizarre. Absurd. Ridiculous. Embarrassing. Trump.

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

6-7 minutes

President Trump drew condemnation for tweeting a violent, doctored video of him punching CNN on July 2, but the real punches were thrown back in 2007, at a scripted WWE match. Here's a look at how the fight came to be.

President Trump drew condemnation for tweeting a violent, doctored video of him punching CNN on July 2, but the real punches were thrown at a WWE match in 2007. (Jenny Starks/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starks/The Washington Post)

As the nation was preparing to celebrate its storied independence from the British crown, the president

secured his place as history's greatest jester.

Or America's first toddler president. Take your pick.

Trump did so by tweeting a doctored video clip of himself from several years ago in which he takes down wrestling magnate Vince McMahon and gives him a good pummeling. The new version superimposes the CNN logo on McMahon's head. Get it? In the 28-second clip, Trump walks away

from the fray unrumpled with nary a hair out of place.

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Bizarre comes to mind. Absurd. Ridiculous. Funny, perhaps, to a certain sort. Embarrassing in the extreme to many Americans who would describe themselves as perpetually appalled. What's next, Trump in his tighty whities atop

Trump Tower punching an inflatable Vladimir Putin?

It is baffling to think that Trump is proud of himself and such high jinks, to put it charitably. We get that he's at war with the media, hardly an original concept at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. But no one has ever seen a U.S. president behave in such an idiotic manner. Most adults have a pause button in their brains that shields civilized society from impulsive, inappropriate behavior. For the president, every impulse is apparently irresistible.

For good reason, many in the journalism world have expressed deep concerns about the effect the video might have. CNN's response said in part: "It is a sad day when the president of the United States encourages violence against reporters."

We've already witnessed one such event this year when Montana congressional candidate Greg Gianforte, now a member of Congress, assaulted a reporter for the Guardian, breaking his glasses.

In a comedy, the audience might applaud the tough guy punching the obnoxious reporter, but this isn't a comedy. Please, someone tell the president.

Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.), whose recent book laments the absence of people behaving like grown-ups in America, reacted to the video-tweet in strong language, suggesting that Trump is trying to "weaponize distrust" toward the media. It's not as though the country's media-haters need much encouragement to act out Trump's looney-tunes dreamscape. It only takes one.

All is not glum, however. There have been some truly humorous moments in the aftermath of the video's viral reception, principally from those defending Trump's cartoon presidency. The ever-earnest Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the president "in no way, form or fashion has ever promoted or encouraged violence." How's that? Isn't this the same Trump who offered to pay the legal fees of anyone who got in hot water for punching out a protester at one of his campaign rallies?

To Trump supporters who find the wrestling video unobjectionable or, I suspect, hilarious in some cases, I would ask that they try to imagine the same video showing Barack Obama superimposing Fox News on someone's face, punching him repeatedly and then smugly strutting away.

Very likely these same folks would have stormed the Mall demanding the president's impeachment.

As an opinion columnist who draws plenty of threatening hate mail, I fear less for my personal safety than for the integrity and security of our country. I've covered politics off and on for 40 years, including writing a thrice-weekly column for the now-defunct Charleston Evening Post in 1980 leading up to the first Republican presidential primary in South Carolina.

Never during that time or since have I ever worried that a president's behavior would embarrass the country on the world stage. Trump's most unpardonable offense isn't his implied threat to members of the fourth estate but his minimizing of

the nation's stature in the world. Our allies must shudder while our enemies devise new ways to celebrate. Trump may crack himself up, but he also shatters any pretense of our seriousness as a nation. So much for that shining city on the hill, not to mention the president as leader of the free world.

We look like fools because our president so convincingly plays one.

Trump, naturally, begs to differ. To his mind, he's acting perfectly presidential. His Twitter habit is simply a "modern day presidential" way of communicating. To this thought, homeland security adviser Thomas Bossert added that Trump is a "genuine president expressing himself genuinely."

Well, there's that.

But the act of a president using modern technology doesn't necessarily convey "presidential," as most define it.

And being genuine in Trump's case simply means he's a genuine fool.



Ghitis: Trump wants to rule, not govern

Frida Ghitis
4-5 minutes

Story highlights

- Frida Ghitis: Trump's media attacks are taken from the populist authoritarian playbook
- Discrediting critics, fostering division, targeting the media -- all undercut democracy

Frida Ghitis is a world affairs columnist for The Miami Herald and World Politics Review, and a former CNN producer and correspondent. The views expressed in this commentary are her own.

(CNN)Americans, along with the rest of the world, are trying to figure out what's behind President Donald Trump's grotesque barrage of attacks on the media, ironically revved up just in time for the Fourth of July.

Some wonder if they reflect a thin skin and lack of impulse control -- perhaps a sign of immaturity or even mental distress -- or if the behavior is part of a strategy;

a calculated effort to obtain specific political results.

But whether by design or by impulse, Trump is in practice following the authoritarian playbook. He displays the instincts of a populist autocrat. He didn't need to read books about Mussolini, study Hugo Chavez's maneuvers, or become schooled in the tactics of Vladimir Putin. He has shown these things are in his blood.

Indeed, he appears not to want to govern so much as rule.

We discern this in his lack of understanding or respect for the foundational and sacrosanct principles of the United States -- among them a free press and the right to criticize the president -- but also from his apparent desire to accumulate power by

manipulating

public opinion, dividing the country, eroding freedoms, and weakening institutions that are not in his control.

Autocrats of the past tended to grab power in one overpowering charge. That won't do in an age in which democracy is all-but universally accepted as the only legitimate form of government. The process now requires

incrementalism.

You boil the frog slowly.

Let me be clear: I do not think Trump intends to become America's dictator -- although he might not mind that. But I do think his instincts and tactics aim to undercut America's democracy to increase his power.

Discrediting journalists (except those who idolize him) is an indispensable element. We have seen it since before he took office. From

stoking

hatred against the press during campaign rallies, to

declaring

members of the media "the enemy of the American people," to his

most recent Twitter spectacle

, insulting television personalities and posting a video of himself

pummeling a CNN stand-in

, the approach serves multiple goals.

First, it allows him to create

his own reality.

By discrediting the media, he can claim that any bit of news that he doesn't like is simply untrue.

But there's more. Trump is promoting divisions and creating enemies, not just for him but for his supporters.

Authoritarian leaders do best in such tense environments, with rifts and hatred taking the place of common goals and reasoned debate.

Take a step back and think about the issues Americans should be discussing. In theory, everyone wants a better health care system, a well-functioning immigration structure, a thriving economy. Instead, Trump has fueled the flames of partisanship, and what should be a discussion about the best way to achieve shared goals has become bitter hostility. The two sides have become enemies.

His deranged Twitter stream is not aimed at persuading anyone, but riling his base. It's an emotional blowtorch.

The tweet where Trump violently slams a man wearing a CNN face was

reportedly first circulated

days earlier by one of his supporters, who has a track record of posting anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and insulting Muslims, gays and women. It is this material Trump chooses to promote. It is material he could be either personally seeking out or perhaps instructing his aides to find for him.

The effect is to further divide America, to hurt not only its international standing but its

democracy; turning its citizens into each other's enemies.

It is five months into his presidency, and an ever-more riven nation is celebrating America's first

Independence Day since Trump took office -- a new President whose governing motto might well

read E pluribus pluribus: from many, many.

**The
New York
Times**

Leonard : Want to Get Rid of Trump? Only Fox News Can Do It

Robert Leonard
6-8 minutes

Sean Hannity of Fox News, left, with Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, in January. Drew Angerer/Getty Images

KNOXVILLE, Iowa — President Trump's administration is in crisis, consumed by fears of what Robert Mueller, the special counsel investigating Russia's meddling in the election, might find. Everyone's lawyering up — even the lawyers have lawyers.

But here in rural Iowa you might never hear about any of that. What I do hear from my conservative friends — most still ardent Trump supporters — is a collective yawn at the Washington maelstrom. Few care about his tweets — even about Mika Brzezinski and Joe Scarborough and the CNN body slam. The whacking of James Comey? About time. President Obama's appointee anyway. Mr. Trump's asking if Mr. Comey could drop the Michael Flynn investigation? It was a simple question, not obstruction of justice. The Comey testimony? Vindication for Mr. Trump! Mr. Comey is a leaker, he lied under oath, and he's going down. He'll be lucky if he doesn't serve prison time.

No, the big stunner in that testimony was Mr. Comey's statement about former Attorney General Loretta Lynch and Bill Clinton — that's where the real obstruction of justice lies.

Here, conservatives celebrate the successes in Mr. Trump's short time in office: a conservative Supreme Court justice now seated; Mexico and Canada back to the trading table; red tape cut; the E.P.A. hamstrung; climate change

nonsense tossed aside. It's exactly what they elected him to do — victory after victory in a bigger battle than just policy, a battle for America's soul.

For many conservatives, they support Mr. Trump because he's their de facto leader in a cultural war. Liberals mock Christianity and demean Christian morals. Conservatives respect our police and military, while liberals romanticize street thugs. Conservatives' tax dollars help pay for public schools and colleges that indoctrinate liberal values. Out here some conservatives aren't even calling them "public" schools anymore. They call them "government schools," as in, "We don't want to pay for your damn 'government schools.'" They're afraid to send their kids to them.

They bend over backward to justify everything Mr. Trump does, largely because they don't believe what anyone in the news media is telling them, except for maybe Fox News.

A prominent businessman here, for example, views the "whole fake Russian story" as "a coup attempt by the media."

A sergeant major in the Iowa National Guard recently overheard a pro-Trump law enforcement friend and me disagreeing about Mr. Trump. He shook his head and smiled, telling me, "Well, all I know, Bob, is that my unit's budget just doubled."

Now, they're not entirely blind to the damage Mr. Trump is doing to the Republican brand. Democrats are energized, and though Mr. Trump's base is holding, "soft" Trump voters are slowly sinking his approval numbers. One friend who twice voted for Barack Obama now sees World War III on the horizon and

deeply regrets his vote for Mr. Trump.

President Trump has been in office only about six months and yet is already under investigation by congressional committees and the special counsel, Mr. Mueller. This fact alone should make every Republican nervous.

The country needs to see these investigations through. Regardless, my conservative friends should ask themselves, what has President Trump accomplished that a President Mike Pence couldn't have, without all of the drama? And what matters more: President Trump or their conservative values? Here, I believe it's the latter. Mr. Trump, after all, was runner-up to Ted Cruz in the Iowa caucuses.

I see only one thing that might give my conservative friends pause about turning against Mr. Trump — Fox News. After all, it helped create him. Most people here watch Fox News, and have for a generation.

Fox News is always on the TV in diners and other restaurants. In bars, if there isn't a game on, Fox News is there. If there are a couple of televisions or more, one will most likely be tuned to Fox. And it's not only TV. It's radio. Our big "blow torch" conservative radio station out of Des Moines blasts conservative indignation and self-righteousness for hours a day and serves up Sean Hannity for hours every night.

I once grumbled to a friend that I didn't think Fox was "Fair and Balanced" at all. He started to argue with me, then thought better of it, saying, "But at least they try — no one else does."

To me, only that network has the power to convince conservatives that, if one or more of the investigations raises the question of impeachment, it's in the best

interest of the party and the conservative agenda to dump Mr. Trump.

Mr. Hannity and other Fox hosts could provide cover for congressional Republicans to consider impeachment. If you believe that impeachment is a political and not a legal question, they need that cover. Right now, Mr. Hannity might have more power over an impeachment process than Paul Ryan or Mitch McConnell.

Even if the investigation turns up clear evidence of presidential misconduct, I believe it would be impossible for the party to consider impeachment without Fox's support. The first Republicans to even mention impeachment would probably be vilified by Fox and find themselves facing an angry constituency and a primary opponent next election. Yet if Fox turns, it's inevitable. For reasons I do not understand, that network has that kind of power among most of the conservative rural voters I know.

Mr. Trump has proved to be more of a liability than an asset in bringing about the changes conservatives want, and I suspect congressional Republicans know that. After all, whom would they rather work with, Mr. Trump or Mr. Pence?

If, in fact, Mr. Trump is, one way or another, removed from office, or takes the hint and resigns, maybe he will prove to be an effective bulldog for conservative causes from the sidelines. Perhaps conservatives will make him a martyr, a victim of the excesses of liberalism and a dishonest media.

Or they can let him fade away as a historical embarrassment like Warren Harding or Richard Nixon. Even if Mr. Trump goes down, the war for the soul of America will continue.

**The
New York
Times**

Graham and Reilly : Trump's Risky Offshore Oil Strategy

Bob Graham and
William K. Reilly

4-5 minutes

BP's Deepwater Horizon drill rig exploding in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. Gerald Herbert/Associated Press

Seven years ago, a BP oil well blew out off Louisiana, causing the

Deepwater Horizon drill rig to explode, killing 11 workers and releasing several million barrels of toxic crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico.

As co-chairmen of the bipartisan National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, we investigated the causes of the disaster and examined the offshore drilling industry to identify ways to reduce

the risks it poses to workers, the public and the environment. Although Congress has refused to enact any of the commission's safety recommendations, the Department of the Interior adopted many of them after extensive input from industry, government and the public.

President Trump's April 28 executive order on offshore energy threatens to abolish these safety

improvements and, as he put it, start "the process of opening offshore areas" to energy exploration. He took a further step last week to expand oil and gas extraction in the environmentally sensitive outer continental shelf. The commission members are unanimous in their view that the actions proposed in the president's executive order are unwise.

As Americans flock to the nation's beaches this summer, it is important to understand what Mr. Trump's recent moves portend. Specifically, his executive order calls for the reconsideration of a critical safeguard that is the most important action the government has taken to reduce offshore drilling hazards. This safeguard, the well control rule, tightened controls on blowout preventers designed to stop explosions in undersea oil and gas wells. The rule was based in part on lessons the commission learned about the root cause of the BP disaster.

Had this common-sense rule been in place on April 20, 2010, that calamity might well have been averted. Weakening or rescinding this rule would increase the risks of offshore operations, put workers in harm's way and imperil marine waters and coastlines.

Mr. Trump's order also directed the Interior Department to review current rules on offshore drilling. Opening more areas to exploration, as the Trump administration moved to do last week, could threaten the fragile Arctic Ocean off Alaska as well as environmentally sensitive reaches of the Atlantic Ocean and

the Gulf of Mexico. A spill in any of those waters could threaten multibillion-dollar regional economies that depend on clean oceans and coastlines.

Nothing has changed to justify these moves since the current five-year offshore leasing plan, which runs through 2022, was finalized after years of public and industry input. Broad public opposition to expanding drilling into frontier areas has not diminished. Nor are the identified potential harms to economies and ecologies any less significant.

In short, drilling in the outer continental shelf remains risky business. Safety and oversight in offshore drilling continues to need improvement, not roll backs.

President Trump's executive order disregards these facts. It fails to account for the vulnerabilities of the ocean's frontier regions, a lack of adequate federal investment in safety measures for Arctic conditions, or the danger to coastal economies. It will put workers' lives as well as ecologically rich and economically important waters and coastlines at needless additional risk.