

# Revue de presse américaine

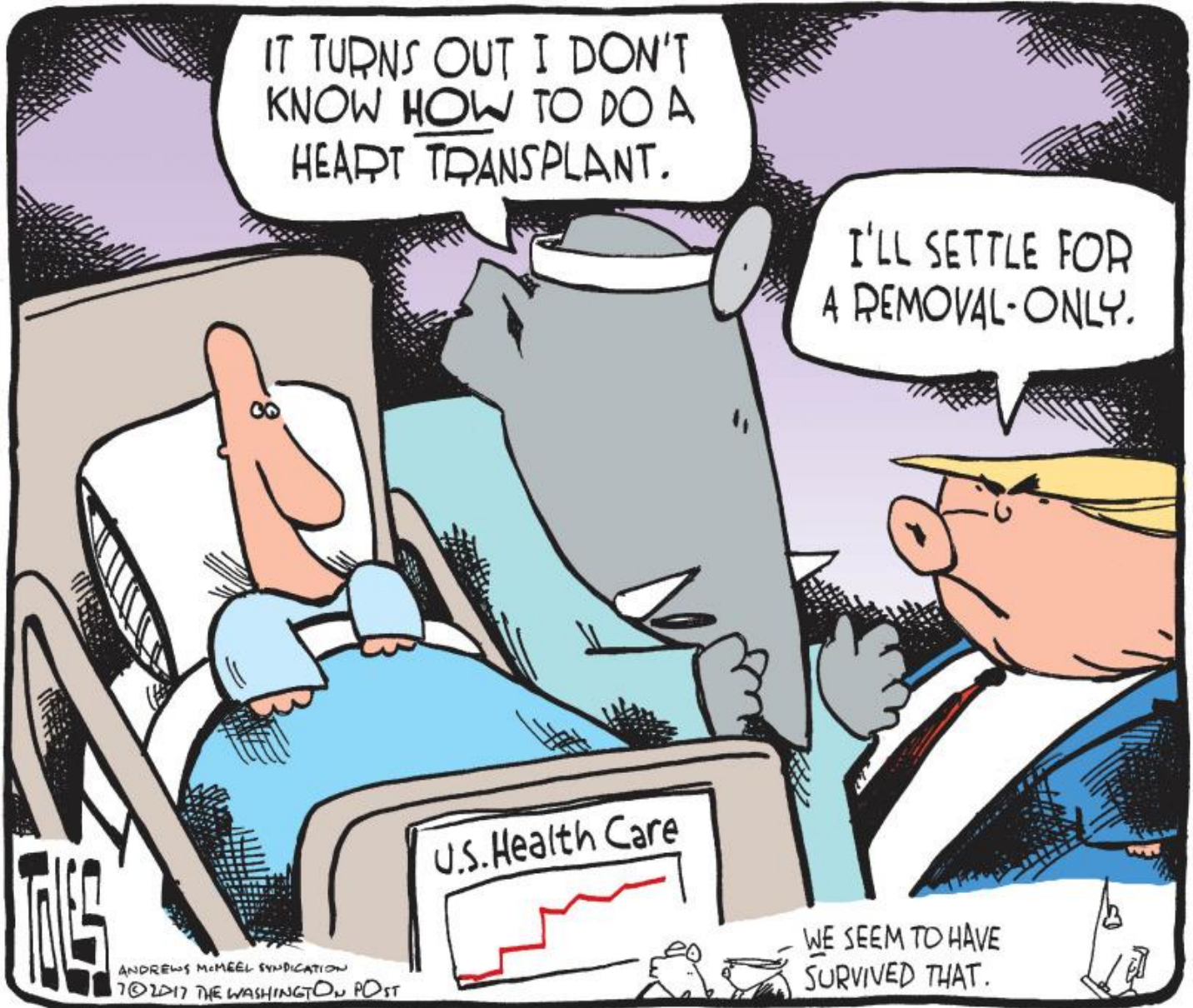
**Ambassade de France aux États-Unis**  
Service de presse et de communication



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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

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## France's Top Military Officer Steps Down in Fight With Macron Over Spending

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL.**

William Horobin  
6-8 minutes

Updated July 19,  
2017 3:21 p.m. ET

PARIS—France's top military officer resigned Wednesday in a public feud with President Emmanuel Macron over military spending, posing the first major test of the new leader's drive to invest his office with more authority.

The resignation of Gen. Pierre de Villiers marked the first time any chief of the country's armed forces has resigned since the post was created in the 1960s, historians said. It was the culmination of rising tensions between the general and the 39-year-old president, who refused to back down on plans to slash military spending by €850 million (\$982 million) this year to plug holes in France's public finances.

"In the current circumstances, I consider I am no longer able to ensure the durability of the model of the army that I believe in to guarantee the protection of France and French people, today and in the future," Gen. de Villiers said.

Mr. Macron swiftly named Gen. François Lecointre, head of his prime minister's defense cabinet, to succeed Gen. de Villiers.

The spat with Gen. de Villiers illustrates the high stakes of what Mr. Macron has described as his "Jupiterian" approach to his office, a reference to the king of the gods in Roman mythology. Since coming to power in May, Mr. Macron has announced plans to use special constitutional powers this summer to

make changes to labor laws by decree, and he has repeatedly used the Palace of Versailles, favored by French kings, as a backdrop for key meetings.

Mr. Macron's opponents assailed him on Wednesday for confronting the military's top brass while France conducts operations in Iraq, Mali and other parts of Africa. Thousands of troops are also patrolling cities across France as part of the state of emergency, which Mr. Macron's predecessor declared and the new leader has upheld, to protect the country against terror attacks.

The French military has been a central piece of the president's efforts to burnish his image as an authoritative leader. Mr. Macron rode down the Champs-Élysées, shoulder-to-shoulder with Gen. de Villiers in an open-top jeep, the day he was inaugurated. Last week he hosted U.S. President Donald Trump at a military parade featuring armored vehicles and flyovers to mark Bastille Day.

National Front leader Marine Le Pen, Mr. Macron's main challenger for the presidency in May's election, said the resignation showed "the very worrying limits of Mr. Macron's attitude and policies."

Lawmakers from the center-right Groupe Les Constructifs—which is in a loose alliance with Mr. Macron's party in parliament—called on the president to abandon or rethink his planned cuts to the defense budget, saying they endangered national security.

"Of course France should reduce its deficit, but France is also a country at war against Islamist terrorism," the lawmakers said.

The dispute began last week when Gen. de Villiers criticized the cuts in a closed-door hearing at the National Assembly that leaked to the French media, telling lawmakers he wouldn't let himself "get f—" by Mr. Macron's government.

"I considered it was my duty to share my reservations, on several occasions, behind closed doors, in complete transparency and truth," Gen. de Villiers said Wednesday in announcing his resignation.

After learning of the general's remarks to parliament, Mr. Macron delivered a speech to senior military leaders gathered on the eve of the Bastille Day parade as Mr. Trump was visiting France. Mr. Macron said a public debate on military finances wasn't dignified, adding he wouldn't tolerate dissent or other attempts to pressure his government.

"I am your boss," Mr. Macron told the military chiefs. Under France's constitution, the president is the commander in chief of the armed forces.

French government spokesman Christophe Castaner said Mr. Macron acknowledged Gen. de Villiers's service during a cabinet meeting Wednesday but told his ministers he was ready to replace any senior official who defied him.

"There is no place for uncertainties, ambiguities and doubts," Mr. Castaner said.

Mr. Macron praised the newly appointed Gen. Lecointre as "a hero" for his role liberating soldiers in Sarajevo in 1995, according to Mr. Castaner.

The clash over military spending comes as the French president attempts to reconcile competing

election promises. Mr. Macron said he would raise military spending to 2% of economic output by 2025, but would also cut overall spending by €60 billion to bring down France's deficit and comply with European budget rules.

Mr. Macron's budget plans ran into immediate hurdles when a report by the state auditor revealed a larger-than-expected budget gap. The cuts to military spending are part of a €4.5-billion plan his government hastily put together this month in an attempt to get back on track with deficit reduction this year.

Mr. Macron has also promised tax cuts for businesses and households to spur France's sluggish economic recovery. His government said last week it needs to find €20 billion of savings next year alone to meet its objectives. The proposed cuts to the military budget this year amount to less than 5% of that total, and Mr. Macron says he plans to increase military spending in 2018.

Mr. Macron's policies are sparking opposition from other quarters too, opening up a divide between the state and local authorities who say they can't cut spending as the president has demanded.

"We've already tightened our belts a lot. Too much is too much," François Baroin, the head of France's association of mayors, said Monday.

Surveys show Mr. Macron's popularity has declined since his election. According to a poll of 1,007 people by BVA Monday and Tuesday, 54% of French people have a good opinion of Mr. Macron compared with 62% in May.

**Write to William Horobin at [William.Horobin@wsj.com](mailto:William.Horobin@wsj.com)**

**The  
New York  
Times**

## France's Top General Resigns in Dispute Over Military Spending

Alissa J. Rubin  
5-6 minutes

President Emmanuel Macron and Gen. Pierre de Villiers during the Bastille Day parade in Paris this month. **Markus Schreiber/Associated Press**

PARIS — A public fight between President Emmanuel Macron and France's chief military officer over proposed cuts in military spending led Wednesday to the first high-profile resignation of a public

servant since Mr. Macron was elected in May.

In an unusual move, the military chief, Gen. Pierre de Villiers, offered his resignation after Mr. Macron said publicly that he would be the one to determine military policy and implicitly criticized General de Villiers for questioning the government's proposed budget cuts.

The president's seemingly unshakable confidence in his judgment, and his reluctance to brook any dissent, could signal potential difficulties ahead as Mr.

Macron tries to shrink government spending.

The dispute with General de Villiers was raised in Mr. Macron's annual speech to the armed forces on July 13, the day before France's imposing Bastille Day military parade.

In that speech, the president referred to concerns the general had raised in a closed parliamentary hearing about the cuts. The general's remarks were later leaked to the news media.

"I do not consider it honorable to put certain debates on public display," Mr. Macron had said.

"I am your chief. The commitments that I have made to our citizens, to the army, I stick to them," he said, adding that he did not need any "pressure" or "commentary."

Mr. Macron has committed his government to meeting the European Union requirement that member governments keep their budget deficits to less than 3 percent of gross domestic product.

The blunt language used in his speech last week suggested the

president was angry at having his policy questioned, and he hammered that point home in an interview three days later in the weekly newspaper *Le Journal du Dimanche*, saying that if there was a disagreement, the army chief would have to go.

"If something puts the chief of the armed forces at odds with the president of the republic, the chief of the armed forces changes," Mr. Macron said in the interview.

In his resignation letter submitted to Mr. Macron on Wednesday, General de Villiers, a career military man, noted his loyalty to the French nation and its political authority, but added, "I viewed it as my responsibility to let them know my reservations, on several occasions, behind closed doors in all transparency and truth."



## France's armed forces chief resigns after clash with Macron over budget cuts

By Reuters  
3 minutes

By Reuters July 19 at 3:54 PM

PARIS — France's armed forces chief resigned Wednesday in a dispute with Emmanuel Macron over defense budget cuts, an early test of the newly elected president's mettle and the tough style he is cultivating.

In a statement, Pierre de Villiers, 60, said he had tried to keep the armed forces fit for an ever more difficult task within the financial constraints imposed on them but was no longer able to sustain that.

"In the current circumstances, I see myself as no longer able to

Now, however, with the spending cuts being proposed, he said he could not guarantee "the protection of France and of the French today and tomorrow."

The military is being asked to shoulder about 20 percent of the total anticipated cuts to the French budget this year, which would mean a reduction of 850 million euros, about \$979 million, in military spending.

While that is a relatively small part of the military's budget of €32 billion, it comes after several years of increasing demands on the armed forces, especially in the fight against terrorism.

It also appeared at odds with Mr. Macron's commitment to increase military spending to 2 percent of G.D.P. — the amount that NATO countries are required to spend on defense — by 2025.

guarantee the robust defense force I believe is necessary to guarantee the protection of France and the French people, today and tomorrow, and to sustain the aims of our country," he said.

Macron, 39, moved quickly to replace de Villiers, appointing Gen. François Lecointre, 55, to fill the role.

As well as being an early test for Macron, the departure of France's most senior soldier highlights the stresses of a major military power as it battles Islamist insurgencies in Africa, partners with allies in Middle Eastern conflicts and patrols its own streets after attacks by homegrown extremists.

De Villiers's resignation followed a fierce argument last week between

Mr. Macron has said that this year's proposed cuts are temporary and that he plans to increase spending in 2018. Currently, France spends about 1.78 percent of its G.D.P. on the military.

After General de Villiers's resignation, Mr. Macron endeavored to reassure ministers during a cabinet meeting that the proposed level of spending would be sufficient "to protect the country," according to a spokesman.

Vincent Desportes, a retired general and former director of France's *École de Guerre Économique*, or School of Economic Warfare, writing in the newspaper *Le Monde*, said that the head of state of the civilian government had not taken stock of how much the role of the military had changed.

"During the Cold War, the central role played by nuclear deterrence

and the limited number of external operations had made defense into an essentially political exercise and reduced the role of the military in the nation," Mr. Desportes wrote.

Now, however, the "professionalization, the multiplication of external operations, the real war and its procession of dead and wounded" have changed the situation, and he added that the government "has not wanted to recognize" it.

Mr. Macron replaced General de Villiers with another career officer, Gen. François Lecointre, who has served in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda.



## France's Macron visits air force base amid military crisis

ABC News  
1 minute

French President Emmanuel Macron is flying in a military jet and visiting nuclear forces as he tries to show his commitment to

the troops amid an intense crisis over defense spending.

Macron's visit to the Istres air base Thursday comes the day after the head of the French military quit in a dispute with Macron over budget cuts.

France's youngest-ever president, Macron has sought to establish his

authority over the military, notably by touring a nuclear submarine and overseeing last week's military parade for Bastille Day alongside U.S. President Donald Trump.

Gen. Pierre de Villiers departure Thursday as the armed forces chief of staff rattled the normally quiet, loyal French military. He was

replaced by Gen. Francois Lecointre.

Macron is to ride on a C-135 transporter and meet staff in charge of France's airborne nuclear force.



## Macron's First Big Test Comes From His Own Military

@MarcChampion  
1 More stories by Marc Champion  
7-8 minutes

Emmanuel Macron, France's president, awaits the arrival of World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim, not pictured, at the Elysee Palace in Paris, on July 6, 2017.

Photographer: Christophe Morin/Bloomberg

Many have been expecting French President Emmanuel Macron's ambitious reform plans to crash into reality. Few anticipated the initial

resistance to come from his top military commander.

Following a public dispute with Macron over cuts to the defense budget, General Pierre de Villiers, chief of the general staff, said

Wednesday that he “no longer feels capable of assuring the continuation of the military model” needed to protect France.

General Pierre de Villiers

Photographer: Etienne Laurent/AFP via Getty Images

It's the first time that a head of the French armed forces has resigned since Charles de Gaulle remade the constitution in 1958, and a significant challenge to Macron's authority just two months after taking office. The newspaper *Le Monde* called it a “moment of truth” for France's 39-year-old president.

“It sends a negative signal and shows dissent at the helm of the state,” said Christelle Craplet, a pollster at BVA institute in Paris. “Macron is at a crucial moment: the end of the political honeymoon with voters and the beginning of the reality.”

French voters took a chance on Macron, a former banker who was not aligned with either major party and who had never held — or run for — elective office. He campaigned on a promise to trim the bloated public sector; remake the pension system to reduce the number of privileged categories of workers; and loosen labor markets to make firing easier to encourage hiring.

He won an enthusiastic endorsement this week from the International Monetary Fund. Yet history doesn't give much reason for optimism. Predecessors like former President Nicolas Sarkozy were forced to water down or abandon similar plans in the face of mass strikes and street protests. France hasn't balanced a budget since 1974. Government spending accounts for 56 percent of the economy, tied with Finland as the most in Europe.

A government spokesman responded to the news by stressing the need for France to get control of its finances. Faced with a 2017 deficit that was overshooting targets agreed with the European Union, Macron imposed spending cuts of 4.5 billion euros (\$5.1 billion) across all ministries, of which 850 million euros will come from the military, mostly by postponing equipment purchases.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said last week that military spending will resume rising in 2018, reaching 34.2 billion euros from 32.7 billion euros this year. The government has said its goal is 50 billion euros by 2025, or 2 percent of economic output. French troops are deployed throughout the Sahel region of Africa to fight Islamist guerrillas and the country's warplanes and special forces are involved with the U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

The armed forces' clash with their boss underscored Macron's status as the first French president to have never served in the army or done mandatory military service. The draft was scrapped in the 1990s.

“What matters now is how Macron manages the crisis — whether he can keep it as an isolated incident or if it spills over and becomes a political crisis,” Craplet said. “Voters are more sensitive to what matters to their lives and a military spat isn't at the core of their concerns but Macron should be careful of the snowball effect.”

Francois Heisbourg, a French security analyst who chairs the London-based Institute for International Strategic Studies, described the resignation as unusual and worrying, reflecting a cultural gap between a stressed military and the rookie president.

“Macron is very intelligent. He knows the figures and he knows the issues, but he hasn't really had the opportunity yet to understand the eco system,” said Heisbourg. “That is something you only get with experience.”

Macron's approval rating fell 5 points to 54 percent in July, according to a monthly poll by BVA for Orange and La Tribune published Tuesday. Respondents with a poor opinion of Macron cite his arrogance, authoritarianism,

disregard for the working classes and excessive attention to his own image.

De Villiers said in an opinion piece in last Friday's *Figaro* newspaper that there's a “strong tension” between overseas military operations and “a complicated budget situation,” and that “this gap is not sustainable.” According to French media reports, de Villiers was more outspoken at a closed door testimony July 12 to members of parliament, and since last week news reports had suggested he could resign.

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His resignation over a point of budgetary principle is rare for any Western military. “The only parallel I can think of was here in the U.K., when the government announced its decision to cancel our aircraft carrier program in 1966, and the chief of naval staff, Admiral Sir David Luce resigned,” said Malcolm Chalmers, deputy director general of the Royal United Services Institute, a London think tank.

Military brass tend to be reluctant to deliver any kind of ultimatum on policy issues because they accept the broad division of responsibilities between civilians who set policies and the military officers who execute them, Chalmers said.

## *the Atlantic* Top French General Quits Over Dispute With Macron Over Budget Cuts

Krishnadev  
Calamur  
4-5 minutes

The top French general resigned Tuesday following a clash with President Emmanuel Macron over proposed cuts to the defense budget that General Pierre de Villiers said would no longer “guarantee the robust defense force” needed to protect France.

“In the current circumstances I see myself as no longer able to guarantee the robust defense force I believe is necessary to guarantee the protection of France and the French people, today and tomorrow, and to sustain the aims of our country,” he said.

The move wasn't unexpected and followed days of public back-and-forth between the two men—unprecedented in French politics. At issue is the plan announced last week by Macron to cut the equivalent of \$980 million to the defense budget for 2017. It was needed, the government said, to

meet the European Union's requirement that its members states maintain their budget deficit at 3 percent of gross domestic product. Most of the cuts were directed at military equipment.

“I know when I am being had,” de Villiers reportedly told a parliamentary panel in off-the-record remarks that were leaked to the media, though *Le Monde* reported the general also used much stronger language to describe the cuts.

De Villiers, who became chief of defense staff in 2014 and whose tenure was extended by Macron last month, then reiterated those sentiments in a Facebook post. Although the post did not name Macron, the public expression of criticism—“Watch out for blind trust ... Because no one is without shortcomings, no one deserves to be blindly followed.”—was seen as highly unusual in a society where the military is highly regarded but known for being silent.

Macron wasn't happy. First, at a speech at the French Defense Ministry, he said: “It is not dignified to hold certain debates in the public

arena.” Then, in an interview with *Journal du dimanche*, he elaborated: “I am the boss,” adding if there was a difference of opinion between the president and his top general, “it is the chief of the defense staff who will change his position,” not the president.

Announcing his resignation Wednesday, de Villiers, who was appointed chief of defense staff in 2014, said it was his duty to share his “reservations.” Hours after his resignation, the government named General François Lecointre the new head of the military. The career officer served in the Balkans in the 1990s and more recently headed the EU's military training mission in Mali.

Although Macron still enjoys high approval ratings after two months in office, the actions that led to de Villiers's resignation are being widely criticized.

“The way he did it will leave marks,” Henri Bentégeat, a former head of the country's armed forces, told *Le Monde*. “You can't publicly question a military leader like that in front of his subordinates.”

Part of the problem was the manner in which Macron, who had campaigned on, among other things, a massive increase in the defense budget, directed his criticism at de Villiers. The general's remarks to the French parliamentary committee were off the record, but leaked to the media. Macron's subsequent criticism of him, however, was public.

Macron was elected on a pledge to be a tough president who would make the necessary difficult choices to remake modern France, but it has become quickly clear that his style has chafed even his supporters. He has said his thoughts are “too complex” for the media to understand, appeared to insult African states for their birth rates, and made a joke about the types of boats used by migrants. But it's his dispute with the military that may hurt him in the long term.

“It's clear today that the executive cannot bear a situation where its top public servants have a view of things that is different from the political view put together by the Elysee,” General Vincent Desportes,

a former head of the country's premier military school, told Reuters,

referring to the presidential palace. "It's not Erdoganism [a reference to

the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan], but it's not far off."



## New French Military Head Named After General Quits in Spat

Associated Press

3-4 minutes

PARIS —

Gen. Francois Lecointre, a career military officer, has been nominated France's military chief, after his predecessor quit Wednesday in a dispute with President Emmanuel Macron over budget cuts in a new challenge to Macron's administration and his economic reforms.

French government spokesman Christophe Castaner told reporters that Macron has nominated Lecointre as the new chief of staff of the armed forces, replacing Gen. Pierre de Villiers.

Lecointre served in Sarajevo during the Yugoslavia wars in the 1990s and recently led the EU military training mission in Mali to help fight Islamic extremists.

Macron's office sought to play down tensions over de Villiers departure, even as French defense commentators described their public dispute as a serious crisis.

De Villiers' office said the general submitted his resignation to Macron at a security council meeting Wednesday and the president accepted. Macron's office did not immediately comment.

De Villiers lashed out at new spending curbs during a closed-door parliamentary commission meeting last week, according to leaked reports.

The dispute escalated over the past week, with de Villiers issuing an appeal on Facebook saying "Watch out for blind trust... Because no one is without shortcomings, no one deserves to be blindly followed."

Without naming him directly, Macron then publicly upbraided de Villiers to military officials, saying, "it is not

dignified to air certain debates in the public sphere. I made commitments [to budget cuts]. I am your boss."

### Watch: French Military Spending Squeeze Prompts Top General's Resignation

Macron's own behavior has elicited criticism, notably by those who accuse him of authoritarian tendencies after he overwhelmingly won election in May and saw his new centrist party dominate last month's parliamentary elections.

The resignation foreshadows the battles Macron will likely face as he tries to reduce the deficit and government spending and boost the stagnant economy.

While Macron has promised to boost defense spending to 2 percent of GDP by 2025 as part of France's commitments to NATO, his budget minister last week announced limits on this year's military expenses as part of an overall spending squeeze.

De Villiers, head of the military since 2014, insisted that it was his "duty" to express his concerns about military resources amid the sustained threat of extremist attacks.

"I have always taken care ... to maintain a military model that guarantees the coherence between the threats that weigh on France and Europe, the missions of our armies that don't stop growing, and the necessary budget means to fulfill them," he said in his resignation statement.

"I no longer consider myself in a position to ensure the durability of the military model that I believe in, to guarantee the protection of France and the French," he said.



## Trump and Macron: From White Knuckles to 'He Loves Holding My Hand' (online)

Maggie Haberman

4 minutes

President Trump and his wife, Melania, with President Emmanuel Macron of France and his wife, Brigitte, at a Bastille Day parade last week in Paris. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

WASHINGTON — President Trump rarely says he needs his hand held for anything. Unless he's around President Emmanuel Macron of France.

"He's a great guy — smart, strong, loves holding my hand," Mr. Trump joked about his French counterpart in an Oval Office interview with The New York Times on Wednesday.

"People don't realize, he loves holding my hand — that's good!" the president said of Mr. Macron, who invited Mr. Trump to attend Bastille Day festivities

es in Paris last week.

The budding warmth in their relationship follows an initially awkward first encounter at a NATO meeting in Brussels in May, during which Mr. Macron firmly shook Mr. Trump's hand to signal that he would not be intimidated. In the weeks after, Mr. Trump said he intended to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accord, a move he anticipated would frustrate Mr. Macron.

Instead, the French president called Mr. Trump a few weeks ago and invited him to join the annual Bastille Day celebration, which also marked the 100th anniversary of the United States' entrance into World War I.

"I said, 'Do you think it's a good thing for me?'" Mr. Trump recalled on Wednesday of asking Mr. Macron about attending the festivities, given how his decision on the Paris accord might have been received.

But Mr. Macron assured him that it would not be a problem, Mr. Trump said, and urged him to come watch France's display of military might, including flyovers by warplanes, soldiers in period uniforms and tanks rolling down cobblestone streets.

"I have a great relationship with him; he's a great guy," Mr. Trump said. He also called the Bastille Day parade "beautiful."

The two presidents watched the parade from a viewing stand, from which Mr. Trump said he could see all the way up the Champs-Élysées to the Arc de Triomphe. Afterward, standing together in a plaza, Mr. Macron grabbed Mr. Trump's hand, and appeared reluctant to let go. So, Mr. Trump recounted, the two presidents stood there, holding hands for several minutes, as Mr. Macron's wife, Brigitte, joined them.

"It was one of the most beautiful parades I've ever seen, and in fact we should do one here down

Pennsylvania Avenue," said Mr. Trump, a military enthusiast who at one point hoped to include a display by the armed forces in his inaugural parade.

Mr. Trump also said that his relationship with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany had been misinterpreted as chilly.

In fact, Mr. Trump said, "We get along very well." He added that a photograph of him sitting with Ms. Merkel in the Oval Office, without a handshake, had been misread as a stilted encounter. He said that he had not heard someone call out to her to shake hands, and that they had worked well together earlier.

Mr. Trump also said he had deeply enjoyed his travels abroad as president.

"I have had the best reviews on foreign land," he said.



## Trump: Macron 'loves holding my hand'

Aida Chavez

President Trump in a new interview joked French President Emmanuel Macron "loves" holding his hand.

"He's a great guy - smart, strong, he loves holding my hand," Trump told The New York Times on

Wednesday, referring to the French leader. "People don't realize, he loves holding my hand - that's good!"

The two leaders shared an extended departing handshake in Paris last

week, which was mockingly timed by MSNBC. Anchor Katy Tur saying the two leaders were "enjoying new romance."

"The latest handshake that was seen around the world lasted nearly

2 minutes

30 seconds," she continued as an on-screen clock counted the seconds of the handshake. "There was a lot of leaning in with President Trump at one point using his other hand to pat Macron on the chest."

Macron and Trump shared an intense handshake in May after

meeting for the first time at a NATO meeting in Brussels, a move the French leader said was meant to assert his dominance.

"My handshake with him, it's not innocent," Macron told the Journal du Dimanche at the time. "It's not

the alpha and the omega of politics, but a moment of truth."

A reporter traveling with Trump in Brussels said the two leaders "shook hands for an extended period of time.

"Each president gripped the other's hand with considerable intensity,

their knuckles turning white and their jaws clenching and faces tightening," the reporter added.

Macron has been one of the most vocal supporters of the Paris climate deal and a critic of Trump's decision to pull out of the deal.

## CNBC : Macron needs to move fast to reform France and keep credibility, says top EU commissioner

Silvia Amaro

5-6 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.

France's brand new President Emmanuel Macron needs to move quickly to change the country, according to a top-ranking member of the European Commission.

The advice, from Jyrki Katainen the vice president for jobs, growth, investment and competitiveness, comes as Macron suffered his first setback this week since taking office.

"As former prime minister of Finland I can only say that the faster you make all the reforms you plan to do, the better, because the rest of the

election term is the time you're starting bearing fruit of all those reforms," Katainen told CNBC in an exclusive interview on Wednesday.

Katainen noted Macron's "bold" economic reform plans and his pro-EU agenda. He added: "We've already seen in many countries negative examples where leaders have not been bold enough to do reforms which they're planning to do early enough and then they start losing credibility and also the fruits of the reforms come later. Maybe if I could say something, move forward as quickly as possible."

Macron, who was elected in May, saw the first political setback on Wednesday after the French military chief resigned over proposals to cut spending. Pierre de Villiers said Wednesday he could no longer command the type of army that he thought to be necessary to protect France. The government wants to make cuts of about 850 million euros (\$980 million) to reduce the country's deficit. Macron also wants to reform the rigid labor market that has held back the economy.

## Business Insider : Fintech startups are charmed by Macron — but are reluctant to leave London for Paris

Jemima Kelly, Reuters

6-8 minutes

France's President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte speak with French entrepreneur and businessman Xavier Niel (R) during the inauguration of start-ups incubator "Station F", in Paris, France, June 29, 2017. REUTERS/Bertrand Guay/Pool

PARIS (Reuters) - France's fast-growing fintech sector is optimistic the country's dynamic new president will push it up the global rankings. But startups based in London do not yet seem ready to swap that key hub for Paris, even if they have French roots.

The nascent industry, ranging from mobile payment apps to "cryptocurrencies" like bitcoin, is seen by governments and business alike as crucial to the future of financial services and of vital importance, therefore, to economic growth.

Britain says fintech contributes \$9 billion to the economy, provides 60,000 jobs and will continue to be a priority. But since last June's vote to leave the European Union, other countries have been jostling to replace London as the sector's main European hub.

Paris, with its huge financial sector, famous universities, and history of inventions such as world-wide-web

precursor Minitel, might seem like an obvious contender. Of the top 10 European banks by global assets, four are French, and its fund management industry is also one of the biggest in the world.

Yet a recent Deloitte study ranked Paris 29th among global fintech hubs, and only seventh in Europe, thanks to a lack of investment, rigid labor laws and a reputation for being less international than other cities. London was top.

President Emmanuel Macron, a former investment banker voted in two months ago, wants to change all that. He has pledged 10 billion euros (\$11.3 billion) to an innovation fund to help turn France into a "startup nation".

Last month the 39-year-old president attended the launch of "F Station" in Paris, the world's biggest startup campus.

Alain Falys, CEO of mobile payments startup YoYo Wallet, is based in a fintech co-working space in London's Canary Wharf but is originally from northern France. For him, London was the "obvious choice" when he was choosing a base in 2013 and he will stay put, although he said he might consider Paris if starting out now.

"If Macron pursues his globalist, internationalist agenda - if he continues to visit incubators, speak in English, if he shows he's really

understood the force of labor reform in terms of job creation of this sector, he will draw in young people from all over Europe," Falys said.

"(British Prime Minister) Theresa May will attract no one." Paris Pixabay

### Brexit opportunity

Paris sees Britain's expected departure from the EU, now being negotiated, as an opportunity to lure back some of the people it has lost to London.

But no one interviewed for this article, including lobbying group Paris Europlace and trade organization FranceFintech, knew of a company that was either moving from London to Paris or opening an additional office there since the vote for Brexit.

Some startups like Transferwise, started by an Estonian and one of Britain's biggest success stories, have said they will open offices somewhere in the EU.

But many say London's prowess in both finance and technology, as well as its internationalism and light-touch regulation, will make it hard to knock off the top spot, at least for now.

The French fintech sector raised less than a tenth of the venture capital raised by Britain in 2016 - \$68 million compared with \$783 million, according to Deloitte.

"We have the world's greatest financial center and one of the biggest tech hubs in one global city - factors that cannot be replicated in Paris or anywhere else in Europe," London's deputy mayor for business and enterprise, Rajesh Agrawal, told Reuters. Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May arrives in Downing Street, in central London, Britain April 19, 2017. REUTERS/Stefan Wermuth

### "Friendly to entrepreneurs"

London says that dynamic will not change, but Brexit is already affecting the city's image elsewhere.

"We were envious, a bit scared of London," said Andre Meyams, co-founder of BeeAm, an online asset management marketplace, at the sidelines of the "Fin & Tech Community" conference in Paris last month. "Brexit made people realize that Paris could be the future."

The fact that Macron used to work as an investment banker, and was then economics minister, also comforts the fintech sector, which works alongside banks and other traditional financial institutions as often as it seeks to displace them.

Many banks have set up "accelerator" spaces, where they mentor startups and sometimes invest in them. Credit Agricole has one such space in Paris's central business district called "Le Village", where Bruno Van Haetsdaele, the

founder of personal finance and budgeting app Linxo, works alongside 99 other startups.

"Macron will bring trust. He's very transparent, he's very friendly to entrepreneurs, and he has a vision that's very international," said Van Haetsdaele.

Others say Paris's focus on the domestic market

make cities such as Dublin or Amsterdam more likely successors to London.

"What I love about London is it's so international," said Nikolay Storonsky, the Russian CEO of London-based foreign payments app Revolut. "Paris is not international at all."

Many start-ups say the most crucial change that Macron can make is to shake up France's labor laws, which they say have made it difficult to hire and fire employees.

"You need to be flexible when you're a startup," said ING's head of fintech, Benoit Legrand, a Belgian who is based in Paris. "You need to be able to test different things out."

Britain's regulators have led the way in allowing startups to test out ideas in the real market, under supervision, with a so-called "regulatory sandbox". It is a system that many countries have copied, though France is yet to put in place.

(\$1 = 0.8818 euros)

(Editing by Philippa Fletcher)

**Bloomberg**

## France Says 'We Want Our Money Back' as Brexit Talks Crawl On

@HeleneFouquet

More stories by Helene Fouquet

5-6 minutes

By and

20 juillet 2017 à 03:04 UTC-4  
20 juillet 2017 à 04:18 UTC-4

- Le Maire cites 100 billion-euro sum in parliamentary hearing
- Second round of Brexit talks wrap up in Brussels Thursday

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France insisted that the U.K. pay a Brexit bill of as much as 100 billion euros (\$115 billion), underlining the hurdles to substantial progress in negotiations toward a new relationship with the European Union.

As the second round of talks wraps up in Brussels, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire used a hearing in the French parliament in Paris on Wednesday evening to take a hard line on what the EU believes the U.K. owes the bloc in terms of liabilities and obligations.

To drive his point home, he evoked the spirit of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher when she won a rebate on Britain's payments to the central EU budget, complaining that the U.K. was losing out despite being one of the biggest contributors.

"I will say what Margaret Thatcher used to say: 'We want our money back,'" Le Maire said, citing the 100-billion-euro figure that has been on the high end of the amounts touted. "We can always debate the amount, but the fact that the United Kingdom must pay what it owes to the European Union budget is a non-negotiable prerequisite at the start of the talks."

Brexit Secretary David Davis returned to Brussels on Wednesday

night and, with his EU counterpart, Michel Barnier, will have lunch together and chair a meeting of negotiators who have spent the past three days thrashing out issues such as Britain's financial obligations and the rights of European citizens in the U.K.

### Stumbling Blocks

The so-called Brexit bill has proved the biggest stumbling block, with the two sides setting out vastly different stances on how the U.K.'s obligations should be calculated. The U.K. has now acknowledged that it will be on the hook when it leaves the bloc in March 2019 but hasn't gone much beyond that.

British officials spent much of the week quizzing EU negotiators on where they believe the U.K. is liable. Britain will not commit to a figure until much later in the process.

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Negotiators never expected any major breakthroughs during the first week of talks but the pressure will mount when they return for scheduled sessions at the end of August and in September and October before EU leaders are asked to deem there has been "sufficient progress" at a summit on Oct. 19-20. That would enable discussions to begin on a future trading relationship and a possible transition period.

The U.K. government is keen for talks to move on to trade, but back home the notion of paying the EU is politically toxic, possibly even more so now that Prime Minister Theresa May lost her parliamentary majority in June's election.

Differences remain also on the protection of rights for EU citizens in the U.K. and British nationals residing in the EU, with EU officials saying this week's talks have thrown up some new differences of opinion between the two sides.

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**The  
New York  
Times**

## 'Valerian' Is France's Most Expensive Film Ever. Luc Besson Says 'Who Cares?' (online)

Rachel Donadio

10-12 minutes

Luc Besson on the set of his latest film, "Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets." STXfilms and EuropaCorp

PARIS — Luc Besson's latest sci-fi extravaganza, "Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets," has every hallmark of his work: action, romance, sassy women packing heat, underwater scenes, special effects and a sense of humor that finds room for Rihanna to perform a shape-shifting Moulin Rouge-style number in outer space, before helping the hero save the world.

It is also the most expensive French film ever made, with a budget of around \$150 million. Huge for France, and even for Hollywood, although several films have topped that, most notably two "Pirates of the

Caribbean" installments at \$300 million and counting. Mr. Besson, whose big ambitions and business savvy have earned him a reputation as the most American of France's filmmakers, claims he doesn't find the number very interesting. "Yeah, but who cares?" he said in a recent interview at the Cité du Cinéma, a studio in northern Paris that he helped get built and where he filmed "Valerian."

What do you mean who cares? The film seems genetically engineered to make money, with plot twists and a range of characters designed to appeal to every man, woman, child and Instagram follower on the planet. "I'm happy we paid everyone," Mr. Besson said, speaking in English. He was sitting in a large armchair and squeezing honey into a cup of Lipton Yellow Label Tea. "All the money went to the special effects."

Mr. Besson, 58, was wearing a black T-shirt with an image of Valerian from the French graphic novel series on which the film is based. The series, by Pierre Christin and Jean-Claude Mézières, first appeared in 1967, and Mr. Besson discovered the books as a lonely 10-year-old who had moved to the French countryside with his mother after his parents, both scuba-diving instructors, split up.

"Valerian" is based on a French graphic novel series by Pierre Christin and Jean-Claude Mézières. STX Films and EuropaCorp

The series tells of the special agents Valerian and Laureline, who travel through space and time. Laureline "is kicking butt, and she's driving a spaceship. It's revolution for me," Mr. Besson said. "And it's my only way to escape. It's my ticket for dreaming. I fall in love with Laureline."

Fast forward to the 1990s. Mr. Besson — having already established his maximalist, big-hearted style with "The Big Blue," "La Femme Nikita" and "Subway" — is working on "The Fifth Element," the offbeat, campy 1997 sci-fi action movie starring Bruce Willis and Milla Jovovich, with costumes by Jean-Paul Gaultier. (The New York Times critic Janet Maslin gave it a skeptical review, with the headline "World Saved by a Nude Babe? Cool!")

Mr. Mézières, who helped create the look of "The Fifth Element," suggested Mr. Besson adapt "Valerian" for film. Mr. Besson reread the comic. "I came back and said: 'It's not possible. I don't have the technology or the experience.'"

Time went by. A decade ago, he bought the rights from an American studio. It was only after James Cameron's 2009 blockbuster, "Avatar," that Mr. Besson realized



technology had advanced enough for him to attempt "Valerian."

Anne Parillaud in "La Femme Nikita." MGM

"James Cameron offered to the entire community to do whatever we want now; thanks to him," Mr. Besson said.

In "Valerian," which is also in 3-D, the hero, played by Dane DeHaan ("The Amazing Spider-Man 2"), and Laureline, played by Cara Delevingne, race through actual and virtual worlds to save Planet Alpha and ultimately help a species known as the Pearls, who lost six million of their kind when their own planet was destroyed. Yes, six million. "I like to suggest things without pointing them out," Mr. Besson said about the Holocaust reference. "I think it's a good start of a conversation for people who watch the movie and especially for parents and their kids."

But "Valerian" isn't gloomy. It's not scary like "Alien" or pensive like "Arrival." The soundtrack includes David Bowie and Bob Marley. Clive Owen plays a bad guy, Ethan Hawke a space-age brothel owner, Herbie Hancock the minister of defense, and John Goodman does the voice for a creature with six nostrils.

"There are so many sci-fi films that are so dark — it's raining, the aliens are the villains," Mr. Besson said. "The future is a blank page. Why do we project so much pessimism on it? Why not at least try to say: 'Maybe there's peace in the future. Maybe I can have a bunch of friends who are aliens.'"

Bruce Willis in "The Fifth Element."

Columbia Tri-Star Pictures

Mr. Besson's film seems aimed to please, and to get noticed across platforms. The publicity notes point out how many Instagram followers Ms. Delevingne has (now more than 40 million), while Rihanna has 75 million Twitter followers. Mr. Besson said that social media clout wasn't a factor in his casting decisions. "I discovered that after," he said. "The main thing for me is to choose the right person for the part."

Really? "For his whole life, Besson has been ahead of everyone in France on how to communicate about a film," said Geoffrey Le Guilcher, a French journalist who wrote a 2016 unauthorized biography, "Luc Besson: The Man Who Wanted to Be Loved."

To help finance "Valerian," Fundamental Films, a Chinese company, acquired a large stake in Mr. Besson's EuropaCorp production company. The film was produced by Virginie Besson-Silla, Mr. Besson's wife, and about 2,000 workers were involved, including those who focused on the special effects. "There's basically three actors, and the rest are aliens," Mr. Besson said. "So you don't even know where to start. There is an entire scene in two parallel worlds at the same time, and the hero has his arm in one and his body in the another one."

After years of storyboarding, he shot the film in 20 weeks last year, entirely at the Cité du Cinéma. To make "Valerian" in France, and not elsewhere with cheaper labor, Mr. Besson lobbied the French government to change the country's tax credit system to allow films not in the French language to receive a tax

break. But he ruffled a few feathers when most of the film's budget was spent outside the country for special effects, including some by Industrial Light & Magic, the California company behind the visual effects for "Star Wars," and Weta, the New Zealand outfit that also worked on "Avatar" and "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

Scarlett Johansson in "Lucy." Jessica Forde/Universal Pictures

"There were 45 shots without special effects, and there were 2,744 with special effects," Mr. Besson said.

French distributors grumble that Mr. Besson's films — like "Lucy," his 2014 English-language blockbuster starring Scarlett Johansson — skew French box-office ratings, since he wildly outperforms every other French director. In years when he doesn't have a film, French box-office revenues plummet.

Mr. Besson, who lives in Los Angeles, has always straddled two worlds. "There's a part of me that's French and loves my country, and there's a part that isn't French," he said. "Every time I see something big and I like it, I want to say, 'Congratulations.' In France, they hate you for that. If you succeed at something they'll say, 'Yeah, his parents probably have money,' or 'You probably cheat.' But maybe he woke up earlier and worked more? No, it's not possible."

In France, Mr. Besson has been in the news more for his activities as a businessman than as a director. He had the idea for the Cité du Cinéma — which houses nine private film studios and a public film school — as a one-stop shop to rival the Pinewood Studios in Britain or

Cinecittà in Rome. EuropaCorp rents space in the Cité and is an investor in the studio, along with a consortium of French banks. Since the Cité opened in 2012, around 30 productions have been filmed there, of which Mr. Besson directed three and EuropaCorp produced nine. The studio's director, Brigitte Segal, said she was satisfied with its occupancy, which she projected at 81 percent for 2017.

Since 2013, the French authorities have been investigating possible misuse of public funds in connection with the Cité du Cinéma's initial financing and setup, and several officials have already been fined small amounts for mismanaging public money used in the project. (In an interview, a spokesman for EuropaCorp, Régis Lefebvre, called the fines "nothing.")

Mr. Besson is "a bit of an adventurer in superproductions without a very strong artistic vision," said Isabelle Regnier, a film critic for Le Monde. "He's a French mogul with no equivalent. You can love or hate his Cité du Cinéma, but it's something very impressive," she said. "There's a very American side in his failures and successes and how he's always bouncing back."

"Valerian" might not win over French critics, but Mr. Besson has global ambitions for it. He said that he wanted audiences to see it as an escapist fantasy. "If they can forget everything for two hours, and live another life for two hours, that would be perfect for me," he said, back in his office, where his coffee table was piled high with Valerian comics. "I want them to be drunk with the story, the images. I want them to lose their minds."

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Andrea Thomas

7-9 minutes

# Germany Says Turkey's Detention of Rights Activist Could Threaten EU Aid

Germany lashed out at Turkey for jailing a German national and suggested the latest escalation in a growing feud between the two countries could cost Turkey billions of euros in European assistance.

Wednesday's threat came hours after Berlin summoned Turkey's ambassador to protest this month's arrest of German human-rights activist Peter Steudtner under Ankara's controversial antiterror laws.

The latest development in a lengthening string of disputes between Germany and Turkey, both

members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is putting pressure on German Chancellor Angela Merkel to put a stop to what critics of Turkey see as increasingly brazen provocations.

German Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Schäfer said the Turkish ambassador was "told very clearly that the arrest of Peter Steudtner and other human-rights activists is neither understandable nor acceptable."

Ms. Merkel's spokesman said Turkey's accusations against the activist were a "transparent attempt to discredit and criminalize dissenters."

The spat broke out on July 5, when Turkish police arrested 10 Amnesty

International activists, including Mr. Steudtner, who had gathered in Turkey for what the organization called a routine workshop.

Six of the rights activists, including Amnesty's Turkey director, have been jailed pending trial on charges of aiding a terror group. Prosecutors alleged that the director was linked to three unrelated terror organizations. The other four activists previously detained are on bail facing investigation.

"These activists are innocent. The decision to proceed shows that truth and justice have become total strangers in Turkey," said Amnesty International's secretary-general, Salil Shetty.

"We firmly believe that this arrest is absolutely unjustified," Ms. Merkel said late Tuesday. "We declare our solidarity with him and the other detainees and the German government, at all levels, will do everything we can to secure his release."

Spokesmen for Ms. Merkel and for German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said the government would consult on possible further action.

Ms. Merkel's spokesman said the European Union was due to re-examine this year its €4.5 billion (\$5.2 billion) in aid to Turkey earmarked for measures to strengthen democracy, the rule of law, economic growth and competitiveness as part of the

country's longstanding bid for EU membership.

"We think it would be right to review this [aid] now given the latest developments in Turkey," the spokesman said. It is unclear "whether this aid can achieve the desired result given the current situation," he added.

A spokesman for Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs didn't respond to a request for comment.

As the rapport between Berlin and Ankara has deteriorated, Ms. Merkel has sought to avoid an escalation, limiting herself to verbal protestations.

Berlin's room to maneuver is limited. Germany relies on a pact with Turkey that has drastically reduced the inflows of migrants from the Middle East since the summer of 2015, which caused a political crisis for the chancellor because Turkey is the main transit route to Europe.

Berlin officials have also been reluctant to take action that could further endanger nine other Germans detained since last July in Turkey under antiterror laws. And they are wary of inflaming passions among Germany's three million ethnic Turks—the largest Turkish diaspora in the world, where support for the Turkish regime is strong, according to recent surveys.

Also, the German military is stationed in Turkey as part of the

international alliance against Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

But the approaching September election in Germany, when Ms. Merkel will be seeking a fourth term, has made it more difficult for her to be seen as refusing to push back against what many in the West perceive as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's increasingly authoritarian drift at home.

"This is a huge dilemma. Voters are clearly in favor of taking tougher actions against Erdogan...and if Erdogan continues to behave this way it can damage her during the election campaign," said Oskar Niedermayer, professor of political science at Berlin's Free University.

A recent survey conducted by YouGov showed that 84% supported the German government in banning Mr. Erdogan from speaking to supporters on the sidelines of the Group of 20 leading economies summit in Hamburg this month.

Martin Schulz, Ms. Merkel's main rival for the chancellery, on Tuesday said German citizens were "at risk of becoming a hostage to the politics of President Erdogan."

Mr. Steudtner's arrest is just one of the many Turkish actions that have caused outrage in Germany.

Deniz Yucel, a prominent German-Turkish journalist arrested in

Istanbul in February under terrorism suspicions, remains in detention without charges despite repeated protests from Berlin. Mr. Yucel has denied any wrongdoing.

And after Turkey repeatedly barred German lawmakers from visiting troops stationed at the Incirlik air base in the country's south, Berlin said it would relocate the contingent to Jordan.

Ankara has previously said it had banned all foreign civilian dignitaries from visiting the base in Incirlik for security reasons.

This month, Turkey began barring lawmakers from visiting a separate German contingent at the NATO air base in Konya, prompting parliamentarians to demand its withdrawal, too. The visits, they argue, are part of the mandates governing German military deployments abroad.

A German pullout from Konya would be far more disruptive to the fight against Islamic State than the Incirlik move. Germany provides about a third of the crews in Konya that operate and maintain the Awacs surveillance aircraft seen as crucial in the campaign.

Turkey has accused Germany of being a haven for terrorists wanted by Ankara and has protested its decision to grant asylum to several individuals it believes were involved

in last year's aborted coup attempt against Mr. Erdogan.

A German official on Wednesday said Ankara had provided Germany with a list of prominent German companies it says support terrorism, including car maker Daimler AG and pharmaceutical company BASF SE.

A spokesman for BASF declined to comment. Daimler spokeswoman Ute Wüest von Vellberg said the company hadn't seen the list and declined to comment further.

A spokeswoman for Germany's BKA Federal Criminal Police Office confirmed that Turkey has provided it with a list consisting of what it referred to as vague information and accusations about companies. But she also said no direct threat to the companies resulted from the list and it has also currently no information about specific threats to these companies' subsidiaries in Turkey.

—Monica Houston-Waesch in Frankfurt contributed to this article.

Write to Andrea Thomas at [andrea.thomas@wsj.com](mailto:andrea.thomas@wsj.com)

**Corrections & Amplifications**  
Recep Tayyip Erdogan is president of Turkey. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated his name as Tayyip Recep Erdogan. (7/19/17)

Appeared in the July 20, 2017, print edition as 'Germany Says Aid To Turkey at Risk As Activist Is Held.'

**The  
New York  
Times**

Ben Protess,  
Jessica Silver-  
Greenberg and Jesse Drucker

17-21 minutes

## Big German Bank, Key to Trump's Finances, Faces New Scrutiny (UNE)

During the presidential campaign, Donald J. Trump pointed to his relationship with Deutsche Bank to counter reports that big banks were skeptical of doing business with him.

After a string of bankruptcies in his casino and hotel businesses in the 1990s, Mr. Trump became somewhat of an outsider on Wall Street, leaving the giant German bank among the few major financial institutions willing to lend him money.

Now that two-decades-long relationship is coming under scrutiny.

Banking regulators are reviewing hundreds of millions of dollars in loans made to Mr. Trump's businesses through Deutsche Bank's private wealth management unit, which caters to an ultrarich clientele, according to three people

briefed on the review who were not authorized to speak publicly. The regulators want to know if the loans might expose the bank to heightened risks.

Separately, Deutsche Bank has been in contact with federal investigators about the Trump accounts, according to two people briefed on the matter. And the bank is expecting to eventually have to provide information to Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel overseeing the federal investigation into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia.

It was not clear what information the bank might ultimately provide. Generally, the bank is seen as central to understanding Mr. Trump's finances since it is the only major financial institution that continues to conduct sizable business with him. Deutsche Bank has also lent money to Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, and to his family real estate business.

Donald J. Trump in 1996 at the Taj Mahal casino in Atlantic City. Two

years later, he began a banking relationship with Deutsche Bank. Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

Although Deutsche Bank recently landed in legal trouble for laundering money for Russian entities — paying more than \$600 million in penalties to New York and British regulators — there is no indication of a Russian connection to Mr. Trump's loans or accounts at Deutsche Bank, people briefed on the matter said. The bank, which declined to comment, scrutinizes its accounts for problematic ties as part of so-called "know your customer" banking rules and other requirements.

And with one of its most famous clients headed to the White House, the bank designed a plan for overseeing the accounts of Mr. Trump and Mr. Kushner and presented it to regulators at the New York State Department of Financial Services early this year. The plan essentially called for monitoring the accounts for red flags such as exceptionally favorable loan terms or unusual partners.

Additionally, the New York regulators recently requested information related to the hundreds of millions in loans Deutsche Bank's private wealth management division provided Mr. Trump, one of the people said, paying particular attention to personal guarantees he made to obtain the loans. Those guarantees have declined as the loans were paid down and the property values increased, but it remains a source of interest to the regulators.

While there is no formal investigation of the bank — and personal guarantees are often required when people receive big loans from their wealth managers — the New York regulators have questioned whether the guarantee could create problems for Deutsche Bank should Mr. Trump fail to pay his debts. To collect, the bank would either have to sue the president, or risk being seen as cutting him a special deal.

It is not a hypothetical concern: Mr. Trump sued the bank in 2008 to delay paying back an earlier loan.

Deutsche Bank expects it must eventually provide information to Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel overseeing the federal investigation into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia. Saul Loeb/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Mr. Trump has had a complicated relationship with the bank over the past 20 years, which has included more than \$4 billion in loan commitments and potential bond offerings, a majority of which were completed, according to a New York Times review of securities filings and interviews with people with knowledge of the deals. Despite all the risk-taking — and a brief loan default that spurred the 2008 litigation — Mr. Trump's business has made the bank money, the people said.

A spokesman for the New York regulators declined to comment, and the White House did not respond to requests for comment.

A few years after Mr. Trump sued the bank in 2008, he moved his business from the bank's commercial real estate lending division to its private wealth division, where executives were more willing to deal with him, according to the people briefed on the matter.

In the past six years, the private wealth unit helped finance three of Mr. Trump's properties, including a golf course near Miami and a hotel in Washington, according to Mr. Trump's most recent financial disclosures and the people with knowledge of the loans.

The size of the loans — totaling about \$300 million — is somewhat unusual by Wall Street standards, according to former and current Deutsche Bank executives and wealth managers at other Wall Street firms.

The Trump National Doral resort in Miami. Ilana Panich-Linsman for The New York Times

While it is not unheard-of for real estate developers to obtain large wealth management loans for projects deemed too risky for an investment bank, it differs from bank to bank, and those that do issue loans of that size typically do so for top clients known to pay their bills.

Mr. Trump's wealth manager at Deutsche Bank, Rosemary Vrablic, has specialized in real estate lending and is known for taking risks on clients, two of the executives and wealth managers said. And her relationship with Mr. Trump is close enough that Ms. Vrablic attended Mr. Trump's inauguration, according to a person who attended.

Mr. Kushner has established his own relationship with the bank. He and his mother have an unsecured line of credit from Deutsche Bank, valued at up to \$25 million, and the family business he ran until January, Kushner Companies, received a \$285 million loan from Deutsche Bank last year.

Mr. Kushner's dealings at the bank have included Ms. Vrablic. In 2013, he ordered up a glowing profile of her in the real estate magazine he owned, The Mortgage Observer, according to a person with knowledge of the matter. The piece concluded with a disclaimer that her "past clients" included Mr. Kushner.

In an interview with The Times last year, Mr. Trump suggested reporters speak with Ms. Vrablic about his banking relationships.

Trump International Hotel in Washington. Al Drago/The New York Times

"Why don't you call the head of Deutsche Bank? Her name is Rosemary Vrablic," he said. "She is the boss."

#### **A Relationship Is Born**

It was 1998, and Mike Offit, fresh off the trading floor of Goldman Sachs for a new job at Deutsche Bank, was hired to put Deutsche Bank's real estate lending business on the map. To do that, Mr. Offit knew he had to snag big name developers.

That moment arrived when Rob Horowitz, with the real estate firm Cooper-Horowitz, approached him with an idea: Would he work with Mr. Trump, who at the time had a tarnished reputation after several of his casinos landed in bankruptcy?

"My reaction was, why wouldn't I?" Mr. Offit recalled in a recent interview.

To Mr. Offit, there was little downside to hearing Mr. Trump's pitch. A short time later, Mr. Trump came by Mr. Offit's Midtown Manhattan office to discuss a loan for renovations at his 40 Wall Street building. Unlike other developers who arrived with their entourages, Mr. Trump showed up alone, Mr. Offit said, and despite a reputation for bluster, he knew the financials of the deal cold.

"There was some resistance from management because of Donald's reputation, but I told them that our loan would be wildly overly collateralized even in the worst-case scenario," Mr. Offit said.

Rosemary Vrablic of Deutsche Bank helped facilitate loans to Mr. Trump. Michael Nagle

More deals followed. Later in the year, Mr. Trump needed \$300

million to build Trump World Tower near the United Nations. But he required a construction loan, which, at the time, Deutsche did not have the right staff to manage. Determined to get the deal nonetheless, Mr. Offit found another German bank to make the loan with the commitment that Deutsche Bank would take possession once the building was constructed.

But as the deal was being finalized, the other German bank had second thoughts because of worries of a labor strike. Just as the deal seemed to be falling apart, Mr. Trump produced a signed commitment from all the major construction unions promising not to strike.

"We were all amazed he managed to get that," said Mr. Offit, who retired from the bank in 1999.

In the mid 2000s, Mr. Trump was in need of another construction loan. But this time, the loan — up to \$640 million to build Trump International Hotel and Tower in Chicago — did not go as well.

A few years after the project began, the 2008 financial crisis upended the global economy and Mr. Trump fell behind on loan payments. According to a person briefed on the deal, Deutsche Bank was discussing a possible extension, when Mr. Trump sued it to avoid paying \$40 million that he had personally guaranteed.

His argument, as detailed in a letter to the bank, was novel: "Deutsche Bank is one of the banks primarily responsible for the economic dysfunction we are currently facing," Mr. Trump wrote.

Trump International Hotel and Tower in Chicago. Nathan Weber for The New York Times

With the help of a lawyer — Steven Schlesinger of Garden City, N.Y. — Mr. Trump argued that the financial crisis allowed him to invoke the extraordinary event clause in his contract with the bank. Mr. Trump argued Deutsche Bank should pay him \$3 billion in damages.

The bank filed its own action against Mr. Trump, demanding he make good on the loan. In a legal filing, Deutsche Bank, which had distributed the loan to a number of other banks, called the lawsuit "classic Trump."

The standoff culminated with a meeting in Trump Tower, Mr. Schlesinger said.

At the meeting, Mr. Trump threatened to remove his name from the building if he did not get more time to pay. That move, Mr. Trump suggested, would reduce the value of the building.

Ultimately, the bank granted Mr. Trump additional time to repay. And when he did, it was through the Wall Street equivalent of borrowing from one parent to repay the other.

Mr. Trump received a loan from Deutsche Bank's wealth management unit to pay off the debt he owed the bank's real estate lending division, according to two people briefed on the transaction. The wealth management unit later issued another loan for the Chicago project that is valued at \$25 million to \$50 million.

Josef Ackermann, Deutsche Bank's former chief executive, now chairman of the Bank of Cyprus. Dmitry Rybolovlev, a Russian oligarch, was a large shareholder of that bank. Thomas Peter/Reuters

#### **A Personal Banker**

Ms. Vrablic, who helped facilitate the wealth management unit's loans to Mr. Trump, has built a career lending to the rich and famous.

She got her start on Wall Street at Citibank's private bank in the late 1980s and later worked at Bank of America before joining Deutsche Bank in 2006.

Ms. Vrablic, who declined to be interviewed for this article, has a reputation for being an aggressive advocate for her clients, according to two executives familiar with her work and profiles written in The American Banker and The Mortgage Observer.

In a 2013 Mortgage Observer article, one of her clients, Herbert Simon, owner of the Indiana Pacers, remarked that "when she came into the picture, it was a tough time to get money, and she was able to be very creative and get us what we needed."

In a 1999 American Banker article, Ms. Vrablic described her clients as having "many homes, ex-wives, and many children."

Mr. Rybolovlev in Monaco in 2015. He purchased Mr. Trump's estate in Florida, Benjamin Bechet for The New York Times

Mr. Trump fit that mold, but he was far from her only client in the rarefied world of New York real estate. Others included Stephen Ross, the chairman and founder of the Related Companies in New York.

Mr. Ross extolled Ms. Vrablic's ability to make deals happen. "She brings knowledge — and the fact is that if she tells you something, you know it's going to get done," he told The Mortgage Observer.

Ms. Vrablic was quoted in the same article as saying that real estate is her “deep dive.”

While Mr. Kushner has never disclosed the exact nature of his business with Ms. Vrablic, his financial disclosure shows a line of credit worth between \$5 million and \$25 million. And according to securities filings, Deutsche Bank provided a \$285 million mortgage to Kushner Companies to help it refinance the loan it used to purchase several floors of retail space in the former New York Times building on 43rd Street in Manhattan.

Mr. Kushner’s company bought the space from Africa Israel Investments, a company owned by Lev Leviev, which has a sizable real estate portfolio in Russia.

Deutsche Bank, other securities filings show, is also involved in loans the Kushner Companies received for the Puck Building in Manhattan’s SoHo neighborhood and a property on Maiden Lane near Wall Street. The bank was responsible for either pooling those loans into mortgage-backed securities that were sold to investors, according to Trepp, a data

and analytics firm, or distributing payments to the investors.

Natalia Veselnitskaya, the Russian lawyer who was among the people who met with Donald Trump Jr. during the presidential campaign. Yury Martyanov/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

In the autumn of 2014, Ms. Vrablic and Mr. Kushner attended the Frick Collection’s dinner, a black-tie event where patrons dined among famous works of art by Manet, El Greco and Turner.

A picture of the pair appeared in the New York Social Diary. Mr. Kushner, dressed in a tuxedo, had his arm around Ms. Vrablic.

#### The Russia Question

There is no indication that federal investigators suspect a Russian connection to Mr. Trump’s dealings with Deutsche Bank, according to people briefed on the matter.

Mr. Horowitz, of the real estate firm Cooper-Horowitz, also saw no Russian ties in his many years of working with Mr. Trump.

“I’ve arranged financing for the majority of Mr. Trump’s transactions,

and I’ve never once seen any money coming to him from Russia,” he said. Mr. Horowitz was not involved in any of the private wealth management loans from Ms. Vrablic.

But separate from Mr. Trump, the German bank has a host of Russian connections.

Soon after Mr. Trump took office, the bank settled allegations that it helped Russian investors launder as much as \$10 billion through its branches in Moscow, London and New York. In May, the Federal Reserve reached its own settlement with the bank over the money laundering violations.

Deutsche Bank also had a “cooperation agreement” with the Russian state-owned development bank, Vnesheconombank, which has been swept up in the investigation into Russian interference in the presidential election. And it had ties to VTB Bank, a far larger Russian bank facing sanctions in the United States and the European Union. The Russian firm’s investment banking arm, VTB Capital, was created by hiring dozens of bankers from Deutsche Bank’s Moscow office.

Some ties are less direct. Josef Ackermann, Deutsche Bank’s former chief executive, is now chairman of the board at the Bank of Cyprus. A large shareholder of that bank was Dmitry Rybolovlev, the Russian oligarch who purchased Mr. Trump’s estate in Florida.

And in May, federal prosecutors settled a case with a Cyprus investment vehicle owned by a Russian businessman with close family connections to the Kremlin.

The firm, Prevezon Holdings, was represented by Natalia Veselnitskaya, the Russian lawyer who was among the people who met during the presidential campaign with Donald Trump Jr. about Hillary Clinton.

Federal prosecutors in the United States claimed Prevezon, which admitted no wrongdoing, laundered the proceeds of an alleged Russian tax fraud through real estate. Prevezon and its partner relied in part on \$90 million in financing from a big European financial institution, court records show.

It was Deutsche Bank.



## In Poland, an Assault on the Courts Provokes Outrage (UNE)

Rick Lyman

8-10 minutes

WARSAW — Step by step, the Polish government has moved against democratic norms: It increased government control over the news media, cracked down on public gatherings and restricted the activities of nongovernmental organizations.

Now the party in power is moving aggressively to take control of the last major independent government institution, the courts, drawing crowds into the streets and possible condemnation by the European Union.

The party is pushing to jam several bills into law; one would force all the nation’s top judges to resign, except those it appointed. Another bill, already approved by Parliament, would ultimately give the government control over who can even be considered for a judgeship.

In Brussels on Wednesday, a top European Union official said that if the changes were made, Poland might slip outside the bloc’s definition of a democracy.

“Each individual law, if adopted, would seriously erode the independence of the Polish judiciary,” said Frans Timmermans,

first vice president of the European Commission. “Collectively, they would abolish any remaining judicial independence and put the judiciary under full political control of the government.”

The drive to control the courts comes barely two weeks after President Trump paid a triumphant visit to Warsaw and praised the populist and nationalist Law and Justice Party, which controls the government. Now, if the party prevails, its success could be the final chapter in Poland’s long progression from a model Eastern European nation — and one of the first former Communist nations to join the union — to what its opponents are calling an illiberal democracy.

Three former Polish presidents, including Lech Walesa, have released a manifesto against the proposed changes, saying “we do not consent to taking away our basic civic freedoms.” And a coalition of more than 175 artists and scientists signed an open letter on Wednesday calling the government’s move a “coup d’état.”

With the legacy of the Solidarity movement, Poland entered the post-Soviet era with a head start on other post-Soviet nations politically, and its strong agricultural sector allowed

it to quickly emerge as an economic success.

But its status as a regional star has been endangered by the rise of the Law and Justice Party. Since assuming power in late 2015, the party has moved to co-opt or weaken potential rivals, beginning with the Constitutional Tribunal, which could have declared its moves unconstitutional. Now dominated by government supporters, the tribunal provides a reliable rubber stamp for government initiatives.

Law and Justice supporters have been put in charge of public television and radio, which now adhere to a firmly pro-government line. Independent oversight was removed from the secret services. The justice minister was named chief prosecutor, formerly a separate and more independent post. New regulations were imposed on public assemblies.

Still, at least one previous step to pull Poland to the right, a nearly total ban on abortions proposed last fall, was defeated after mass protests.

“This is a call for a right-wing revolution,” said Jerzy Stepien, the director of the Institute of Civic Space and Public Policy at Lazarski University, and a former president of the Constitutional Tribunal. “If we have people in power who feel

themselves above the law, we are in a revolutionary situation.”

In the lower house of Parliament this week, as opposition leaders struggled to beat back the governing party’s push to pass its legislation, people on both sides delivered emotional speeches frequently interrupted by chants.

“You could have been reformers of the Polish judiciary,” an enraged Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz, from the opposition Peasants Party, said to stone-faced lawmakers from the Law and Justice Party. “But you have become its executioners wearing a mask of justice.”

The Law and Justice party leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, in Parliament on Wednesday. Agencja Gazeta/Reuters

Things turned especially ugly during a debate at midnight on Tuesday in Parliament when an opposition politician, Borys Budka, presumed to speak for the former Polish president from Law and Justice, who was killed in a 2010 plane crash. “If Lech Kaczynski were alive, he wouldn’t allow this,” Mr. Budka declared.

An enraged Jaroslaw Kaczynski — the former president’s twin brother and, as leader of Law and Justice, the most powerful political figure in Poland — seized the lectern and

fired back: "Do not wipe your traitorous mugs with the name of my late brother. You are scoundrels."

Law and Justice has long maintained that the 2010 crash was an assassination, perhaps involving Russia and members of the political opposition.

"You murdered him," Mr. Kaczynski shouted.

Ewa Kopacz, the prime minister under the previous center-right government, declared herself flabbergasted. "This man is crazy with hate," she said of Mr. Kaczynski. "He cannot control his emotions."

The conflict over the judiciary has been simmering for some time. One proposed law, already approved by Parliament and awaiting President Andrzej Duda's signature, would reconfigure the National Council of the Judiciary, which chooses those eligible to become judges, so that government-appointed members would essentially have veto power.

A second bill, introduced late last week, would force all current

members of the Supreme Court to resign, including several who have been feuding with the government, and replace them with judges selected by the governing party's minister of justice.

"Their goal is to create political control over the judiciary," said Adam Bodnar, Poland's official ombudsman, who has come out against the bills. "I don't have doubts about it."

Mr. Kaczynski and other Law and Justice officials contend that opponents are overreacting to an honest attempt by the government to reform a dysfunctional and highly unpopular court system and to root out corrupt judges and liberal ideologues who want to thwart the will of the people.

Law and Justice, Prime Minister Beata Szydlo said, has "stood on the side of the people, and nobody will make us turn back from this way — not even by shouting here and stamping your feet!"

To become law, a bill must have three readings in the Sejm, the lower house of Parliament, then be

passed by the Senate and signed by the president. The government's decision to use procedural maneuvers to fast-track the Supreme Court bill appears to have caught opponents off guard.

"There were no public consultations, no public hearings," said Kamila Gasiuk-Pihowicz of the opposition party Modern. "There should have been experts' opinions, but there's no time for that."

President Duda tried to suggest a compromise in a nationwide address. He said he would sign the bill on his desk involving the appointment of judges only if an amendment were added so that new judges must get 60 percent of the vote in Parliament rather than a simple majority. Since Law and Justice has only a slim majority in the Sejm, this would force the governing party to find at least one other party to vote with it. If that amendment is not added, Mr. Duda said, he will refuse to sign the Supreme Court law.

It was a rare disagreement between Mr. Duda, a former Law and Justice member who became independent

when he was elected president, and Mr. Kaczynski. Opponents were not sure whether this signaled a true split between the two leaders or was some sort of a trick.

"We don't know if the president is acting really with some sort of noble intentions or whether he's just playing a game," said Mr. Stepień, the former president of the Constitutional Tribunal.

As opponents sought to slow the bill's passage, opposition leaders asked Poles to continue to take to the streets. Some protesters have set up a tent camp outside Parliament, vowing to keep a round-the-clock vigil. "I had to be here," said Lidia Leipert, a lawyer who joined the throng after work.

Agnieszka Wierzbicka, a nutritionist, said she was already resigned to losing this round.

"I think our protest is nothing but symbolic now," she said. "Will it change anything? I highly doubt it. But that doesn't make it invalid. It is important for history."

## INTERNATIONAL



### The Global Consequences of Trump's Incompetence

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

11-14 minutes

I returned this past weekend from a European vacation: conferencing in Greece, queuing up at Wimbledon, kayaking in Ireland, and generally doing my own small part to stimulate the EU economy. I'm not Tom Friedman, so I didn't interview every taxi driver I encountered, but the one I did talk to was pretty down on the 45th president of the United States. I'm sure there are a few Trump supporters in Europe, but recent surveys suggest they are a distinct minority. That seems to be increasingly true here, too, despite the stubborn loyalty of those supporters who would stick with the guy even if he did, in fact, shoot someone on Fifth Avenue.

Since Donald Trump was inaugurated, a vast amount of ink and billions of pixels have been devoted to documenting, dissecting, condemning, or defending his disregard for well-established norms of decency and political restraint. I'm talking about the blatant nepotism, the vast conflicts of interest, the overt misogyny, and what Fox News's Shepard Smith

called the "lie after lie after lie" regarding Trump's relations with Russia. The presidential pendulum has swung from dignified (Barack Obama) to disgusting (Trump), and it's tempting to spend all one's time hyperventilating about his personal comportment rather than his handling of important policy issues.

But the real issue isn't Trump's nonstop boorishness; it's his increasingly obvious lack of competence.

But the real issue isn't Trump's nonstop boorishness; it's his increasingly obvious lack of competence. When experienced Republicans warned that Trump was unfit for office during the 2016 campaign, most of their concerns revolved around issues of character. But their warnings didn't prepare us for the parade of buffoonery and ineptitude that has characterized his administration from Day One.

What do I mean by "competence"? The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "the ability to do something successfully or efficiently." In foreign policy, competence depends on a sufficient knowledge about the state of the world and the key forces that drive

world politics so that one can make well-informed and intelligent policy choices. It also means having the organizational skills, discipline, and judgment to pick the right subordinates and get them to combine the different elements of national power in pursuit of well-chosen goals. In other words, foreign-policy competence requires the ability to identify ends that will make the country more secure and/or prosperous and then assemble the means to bring the desired results to fruition.

As in other walks of life, to be competent at foreign policy does not mean being 100 percent right or successful. International politics is a chancy and uncertain realm, and even well-crafted policies sometimes go awry. But, on balance, competent policymakers succeed more than they fail, both because they have a mostly accurate view of how the world works and because they have the necessary skills to implement their choices effectively. As a result, such leaders will retain others' confidence even when a few individual initiatives do not work out as intended.

For much of the postwar period, the United States benefited greatly from

an overarching aura of competence. Victory in World War II, the creation of key postwar institutions like NATO and Bretton Woods, and the (mostly) successful management of the Cold War rivalry with the USSR convinced many observers that U.S. officials knew what they were doing. That aura was reinforced by scientific and technological prowess (e.g., the moon landing), by mostly steady economic growth, and to some extent by the progress made in addressing issues such as race, however imperfect those latter efforts were. That same aura was tarnished by blunders like Vietnam, of course, but other countries still understood that the United States was both very powerful and guided by people who understood the world reasonably well and weren't bad at getting things done. The George H.W. Bush administration's successful handling of the collapse of the USSR, the reunification of Germany, and the first Gulf War reinforced the broad sense that U.S. judgment and skill should be taken seriously, even if Washington wasn't infallible.

Since then, however, things have gone from good to bad to worse to truly awful. The Bill Clinton administration managed the U.S. economy pretty well, but its

handling of foreign policy was only so-so, and its policies in the Middle East and elsewhere laid the foundation for much future trouble. The George W. Bush administration was filled with experienced foreign-policy mavens, but a fatal combination of hubris, presidential ignorance, post-9/11 panic, and the baleful influence of a handful of neoconservative ideologues produced costly debacles in Iraq and Afghanistan. Obama did somewhat better (one could hardly have done worse), but he never took on the Blob's commitment to liberal hegemony and made some of the same mistakes that the younger Bush did, albeit on a smaller scale. Even the vaunted American military seems more skilled at blowing things up than at achieving anything resembling victory.

Which brings us to Trump.

He has been in office for only six months, but the consequences of his ineptitude are already apparent.

He has been in office for only six months, but the consequences of his ineptitude are already apparent.

First, when you don't understand the world very well, and when your team lacks skilled officials to compensate for presidential ignorance, you're going to make big policy mistakes. Trump's biggest doozy thus far was dropping the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a decision that undermined the U.S. position in Asia, opened the door toward greater Chinese influence, and won't benefit the U.S. economy in the slightest. Similar ignorance-fueled errors include walking away from the Paris climate accord (which makes Americans look like a bunch of science-denying, head-in-the-sand ignoramuses) and failing to appreciate that China wasn't — repeat, wasn't — going to solve the North Korea problem for us. Not to mention his team's inability to spell and confusion over which countries they are talking about.

Second, once other countries conclude that U.S. officials are dunderheads, they aren't going to pay much

attention to the advice, guidance, or requests that Washington makes. When people think you know what you're doing, they will listen carefully to what you have to say and will be more inclined to follow your lead. But if they think you're an idiot, or they aren't convinced you can actually deliver whatever you are promising, they may nod politely as you express your views but follow their own instincts instead.

We are already seeing signs of this. Having played to Trump's vulnerable ego brilliantly during his visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia is now blithely ignoring U.S. efforts to resolve the simmering dispute between the Gulf states and Qatar. True to form, Israel doesn't care what Trump thinks about the Israeli-Palestinian dispute or the situation in Syria either. To be sure, these two countries have a long history of ignoring U.S. advice and interests, but their indifference to Washington's views seems to have reached new heights. And now South Korea has announced it will begin talks with North Korea, despite the Trump administration's belief that the time was not right.

Meanwhile, the EU and Japan just reached a large trade deal; TPP-like talks are resuming without the United States; and the leaders of Germany and Canada — two of America's closest allies — have openly spoken of the need to chart their own course. Even the foreign minister of Australia — another staunch U.S. ally — has taken a dig at Trump for his demeaning remarks to France's first lady. And who can blame them? I mean: If you were a responsible foreign leader, would you take the advice of the man who had the wisdom to appoint Sebastian Gorka to a White House national security position, wants to cut the State Department budget by 30 percent, and thinks Jared Kushner is a genius who can handle difficult diplomatic assignments?

The United States is still very powerful, of course, so both allies and adversaries will continue to be cautious when dealing with it. That's why Emmanuel Macron of France

and Justin Trudeau of Canada have treated Trump with more respect than he deserves.

You'd tread carefully, too, if you found yourself in the same room as a drunk rhinoceros. But you probably wouldn't ask the rhino for advice or consult it on geopolitical strategy.

You'd tread carefully, too, if you found yourself in the same room as a drunk rhinoceros. But you probably wouldn't ask the rhino for advice or consult it on geopolitical strategy.

Instead of relying on U.S. guidance and (generally) supporting U.S. policy initiatives, states that lose confidence in America's competence will begin to hedge and make their own arrangements. They'll do deals with each other and sometimes with countries that the United States regards as adversaries. That is happening already with China and Iran, and you can expect more of the same as long as U.S. foreign policy combines the strategic acumen of Wile E. Coyote, the disciplined teamwork of the Three Stooges, and the well-oiled efficiency of the frat in *Animal House*.

Paleoconservatives and isolationists might welcome this outcome, because they think the United States has been bearing too large a share of global burdens and that it just screws things up when it tries to run the world. They have a point, but they take it way too far. If the United States were to disengage as far as they would like, the other 95 percent of humanity would proceed to create a world order where U.S. influence would be considerably smaller and where events in a few key regions would almost certainly evolve in ways that the United States would eventually regret. Instead of retreating to "Fortress America," it makes more sense to adopt the policy of offshore balancing that John Mearsheimer and I outlined a year ago.

But offshore balancing won't work if other states have little or no confidence in U.S. judgment, skill, and competence. Why? Because

the strategy calls for the United States to "hold the balance" in key regions (i.e., Europe, Asia, and perhaps the Middle East) and to stand ready to bring its power to bear in these areas should a potential hegemon emerge there. The countries with which the United States would join forces should that occur have to be sufficiently convinced that Washington can gauge threats properly and intervene with skill and effect when necessary. In short, the credibility of U.S. commitments depends on a minimum reputation for competence, and that is precisely the currency that Trump and Co. have been squandering.

To be clear, I am not saying there are not a lot of competent people serving in the U.S. government or that the United States is incapable of doing anything right these days. Indeed, my hat is off to the dedicated public servants who are trying to do their jobs despite the chaos in the White House and Trump's deliberate effort to cripple our foreign-policy machinery.

Nor am I saying that Donald Trump is incompetent at everything. He is, by all accounts, a much better than average golfer (even if he may be — now here's a shocker — prone to cheating), which may explain why he prefers golfing to governing. He has been adept at getting attractive foreign women to marry him, though not especially good at making the marriages last. And he is clearly an absolutely world-class bullshit artist, with a genuinely impressive ability to lie, prevaricate, evade, mislead, stretch the truth, and dissemble. These skills clearly served him well as a real estate developer, but they aren't helping him very much as president. Because once people decide you're a bumbler, either they take advantage of your ineptitude or they prefer to deal with those who are more reliable. It gives me no joy to say this, but can you blame them?

Photo credit: MANDEL NGAN/AFP/Getty Images

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Editorial : Avoiding War With Iran

The Editorial Board

7-8 minutes

Angus Greig

The last thing the United States needs is another war in the Middle East. Yet a drumbeat of provocative words, outright threats and actions — from President Trump and some

of his top aides as well as Sunni Arab leaders and American activists — is raising tensions that could lead to armed conflict with Iran.

Tehran invites some of this hostility with moves like detaining Xiyue Wang, a Princeton scholar, and supporting the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad. And for many American politicians, Iran — estranged from the United States since 1979 — deserves only

punishment and isolation. But Iran and the United States also share some interests, like fighting the Islamic State. So why not take advantage of all the diplomatic tools, including opening a dialogue, used before to manage difficult and even hostile governments?

It is useful to recall the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War, arguably America's biggest strategic blunder in modern times. After the Sept. 11

attacks, the country was riveted on Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. But in Washington, the talk turned almost immediately to Iraq and the chance to overthrow Saddam Hussein, even though he had nothing to do with Sept. 11 and had no nuclear weapons, as President George W. Bush alleged. Mr. Bush decided to fight a pre-emptive war without a solid justification or strategy.

Such a stumble into war could happen again. Here are some reasons to be concerned:

■ President Trump campaigned on a pledge to tear up the 2015 seven-nation nuclear pact under which Iran rolled back its nuclear program in exchange for a lifting of sanctions. Although he twice certified to Congress, most recently on Monday, that Iran remains in compliance with the deal, he did so grudgingly and with the subsequent imposition of new sanctions related to Iran's ballistic missile tests. The Iranians say Mr. Trump is in danger of violating the agreement, especially after urging European leaders not to do business with Iran. A central promise of the deal was that Tehran would benefit economically in exchange for its nuclear restraint. Instead of taking advantage of this diplomatic breakthrough, Mr. Trump seems intent on reversing it by provoking Iran to renege or renegeing himself, in much the way he rejected the Paris climate accord.

■ Congress, which was overwhelmingly opposed to the nuclear deal when it was signed, is working on new sanctions. Republicans in particular have pressed Mr. Trump to toughen his approach. In a recent letter to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, four senators said Iran continues to wage "regional aggression, sponsor international terrorism, develop

ballistic missile technology and oppress the Iranian people." There's truth in that. But the nuclear deal was intended to alleviate only the nuclear threat, and they, like other critics, fail to acknowledge that it represented important progress toward decreasing the risk of war in the region.

■ Top American officials have turned up their rhetoric and have hinted at support for regime change, despite the dismal record in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Mr. Tillerson accused Iran of seeking regional hegemony at the expense of American allies like Saudi Arabia. "Our policy toward Iran is to push back on this hegemony ... and to work toward support of those elements inside of Iran that would lead to a peaceful transition of that government," he told a congressional committee. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis recently called Iran "the most destabilizing influence in the Middle East."

■ Since the 1979 revolution that installed a theocracy in Iran, American leaders have periodically toyed with regime change. But some experts say this time is more serious, because Mr. Trump accepts the simplistic view of Sunnified Saudi Arabia that Shiite-led Iran is to blame for all that's wrong in the region, taking sides in the feud between two branches of Islam.

The Saudis, who were already facing off against Iran-backed rebels in Yemen, have taken an even harsher stance since their leadership change. This month, they created a crisis by mounting a regional boycott against Qatar, which has relations with Iran. Israel also considers Iran a virulent threat, one reason for a deepening alignment between Israel and the Sunni states, and from time to time has reportedly urged America to attack Iran or considered doing so itself.

■ Anti-Iran voices outside government are trying to push Mr. Trump and Congress toward confrontation with Iran. The head of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a hawkish group that tried to block the Iran nuclear deal, urged Mr. Trump in a recent Wall Street Journal opinion article to "systemically dismantle Iranian power country by country in the Middle East" and to strengthen Iran's pro-democracy forces. Prominent Trump supporters like John Bolton, a former ambassador to the United Nations; Newt Gingrich, former House speaker; and Rudolph Giuliani, former New York mayor, are pressing Mr. Trump to abandon the deal and are speaking out on behalf of the Mujahedeen Khalq, exiled Iranian dissidents who back regime change.

Most Americans are aware of Iran's crimes against this country, including the 52 Americans taken hostage in 1979; the 241 Marines killed in the 1983 bombing of their barracks in Lebanon; and the 1996 bombing of the Air Force quarters in Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia. Perhaps less known are events that still anger Iranians — like the 1953 coup aided by the C.I.A. that ousted Iran's democratically elected leader, Mohammed Mossadegh, and America's intelligence support for Iraq in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

Iran's grievances do not make its recent behavior any less concerning. Tehran continues to fund Hezbollah and other extremists; detain Americans; and work to expand its reach, including in Iraq. Iran and the United States appear to be entering a particularly risky time. As the Islamic State gets pushed out of Iraq and Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia, along with their proxy forces, will be competing for control. Any attempt at regime change in Iran could destabilize the volatile Middle East in even more unpredictable ways.

Iran's government continues to be torn between anti-American hardliners and moderates like President Hassan Rouhani who are willing to engage with America. Mr. Trump would make a grave mistake if instead of trying to work with those moderate forces he led the nation closer to war.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Map Said to Show Location of U.S. Forces in Syria Published in Turkey

Dion Nissenbaum

4-5 minutes

July 19, 2017 6:17 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—A detailed map purportedly showing where U.S. forces are deployed in northern Syria was published by Turkey's state-run news agency, drawing a sharp retort and a warning from the Pentagon that the move could undermine the battle against Islamic State.

The U.S. government on Wednesday expressed its concerns to Turkish officials after Anadolu Agency released a lengthy article and a map it said showed the locations of 10 bases used by hundreds of U.S. forces in northern Syria battling Islamic State, also known as ISIS.

"The release of sensitive military information exposes coalition forces to unnecessary risk and has the potential to disrupt ongoing operations to defeat ISIS," the U.S. military said in a statement. "ISIS is

the greatest threat to regional stability and it is critical that all parties operating in Syria remain focused on what is most important—the annihilation of ISIS."

Release of the map angered some U.S. officials, who privately expressed frustration that Turkey, a North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally, would threaten its relationship with Washington by allowing its state-run news agency to publish sensitive information.

"While we cannot independently verify the sources that contributed to this article, we would be very concerned if officials from a NATO ally would purposefully endanger our forces by releasing sensitive information," the Pentagon said. "We have conveyed these concerns to the government of Turkey."

Turkish officials didn't respond to requests for comment about the release of the information, which comes as the U.S. military is stepping up its efforts to push Islamic State out of Raqqa, its de facto capital in Syria.

Turkey and the U.S. remain at odds over Washington's decision to work in Syria with the Kurdish YPG militia. Turkish leaders consider the force a threat to their country and have expressed frustration that the Trump administration decided to step up its military cooperation with the YPG earlier this year.

Turkish officials see the YPG as an offshoot of the PKK, a Kurdish separatist force that the U.S. and Turkey both classify as a terrorist group. The U.S. treats the YPG as a distinct force from the PKK, allowing it to work with Kurdish fighters in Syria.

In May, President Donald Trump approved plans to directly arm the YPG for the first time, raising new concerns in Turkey that the weapons would be turned on Turkish soldiers fighting in Syria or smuggled across the border into Turkey.

The U.S. has tried to assuage Turkish concerns, but the issue remains a divisive one for the two countries.

Turkey has launched airstrikes on YPG positions in northern Syria and repeatedly turned its artillery on Kurdish forces. The U.S. responded by launching joint border patrols in April with the YPG, a move that helped temporarily defuse tensions.

While the Turkish news agency published the map, the German newspaper Bild released satellite imagery of what it said was a major U.S. base in northern Syria, a sprawling facility with a long runway, hangars, barracks and fuel depots.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has denounced the U.S. military presence in Syria.

"Any foreign troops coming to Syria without our invitation or consultation or permission, they are invaders, whether they are American, Turkish, or any other one," Mr. Assad said in an interview earlier this year. "They didn't succeed anywhere they sent troops, they only create a mess. They are very good in creating problems and destroying, but they are very bad in finding solutions."

—Margaret Coker in Istanbul and Nour Alakraa in Beirut contributed to this article.

Write to Dion Nissenbaum at [dion.nissenbaum@wsj.com](mailto:dion.nissenbaum@wsj.com)

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The  
Washington  
Post

## Trump ends covert CIA program to arm anti-Assad rebels in Syria, a move sought by Moscow (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/greg.jaffe.5>

8-10 minutes

In a move that reflects his interest in working with Russia, President Trump has decided to end a covert CIA program supporting Syrian rebels fighting President Bashar al-Assad. In a move that Russia is likely to welcome, President Trump has decided to end a covert CIA program supporting Syrian rebels fighting President Bashar al-Assad. (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

President Trump has decided to end the CIA's covert program to arm and train moderate Syrian rebels battling the government of Bashar al-Assad, a move long sought by Russia, according to U.S. officials.

The program was a central plank of a policy begun by the Obama administration in 2013 to put pressure on Assad to step aside, but even its backers have questioned its efficacy since Russia deployed forces in Syria two years later.

Officials said the phasing out of the secret program reflects Trump's interest in finding ways to work with Russia, which saw the anti-Assad program as an assault on its interests. The shuttering of the program is also an acknowledgment of Washington's limited leverage and desire to remove Assad from power.

Just three months ago, after the United States accused Assad of using chemical weapons, Trump launched retaliatory airstrikes against a Syrian air base. At the time, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, said that "in no way do we see peace in that area with Assad at the head of the Syrian government."

Officials said Trump made the decision to scrap the CIA program nearly a month ago, after an Oval Office meeting with CIA Director Mike Pompeo and national security adviser H.R. McMaster ahead of a July 7 meeting in Germany with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

How Trump is changing America's foreign policy

Spokesmen for the National Security Council and the CIA declined to comment.

After the Trump-Putin meeting, the United States and Russia announced an agreement to back a new cease-fire in southwest Syria, along the Jordanian border, where many of the CIA-backed rebels have long operated. Trump described the limited cease-fire deal as one of the benefits of a constructive working relationship with Moscow.

The move to end the secret program to arm the anti-Assad rebels was not a condition of the cease-fire negotiations, which were already well underway, said U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the secret program.

Trump's dealings with Russia have been under heavy scrutiny because of the investigations into the Kremlin's interference in the 2016 election. The decision on the CIA-backed rebels will be welcomed by Moscow, which focused its firepower on those fighters after it intervened in Syria in 2015.

Some current and former officials who support the program cast the move as a major concession.

"This is a momentous decision," said a current official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a covert program. "Putin won in Syria."

With the end of the CIA program, U.S. involvement in Syria now consists of a vigorous air campaign against the Islamic State and a Pentagon-run train-and-equip program in support of the largely Kurdish rebel force that is advancing on Islamic State strongholds in Raqqa and along the Euphrates River valley. The Trump administration's long-term strategy, following the defeat of the Islamic State, appears to be focused on stitching together a series of regional cease-fire deals among the U.S.-backed rebels, the Syrian government and Russia.

Some analysts said the decision to end the program was likely to empower more radical groups inside Syria and damage the credibility of the United States.

"We are falling into a Russian trap," said Charles Lister, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, who focuses on the Syrian resistance. "We are making the moderate resistance more and more vulnerable. . . . We are really cutting them off at the neck."

Others said it was recognition of Assad's entrenched position in Syria.

"It's probably a nod to reality," said Ilan Goldenberg, a former Obama administration official and director of the Middle East Security Program at the Center for a New American Security.

U.S. intelligence officials say battlefield gains by rebels in 2015 prompted Russia's direct military intervention on the side of the Assad regime. Some U.S. officials and their allies in the region urged President Barack Obama to respond by providing the rebels with advanced antiaircraft weapons so they could better defend themselves. But Obama balked, citing concerns about the United States getting pulled into a conflict with Russia.

Senior U.S. officials said that the covert program would be phased out over a period of months. It is also possible that some of the support could be redirected to other missions, such as fighting the Islamic State or making sure that the rebels can still defend themselves from attacks.

"This is a force that we can't afford to completely abandon," Goldenberg said. "If they are ending the aid to the rebels altogether, then that is a huge strategic mistake."

U.S. officials said the decision had the backing of Jordan, where some of the rebels were trained, and appeared to be part of a larger Trump administration strategy to focus on negotiating limited cease-fire deals with the Russians.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

Earlier this month, five days into the first cease-fire in southwest Syria, Trump indicated that another agreement was under discussion with Moscow. "We are working on the second cease-fire in a very rough part of Syria," Trump said. "If we get that and a few more, all of a sudden we are going to have no bullets being fired in Syria."

One big potential risk of shutting down the CIA program is that the United States may lose its ability to block other countries, such as Turkey and Persian Gulf allies, from funneling more sophisticated weapons — including man-portable air-defense systems, or MANPADS — to anti-Assad rebels, including more radical groups.

Toward the end of the Obama administration, some officials advocated ending the CIA program, arguing that the rebels would be ineffective without a major escalation in U.S. support. But the program still had the support of a majority of top Obama advisers, who argued that the United States couldn't abandon its allies on the ground and give up on the moderate opposition because of the damage that it would do to U.S. standing in the region.

Even those who were skeptical about the program's long-term value, viewed it as a key bargaining chip that could be used to wring concessions from Moscow in negotiations over Syria's future.

"People began thinking about ending the program, but it was not something you'd do for free," said a former White House official. "To give [the program] away without getting anything in return would be foolish."

Greg Jaffe is a reporter on the national staff of The Washington Post, where he has been since March 2009. Previously, he covered the White House and the military for The Post.

The  
New York  
Times

## Trump Ends Covert Aid to Syrian Rebels Trying to Topple Assad

David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt and Ben Hubbard

6-8 minutes



Syrians combed the rubble of their houses, which were destroyed on Wednesday during clashes on the outskirts of Raqqa. Bulent Kilic/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

President Trump has ended the clandestine American program to provide arms and supplies to Syrian rebel groups, American officials said, a recognition that the effort was failing and that the administration has given up hope of helping to topple the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

The decision came more than a month ago, the officials said, by which time the effort to deliver the arms had slowed to a trickle.

It was never publicly announced, just as the beginnings of the program four years ago were officially a secret, authorized by President Barack Obama through a "finding" that permitted the C.I.A. to conduct a deniable program. News of the troublesome program soon leaked out.

It joins similar failed efforts to deliver arms and money to groups seeking to overthrow governments that Washington found noxious, most famously the Kennedy administration's disastrous effort to do away with the government of Fidel Castro in Cuba.

The White House had no comment. But the decision is bound to be welcomed by the Russians, whose military has backed Mr. Assad's government and relentlessly attacked some of the rebel groups that the United States was supplying, under the guise of helping to eradicate terrorists.

On Tuesday, Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, charged that the United

States had helped destabilize the region, and portrayed Iran as merely defending its interests. Washington, instead, views Iran's aid to the Assad government as part of an effort to restore itself as a major regional power.

From the start, there were doubts that arming disorganized, often internally fractious forces would succeed. Officials in the Obama administration conceded that there was no way to predict the future loyalties of those who received American arms, despite a lengthy vetting process. That problem — getting the weapons into the right hands and assuring they were not passed on to others and used against American troops or allies — plagued the effort soon after it was proposed by Hillary Clinton, who was then secretary of state, and David H. Petraeus, the C.I.A. director at the time.

Mr. Trump's decision was first reported by The Washington Post. But it was foreshadowed as early as April, when the Trump administration said that ousting Mr. Assad, whose government has fought a civil war that has taken roughly half a million lives, was no longer a priority. Instead, the United States and Russia have been discussing cease-fire zones in the country, the first of which went into effect this month.

Those discussions have been possible because Mr. Assad, secure in his support from Moscow and Tehran, no longer sees a fundamental threat to his ability to remain in power. And Mr. Trump's decisions amounted to an acknowledgment that no escalation of the program, which began in 2013 in concert with the C.I.A.'s counterparts in Saudi Arabia,

Turkey and Jordan, was likely to yield a different result.

When it began, the initial objective was to force Mr. Assad to the bargaining table, in a series of negotiations that the secretary of state at the time, John Kerry, took up in earnest in late 2015. But each agreement — for cease-fires, and deadlines for a political "road map" for elections in the country — fizzled. Mr. Kerry fumed that Mr. Obama was not willing to provide the kind of military pressure on Mr. Assad that might bolster the diplomacy. Mr. Obama, for his part, was leery of entering another Middle East war whose outcome he could neither control nor predict.

The program became less relevant as the Russians increased their presence in Syria, targeting and badly weakening the C.I.A.-backed rebels, who were the most capable of the opposition fighters. That helped the Assad government claw back and consolidate territorial gains.

"This is a big deal, but it's been a long time coming," Charles Lister, a Syria analyst for the Middle East Institute in Washington, said. "It's the biggest indication so far of the administration's having given up on the opposition."

"After all, the Southern Front has consistently been our most reliable anti-Assad partner," Mr. Lister said, referring to opposition forces fighting Mr. Assad in the southern part of the country. "It's also the result of strong Jordanian pressure, as Amman has been pushing a freeze for a long time. So it was probably inevitable, but it's nonetheless very significant."

He added that it was "a big mistake in my mind."

Other independent experts said it was unclear whether Mr. Trump's decision would have an impact on fighters defending areas held by the opposition.

At its height, the program was run through operations rooms in Jordan and Turkey, supporting rebel groups fighting under the banner of the Free Syrian Army who were deemed not to be extremists.

But the pressure on Mr. Assad was not great enough to force him to enter negotiations to end the civil war. Nor was it sufficient to clear the way for the rebel groups to take over major cities or approach the capital, Damascus. The program also sought to bolster so-called moderate rebels against extremist factions like the Syrian affiliate of Al Qaeda.

When the history of the effort is written — and the documents surrounding it are declassified — historians will doubtless seek to learn why the rebels lost ground for years, to Syrian government forces and their Russian and Iranian allies, and to extremists.

After the rebels' expulsion from the eastern half of the city of Aleppo last year, it became clear that they no longer posed a serious threat to Mr. Assad's rule.

But stopping the covert program, which mainly helped rebels near the Turkish border in northwestern Syria and along the Jordanian border in the south, will not affect the fight against the jihadists of the Islamic State in the east. A different program there run by the Pentagon is supporting a Kurdish-Arab militia known as the Syrian Democratic Forces.



## For the first time, Israel describes the aid work it carries out in Syria

By Ruth Eglash  
6-7 minutes

**GOLAN HEIGHTS** — Israel made public for the first time Wednesday the extent of its humanitarian aid to the civilian population living just across its northern border in Syria.

It is well documented that Israel has provided emergency medical treatment to Syrian fighters seeking help. As many as 3,000 wounded individuals have made their way to the border and received lifesaving medical treatment in Israeli hospitals before returning to their homeland.

There have also been media reports that Israel has provided financial

and other support to some of the rebel groups fighting against the army of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in a conflict that started in 2011.

On Wednesday, the Israeli army opened its store rooms and briefed journalists on the full extent of a humanitarian operation it calls "Good Neighbors." As part of the effort, Israel has transferred 360 tons of food, 450,000 liters of gasoline and 50 tons of clothing to Syria. It has also sent large quantities of painkillers, anesthetics and basic medicine for diabetes and asthma.

While its official policy has been to steer clear of the fighting raging a few miles from its border, Israel has been drawn into the conflict on

numerous occasions, returning fire toward Syrian army positions, even killing fighters, when errant fire reaches into its territory.

On Wednesday, during a meeting with Eastern European leaders in Budapest, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was heard saying, too, that Israel had carried out dozens of attacks against arms convoys in Syria making their way to the militant Lebanese group Hezbollah.

"We blocked the border not only in Egypt but in the Golan Heights," Netanyahu told leaders from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. "We built the wall because there was a problem with ISIS and Iran trying to build a terror front there. I told Putin, when

we see them transferring weapons to Hezbollah, we will hurt them. We did it dozens of times." (ISIS is another name for the Islamic State.)

*[Netanyahu accidentally reveals Israel has struck Iran-backed fighters in Syria]*

The meeting was being held behind closed doors, but Netanyahu's remarks were accidentally transmitted to reporters covering the event, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported.

During the trip to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on Wednesday, military personnel shared with journalists that over the past year Israel has provided aid to some 200,000 civilians living on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights.

As many as 6.5 million Syrians have been displaced in the fighting. Many of those have made their way to nearby countries and even Europe, but only the poorest Syrians have turned to Israel for assistance, Col. Barak Hiram, brigade commander of the Golan Heights, told reporters.

Israel and Syria have never had diplomatic relations and have been officially at war since Israel's establishment in 1948. Until now, there was almost no human interaction between Israelis, who took control of part of the Golan Heights after the 1967 war, and those Syrians who live close to Israel's border.

"They have been taught all their lives that Israel is Satan and were afraid to come to the border for help," Hiram said.

Much of the Syrian population in that area lives in rural villages, and about 50 percent are under 18. There are also internally displaced people who have arrived in the area, with some 400 families living in tents close to the border, he said.

The fighting had left many residential areas with no running water or electricity, and educational and health-care facilities are almost nonexistent. Those that are still standing have only rudimentary equipment, Hiram said.

Since last summer, Israel has transferred infrastructure equipment such as generators and piping to repair the water system, as well as hundreds of tons of basic food supplies and medicine.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

The Israeli army has also facilitated basic medical treatment for Syrian children and their parents in triage clinics set up along the border, allowing more-serious cases to be treated in Israeli hospitals.

Until now, most of the operation has taken place at night, but in roughly two weeks a medical clinic

to be run by a team of American doctors and protected by the Israeli army will open in the area and operate during the day, Hiram said.

Noam Fink, who is the chief medical officer of Israel's Northern Command and oversees the medical program in the Golan Heights, said children with basic illnesses or conditions could now receive simple treatment.

"It makes me proud that we are doing this, and I hope that the international language of medicine will start relations with our neighbors," he said.

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

## Spencer : The City Is the Battlefield of the Future

John Spencer  
5-6 minutes

July 19, 2017 5:48 p.m. ET

The battle for Mosul represents the future of warfare—and it wasn't pretty for America's allies. A ragtag army of a few thousand Islamic State fighters managed to hold the city for months against some 100,000 U.S.-backed Iraqi security forces. The ISIS fighters communicated via social media and were armed with crude explosive devices and drones available at Wal-Mart. In the end the rebel fighters were dislodged, but not before an estimated 7,000 people were killed and another 22,000 wounded.

U.S. commanders ought to imagine how they would handle a similar environment. Future American conflicts will not be waged in the caves or craggy mountaintops of Afghanistan, much less the open deserts of Iraq or the jungles of Vietnam. They will be fought in cities—dense, often overpopulated and full of obstacles: labyrinthine apartment blocks, concealed tunnels, panicking civilians. The enemy will be highly networked and integrated into his surroundings. America's next war will be the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu on steroids.

The U.S. military must wake up to the reality of demographic trends.

Over half of the world's population resides in cities, and the United Nations estimates that figure will reach 60% by 2030. By the same year, the number of "megacities," those with more than 10 million residents, will climb from 31 to more than 40. Such urbanization makes less plausible the traditional tactic of coercing civilians out of conflict zones to give the military free rein.

This in turn makes cities increasingly attractive to bands of violent nonstate actors in places like the Middle East and Northern Africa. Dense populations, advances in communication technology, and the often-poor coordination between city and national-security forces can allow terror groups to control urban territory at a fraction of the cost states spend to fight back. No amount of money thrown into the U.S. defense budget will correct this urban disadvantage without a major shift in the way Americans prepare to fight.

Surprisingly, few militaries specifically train for major urban operations. The U.S. military has no location that can adequately replicate a big city. The training sites on Army bases that are generously labeled as "urban" include a few dozen buildings at best. The three centers that certify major units for combat—the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La.,

and the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany—are in rural places. We don't transport sand into the woods to train for desert warfare or build greenhouses to simulate jungles. We train in those environments, and we should train for urban warfare in cities.

The only site available to the Army that comes close to what's needed is the Indiana National Guard's Muscatatuck Urban Training Center. This 1,000-acre facility has 68 buildings, a reservoir, a system of tunnels, and more than nine miles of roads. But Muscatatuck still lacks the density American and allied forces have repeatedly faced since the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003.

American forces also need to be equipped to operate in large cities with new equipment, formations and doctrine. Nowhere in the U.S. Army's doctrine—the manuals of concepts and operating procedures that guide the action of its forces—does the word "siege" appear. But this oldest form of warfare has become the chosen tactic to end urban fights in Iraq and Syria. Islamic State was able to drag out the conflicts in Mosul and Raqqa while U.S.-backed forces struggled to cut off supply routes.

What can be done to level this imbalance on urban terrain? A first step would be to create an authentic, full-scale training site to

prepare American troops. I imagine a school in an actual city, analogous to the mountain, desert and jungle operations centers the U.S. currently maintains. Major cities such as Detroit and the outer boroughs of New York have large abandoned areas that could be safely redeveloped as urban training sites.

This is a long-term investment: A new training facility would not prevent quagmires like Mosul overnight. Critics might argue that the U.S. should focus on retaining its advantage against strategic adversaries like Russia, China and North Korea. But strategic deterrence and battlefield readiness are not mutually exclusive. Equipping soldiers to fight in cities is one way to deter enemies—state and nonstate actors alike—from challenging America directly.

The city is the battlefield of the future, whether the U.S. military trains for it or not. Failing to invest in urban warfare only means American soldiers will be sent into combat in environments they have never seen.

*Maj. Spencer is an Army infantryman and deputy director of the Modern War Institute at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y.*

Appeared in the July 20, 2017, print edition.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## U.N. Expresses Alarm Over 'Extreme Dangers' for Yemeni Civilians

Rick Gladstone  
3-4 minutes

this year. Hani Mohammed/Associated Press

The United Nations expressed alarm on Wednesday at a bombing by Saudi-led forces in Yemen that killed at least 20 fleeing civilians, and it criticized restrictions that stop

journalists from reaching the country to chronicle the war.

The bombing, in the southwest province of Taiz, was first reported late Tuesday, but the extent of the casualties became clear only hours later.

The United Nations refugee agency said most of the victims were from one family, which like many others in the area had abandoned their homes to find safety.

"The latest incident once again demonstrates the extreme dangers

Yemenis presented documents to receive food rations provided by a local charity in Sana, the capital,

facing civilians in Yemen, particularly those attempting to flee violence, as they disproportionately bear the brunt of conflict," an agency statement said.

At least two million Yemenis are regarded as internally displaced, having fled elsewhere within the country since the conflict began. The refugee agency said roughly 27 percent of them are from Taiz.

For more than two years Saudi Arabia and its allies have been fighting the Houthis, an Iran-backed Yemeni group

that evicted the Saudi-supported government from Sana, the capital, and controls big parts of the country, the poorest in the Middle East.

The conflict has left at least 10,000 people dead and created an urgent humanitarian disaster, with the threat of famine amplified by a widespread cholera outbreak that has sickened more than 300,000 people.

The Saudi coalition has faced repeated criticism from rights advocates and relief groups over

indiscriminate bombings in the conflict. The Saudis have said they avoid civilian casualties but have made errors, such as a bombing raid last October that killed more than 100 funeral mourners.

The United Nations and other organizations helping Yemen's civilians have also criticized the Saudi blockades that have restricted shipping and aviation, causing severe shortages and preventing foreign journalists from witnessing the conflict up close.

Friction over this issue spilled into the open on Wednesday when the Saudi coalition stopped a United Nations aid flight from leaving Djibouti for Sana until three BBC journalists deplaned.

Farhan Haq, a United Nations spokesman, expressed anger about the plane standoff.

"Steps like this do not help," he said. "This has been a large, man-made humanitarian problem. The world needs to know, and journalists need to have access."



## Trump has rare meeting of full national security team to discuss Afghanistan

<https://www.facebook.com/greg.jaff>  
e.5

5-6 minutes

President Trump presided over a rare meeting of his full national security team Wednesday in the White House. The subject was the future of the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan, and hovering over the discussion was a big question: How committed is the president to a long-term and costly American presence in the country?

Trump has said little about America's longest war since taking office in January, but the debate over how to stabilize the country and reverse the Taliban's momentum has divided top officials in the Pentagon, the State Department and the White House in recent weeks.

The meeting Wednesday was designed to tee up final decisions for the president in what has been a long and difficult policy review, said current and former U.S. officials.

Trump gave Defense Secretary Jim Mattis the authority more than a month ago to send as many as 3,900 additional

troops to Afghanistan on top of the roughly 8,500 currently there. But Mattis has yet to pull the trigger on sending the additional forces until the administration can agree on a final strategy for Afghanistan, said U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing internal planning.

"He's clearly being cautious about cashing that check," said a former U.S. official who has participated in the administration debate. "Mattis is either not persuaded that there's a strategic rationale for the troops or he's not persuaded that the decision will ultimately fly with the president — or both."

The meeting that Trump led in the White House did not focus on the size of the American force in Afghanistan but looked at America's broader approach to the region and its strategy regarding Pakistan, which has provided a haven for the Taliban.

National security adviser H.R. McMaster and U.S. commanders in Afghanistan have pressed for a more punitive approach to Pakistan aimed at forcing it to cut ties to the Afghan Taliban.

But such an approach has been met with skepticism by senior officials in the Pentagon and the State Department, who said that Pakistan is unlikely to change its behavior and that efforts to pressure Islamabad would likely lead to greater instability in the region.

Top U.S. officials have also been divided over whether to seek peace negotiations with the Taliban now or wait until the new U.S. strategy has begun to shift the momentum on the battlefield. "The McMaster view is that you should not negotiate with the Taliban while they are still ascendant," said the former U.S. official.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

But the current U.S.-Afghan war strategy is built around a four-year plan to push back the Taliban that is not likely to yield significant results until its later stages, U.S. officials said.

Earlier this week, Trump met over lunch with service members who had fought in Afghanistan and suggested that his patience with the war might be running out.

"It's our longest war. We've been there for many years," Trump told reporters before the lunch. "We've been there for now close to 17 years, and I want to find out why we've been there for 17 years, how it's going, and what we should do in terms of additional ideas."

One challenge for Trump is that there are not a lot of new options available to him that do not come with a big price tag. In recent months, Trump has loosened the rules governing American airstrikes, allowing U.S. forces to boost the air campaign against the Taliban to levels not seen since 2012, when the United States had 100,000 troops in the country.

"I'm skeptical that the strategy can be dramatically improved," said Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "You can try to be tougher on Pakistan. You can try to make clear that we are there for a long-term commitment. But I don't expect a dramatic metamorphosis of this mission."



## Lack of Progress at U.S.-China Talks Raises Stakes for Trump

lan Talley

9-11 minutes

Updated July 20, 2017 7:39 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON—High-level economic talks between the U.S. and China ended Wednesday without any concrete agreement or future agenda, leaving the Trump administration's efforts to recast trade ties with Beijing in limbo.

Jacob M. Schlesinger and

After a full day of bilateral meetings, the U.S. side issued a terse statement saying that "China acknowledged our shared objective to reduce the trade deficit which both sides will work cooperatively to achieve."

The statement from Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin didn't provide further details on just how much the two sides could agree on, or when they would resume talks.

Chinese officials painted a rosier picture of Wednesday's talks, with

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang describing them as "innovative, practical and constructive," though he reiterated China's displeasure at recent U.S. actions, including arms sales to Taiwan. China's Commerce Ministry didn't immediately comment on the outcome of the dialogue.

U.S. and Chinese officials agreed that "one of the solutions to address the trade imbalance is for the United States to expand its exports to China, instead of reducing imports from China," Chinese Vice Finance Minister Zhu Guangyao said in remarks reported by the official

Xinhua News Agency. Beijing is also urging Washington to lift export controls that curb sales of high-tech products to China, Mr. Zhu said.

The failure to take specific steps to close America's \$347 billion trade deficit with China—70% of the U.S. global imbalance—raises pressure on the Trump administration to consider shifting from its embrace of cooperation with Beijing toward more confrontation.

Trump aides have been weighing a series of tougher trade policies toward China, from new import barriers on steel and solar panels,

to tighter restrictions on investments, but have so far chosen not to implement them.

People familiar with Wednesday's talks said that American negotiators tried, unsuccessfully, to use the threat of new steel tariffs to force the Chinese to commit to specific benchmarks for cutting the country's mammoth production overcapacity in that sector, a big factor dragging down steel prices globally.

The meetings were held to mark the end of a 100-day period that President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping had set to come up with a comprehensive plan to reset commercial ties between the world's two largest economies. The lack of any announced plan means they failed to meet that self-imposed deadline.

The decision to issue a statement from just the U.S. side was a break with past practices after similar negotiations held in recent years during the Obama and Bush administrations. In the past, both countries issued common statements summarizing what they had discussed, emphasizing areas of agreement—and usually issuing a list of sector-specific market-opening pledges from China. It was also a contrast with the more amicable joint statement given by Mr. Trump and Mr. Xi during an April Florida summit where they agreed to launch a “Comprehensive Economic Dialogue.”

“Many expected at the 100-day point we would have much more substantive points of progress,” said Nicholas Lardy, a China scholar at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. He added that the lack of agreement on even modest measures is a sign that U.S.-China relations “are very uncertain and subject to very high risks.”

People familiar with the talks said a major sticking point was a demand from the American negotiators to craft a concrete plan, with benchmarks and a timetable, for reducing China's trade surplus with the U.S.

“The administration wanted to put some numerical targets in place and I know China was uncomfortable with that,” said Myron Brilliant, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce vice president of international affairs.

More than his predecessors, Mr. Trump has focused not just on removing barriers to American exports, but on trying to curb America's trade deficit, which he has said is a concrete sign of flawed policies. Many economists say Mr. Trump's focus on trade deficits with individual countries is ill-conceived because deficits are driven in large part by macroeconomic factors beyond the control of trade negotiators, like national saving and investment patterns.

Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang, who headed his delegation, opened Wednesday's talks by saying that the economic teams from both countries “have worked around the clock and have held over 60 rounds of working consultations” since the Florida summit to prepare for this week's session. He portrayed those discussions as more “intense” than intricate negotiations surrounding China's joining the World Trade Organization in 2001.

People familiar with the discussions said American negotiators had been optimistic going into the meetings that they could announce some kind of accords on Chinese regulation of data at multinational companies—a major complaint of U.S. firms doing business there—easing restrictions on foreign auto makers, curbing Chinese agricultural subsidies, and addressing Chinese steel overcapacity.

The stall in economic talks mirrors a similarly rough patch in the Trump administration's diplomatic ties with Beijing. In the weeks since the Mar-a-Lago summit, Mr. Trump rebuffed Chinese objections in approving news arms sales to Taiwan, which Beijing considers a renegade province, and sent bombers and naval patrols this month to the South China Sea to assert American freedom to navigate those contested waters. Mr. Trump also tightened economic sanctions against companies and banks allegedly doing businesses aiding North Korea's nuclear program.

The North Korea issue in particular may affect Mr. Trump's economic approach to China. The president said earlier that he would give China some leeway on trade in return for Beijing's help curbing Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. He has since said he was disappointed with China's efforts, which may make him feel freer to yield the trade club.

“In terms of North Korea, our strength is trade,” Mr. Trump said last week.

Beijing hadn't been likely to grant major concessions to Washington even without recent irritants in the relationship, according to Huo Jianguo, a former Chinese trade official turned researcher.

“Large gaps still exist between the U.S. and China in terms of their economic interests, and there's little consensus on an approach toward bridging those differences,” said Mr. Huo, vice chairman of the China Society for World Trade Organization Studies. “Both sides still need to time to adjust their mentalities.”

The Trump team early on expressed optimism that it had found a new formula for solving nettlesome trade tensions where prior administrations had failed. In May, as part of a quick down

payment, the two governments announced agreement on Chinese market-opening measures in agriculture and finance, with a Chinese pledge to deliver concrete results before this week's meetings.

But some U.S. business groups and affected companies have complained that while China has met the letter of its pledges, it has failed to live up to the spirit of them, removing the promised trade barriers, while leaving other impediments in place.

A new tiff flared up this week when Dow Chemical Co. said China had appeared to renege on a promise to provide an expedited review of its genetically modified soybean crops as part of the May pledge to accelerate approval of eight stalled biotechnology products.

The Chinese government said there had been a misunderstanding and that the Dow product hadn't been on its priority clearance list.

Some American business leaders worry that the stalled talks could create new uncertainty and instability in bilateral economic ties.

“We are disappointed the Comprehensive Economic Dialogue ended at an apparent impasse,” John Frisbie, president of the US-China Business Council, said. “It is important for governments to take tangible steps to address longstanding issues and ensure the commercial relationship remains a source of stability in the overall relationship.”

—Jacob Bunge in Chicago and Chun Han Wong in Beijing contributed to this article.

**Write to** Jacob M. Schlesinger at [jacob.schlesinger@wsj.com](mailto:jacob.schlesinger@wsj.com) and Ian Talley at [ian.talley@wsj.com](mailto:ian.talley@wsj.com)

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## **The New York Times** China Showers Myanmar With Attention, as Trump Looks Elsewhere (UNE)

Jane Perlez  
11-13 minutes

NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar — When Myanmar's leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, wanted to hold a peace conference to end her country's long-burning insurgencies, a senior Chinese diplomat went to work.

The official assembled scores of rebel leaders, many with longstanding connections to China, briefed them on the peace gathering and flew them on a chartered plane

to Myanmar's capital. There, after being introduced to a beaming Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, they were wine and dined, and sang rowdy karaoke late into the night.

A cease-fire may still be a long way off, but the gesture neatly illustrates how Myanmar, a former military dictatorship that the United States worked hard to press toward democracy, is now depending on China to help solve its problems.

The pieces all fell into place for China: It wanted peace in Myanmar to protect its new energy

investments, it had the leverage to press the rebels and it found an opening to do a favor for Myanmar to deliver peace.

China is now able to play its natural role in Myanmar in a more forceful way than ever before as the United States under the Trump administration steps back from more than six years of heavy engagement in Myanmar, including some tentative contacts with some of the rebels. The vacuum left by the United States makes China's return all the easier.

When Myanmar began to adopt democratic reforms in 2011, the Obama administration quickly reciprocated, loosening sanctions as part of a broader effort to strengthen relationships with Southeast Asian nations as a bulwark against China's rise.

As Myanmar's relations with China cooled, the result of what many saw as heavy-handed intervention by Beijing, Barack Obama became, in 2012, the first American president to visit the country. He came again in 2014, promoting stronger trade and security relations, and counted

Myanmar's opening as a foreign policy coup.

But the United States did little to build on the new relationship, and now the tables have turned. As the Trump administration pays little attention, China is exercising strategic and economic interests that come from geographic proximity, using deep pockets for building billion-dollar infrastructure and activating ethnic ties with some of the rebel groups, all areas where the United States cannot compete.

"China wants to show: 'We are doing our best at your behest,'" said Min Zin, executive director of the Institute for Strategy and Policy in Myanmar, who attended the peace gathering in May. "As the United States recedes, Aung San Suu Kyi is relying more and more on China in Myanmar and on the international stage."

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Beijing in May. Since becoming Myanmar's de facto leader last year, she has visited Beijing twice and passed on an invitation to Washington. Pool photo by Mark Schiefelbein

And not only Myanmar. Across Southeast Asia, China is energetically bringing nations into its orbit, wooing American friends and allies with military hardware, infrastructure deals and diplomatic attention.

In the Philippines, an American ally, President Rodrigo Duterte is leaning strongly toward Beijing. The military government in Thailand, another American ally, has bought submarines from China and, at China's request, deported Uighurs, a Turkic ethnic group that China accuses of fomenting violence in China. In Malaysia, China is offering Prime Minister Najib Razak lucrative deals like high-speed train projects.

After the Obama administration made big gains in Myanmar, China's president, Xi Jinping, was reported to have asked, "Who lost Myanmar?" The message has gotten through, as China is now pushing on multiple fronts to bring the country back into its fold.

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi seems receptive. She has visited Beijing twice since becoming Myanmar's de facto leader last year. In contrast, she skipped an invitation from Washington to attend a conclave of Southeast Asian foreign ministers — she is also foreign minister of Myanmar — organized by Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson.

China and Myanmar have also found common cause in their hard

line on Muslims. At the United Nations several months ago, China blocked a statement supported by the United States on the persecution of the Rohingya, the Muslim minority in Myanmar.

But nowhere is China's effort to win over Myanmar clearer than as mediator in Myanmar's ethnic civil wars, the mission Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi says is dearest to her heart.

"I do believe that as a good neighbor China will do everything possible to promote our peace process," she said during a visit to China last year. "If you ask me what my most important aim is for my country, it is to achieve peace and unity among the different peoples of our union."

China is well positioned to help. Among the armed groups most resistant to peace talks are the United Wa State Army and the Kokang Army, both of which have been tacitly supported by China for years in their battles with the Myanmar military.

The Wa, whose army is said to have 20,000 members, use Chinese currency in their autonomous region, where illegal narcotics are made and exported into China. Two Wa arms factories produce weapons with the help of former Chinese Army officers, and the Wa have received Chinese armored combat vehicles and tank destroyers, probably through Chinese middlemen, experts say.

China plans to build a \$7.3 billion deep-sea port in the poor fishing town of Kyaukpyu, giving its navy a base on the Indian Ocean. But residents say they have seen few benefits from a decade of Chinese pipeline construction. Soe Zeya Tun/Reuters

A third group, the Arakan Army, uses Chinese arms and vehicles provided by the Wa.

China's special envoy for Asian affairs, Sun Guoxiang, brought the leaders of all three to the peace conference, as well as the leaders of four other rebel groups, most of whom use Chinese weapons.

"China wants quiet in Myanmar," said Maung Aung Myoe, an expert on the Myanmar military at the International University of Japan. "It hurts their interests to have fighting because it disrupts China's trade. China now owns the peace process. The Myanmar military knows that."

China has a particular interest in pressing the Arakan rebels to the peace table. They operate in the western state of Rakhine, where

they can wreak havoc with the Chinese-built pipelines that carry oil and natural gas from the Bay of Bengal to southern China. Keeping Rakhine free of unrest may have also been a factor in China's blocking the United Nations from issuing a statement on the allegations of atrocities committed by Myanmar's army there.

The stakes are rising as a Chinese state-owned corporation negotiates final permissions to build a \$7.3 billion deep-sea port at Kyaukpyu, a port town in Rakhine that will give China highly prized access to the Indian Ocean.

Citic Construction of China is to start building the port early next year, having won the contract by covering 85 percent of the cost, said Oo Maung, vice chairman of the Kyaukpyu special economic zone management committee. Citic also won the right to build a \$3.2 billion industrial park nearby, he said.

The port is a signature project of China's global "One Belt, One Road" initiative, a \$1 trillion global infrastructure campaign, which ensured preferential financing, said Yuan Shaobin, vice chairman of Citic Construction.

The United States generally leaves construction projects and other investments abroad to private companies, and Myanmar, a frontier economy fraught with risks, is considered an unattractive destination, said Mary P. Callahan, associate professor of international studies at the University of Washington.

"American companies haven't come because of the high price of land, and a difficult approval process," she said. "The labor force is cheap but not skilled."

America's loss may be China's strategic gain. China's ownership of the port — Citic will have the right to operate it for 50 years, with a possible 25-year extension — hands Beijing a giant boost in its long-term plans for supremacy in the Indian Ocean, analysts said.

Construction was halted before it had barely begun on a Chinese-financed dam planned for the Irrawaddy River. Some in Myanmar suspect that China is helping with the peace process to win approval for the dam. Minzayar Oo for The New York Times

Once completed, "Kyaukpyu will be a Chinese naval base," said Mr. Maung Aung Myoe, the military analyst. "China desperately needs

access on the eastern side of the Indian Ocean."

China is already building Indian Ocean ports in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and it is seeking approval for one in Bangladesh.

Some hurdles remain. Frustration with China roils the scruffy town of Kyaukpyu, among the poorest in Myanmar. After a decade of Chinese pipeline construction in the area, ordinary people say they received few benefits. The schools built by China as part of a corporate responsibility project were empty shells, they said.

"I got a few cents a day for digging the pipeline and about \$250 for the five-year use of my land," said Tun Aung Kyaw, 56, a farmer who was walking to herd his six cows in bare feet, a thin tarpaulin tied across his bare chest to protect him from the monsoon rain.

Citic is aware of the hostility and is working with nongovernmental organizations in Kyaukpyu to avoid past mistakes, Mr. Yuan said. Citic will train Myanmar workers for 3,000 jobs for the park and the port, he said.

China also faces suspicions among Myanmar's politicians, many of whom opposed a Chinese-financed dam planned at Myitsone, on the Irrawaddy River, to provide power to China. The previous government, yielding to public opposition, suspended the \$3.6 billion project. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's government has appointed a commission to decide the dam's fate.

A confidant of hers and a member of her political party, Mi Khun Chan, said China viewed aiding the peace process as part of the cost of winning a green light for the dam.

For all the misgivings among her people about China, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi seems impressed with Beijing's power to assist in peace.

Her father, Aung San, the leader of Burma after World War II, dreamed of a united country. He almost got there, presiding over an agreement with ethnic leaders in 1947 for a federation of states. Six months later he was assassinated.

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi wants to finish the job. "Our goal is the emergence of a democratic federal union based on democracy and federalism," she said at the opening of the peace conference.

For the moment, she has China at her side.

## How a Saudi Prince Unseated His Cousin to Become the Kingdom's Heir Apparent (UNE)

Justin Scheck, Shane Harris, and Summer Said

12-15 minutes

July 19, 2017 10:20 a.m. ET

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia—After a wakeful night confined to a Mecca palace lounge, Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef emerged into a marble-walled room the morning of June 21.

The 57-year-old prince found a waiting crowd, cameras, a security guard with his hand on a gun—and his cousin Mohammed bin Salman, 31, the favored son of King Salman, newly installed as his successor as heir apparent and crown prince.

An inside look at how the drama unfolded—pieced together from interviews with people familiar with the royal court, including people aligned with each prince, and from videos of events—shows the extent to which the Saudi shuffle was a power grab by a self-declared reformer.

That June 21 morning, the older prince muttered a greeting to the younger, who approached in an ankle-length robe and red-and-white checked headdress, a video of the encounter shows. Mohammed bin Salman, known to many as “MBS,” knelt and kissed his older cousin’s hand.

At that point it would have been clear to Mohammed bin Nayef that his long career—in which he had gained the trust of American intelligence officials and become a crucial figure in the U.S.-Saudi relationship—was over, say people familiar with the royal court. “When MBS kisses you,” says one of these people, “you know something bad will happen.”

After the June 21 encounter between the two princes, the royal court announced Mohammed bin Salman’s elevation. Mohammed bin Nayef disappeared from public view. He has been at his Jeddah palace with his movements restricted, say those people, overseen by guards loyal to Mohammed bin Salman.

A royal-court official, in a written response to questions about the shuffle, said Mohammed bin Nayef was “deposed.”

“The reasons of his deposition are very confidential and no one has the right to disclose them,” he said, adding that the decision to do so

“was for the sake of the national interest.” The former crown prince has daily visitors, he said, “and has visited the king and the crown prince more than once.”

The younger prince’s ascent marks a reordering of power with profound implications for one of the world’s wealthiest and most secretive countries. With King Salman ailing, the new crown prince could soon be in charge of one of the world’s last remaining absolute monarchies, a kingdom that ranks among the planet’s largest oil producers and importers of arms, and that uses its vast resources to boost its sway in the Middle East.

Saudi Arabian succession is governed by a malleable set of rules and family customs, and involves input from a council of about 35 top princes representing descendants of the kingdom’s founder. The June 21 move amounted to one faction’s deposing of another, in the most jolting succession fight since King Saud was forced from the throne by his brothers 53 years ago.

That has left some royal-court insiders concerned about further upheaval, worrying another group could plot a move, say some of the people familiar with the royal court. “Now it’s the precedent,” one of them says.

The royal-court official declined to make Mohammed bin Salman available for comment and said Mohammed bin Nayef declined to comment.

Mohammed bin Salman in recent years has made bold promises of change, pledging to modernize and open Saudi Arabia’s economy and culture. His plan focuses on listing shares in the state-owned oil company on a public exchange and investing the proceeds to diversify the economy. He has also taken an aggressive approach to foreign policy and has worked to form close ties with the Trump White House.

His older cousin is a low-key official who has made relatively few public appearances and has followed a slow-moving approach to governance over the years. He had widespread support among older Saudi princes who have backed his more conservative approach to foreign affairs. Through his years of working on antiterrorism initiatives, he had longstanding relationships with career U.S. security officials who have sometimes been at odds with the current White House.

Some Saudis and Saudi watchers have expressed hope that economic liberalization will lead to more political and cultural liberalization, and that Mohammed bin Salman will emerge as a force for such change. His planned economic overhaul includes a push to bring more women into the workforce and improve education levels.

Discord between the two princes stretched back to 2015, in the early part of King Salman’s reign, when he made Mohammed bin Nayef crown prince and installed his own son, Mohammed bin Salman, as deputy crown prince. King Salman’s later moves to give his son power over foreign affairs, the military and the economy fueled speculation the king could move him up in the succession order.

### The Qatar rift

A debate over how to handle the confrontation with Qatar that began in June, over accusations by Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries that the Persian Gulf neighbor supported terrorism, among other factors, heightened the sense of urgency over the rift between the princes, say several of the people familiar with the royal court. The older wanted a diplomatic solution rather than economic coercion and threats of violence, say some of the people familiar with the royal court. The younger adopted a more hawkish stance, supporting the economic blockade of Qatar that prevailed and remains in place.

“Mohammed bin Nayef did not oppose any measures taken against Qatar,” the royal-court official said.

King Salman’s deteriorating health fed concerns in Mohammed bin Salman’s camp that time was growing short, say some of the people familiar with the royal court. The young prince began to lobby his father to choose him as successor.

“The King’s health is excellent,” the royal-court official said of the 81-year-old monarch. “He performs his daily, varied routines in an active and energetic manner. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the King is a King until death.”

The royal court recorded a video in recent weeks in which the king says it is time for Mohammed bin Salman to become king, say several of the people familiar with the royal court. They say the unpublished video could be used upon the king’s death or as a public abdication announcement.

The royal-court official, without directly addressing the video, said: “Any country that abandons its leader in his last days for a critical health condition is a country with no dignity and prestige.”

As the young prince laid his plan, he notified the Trump administration. The week before the power shuffle, say several of the people familiar with the royal court, Mohammed bin Salman dispatched a young official named Turki al Sheikh to Washington.

President Donald Trump had met Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh and Washington in recent months. Mr. al Sheikh, a poet and writer of patriotic songs with no foreign-policy experience, had been moved by Mohammed bin Salman recently to a prominent role in the royal court.

On his June trip to Washington, Mr. al Sheikh notified the White House that Mohammed bin Salman was ready to oust his older cousin, say these people.

A White House official, referring to the Saudi leadership change, said the U.S. government “sought not to intervene or to be seen as intervening in such a sensitive internal matter,” and “we consistently stressed our desire to maintain cooperation” with Saudi leadership.

The royal-court official said: “With regard to Minister Turki Al-Sheikh, he did not meet any U.S. official at all. Neither the U.S. nor any other country has been directly or indirectly informed about the matter, for this is an absolute sovereign matter.”

Mohammed bin Salman’s plan began playing out soon after Mr. al Sheikh returned to Saudi Arabia, in a drama described to The Wall Street Journal by people familiar with the royal court.

On June 20, Mohammed bin Nayef was getting ready for a relaxed Eid, the big celebration at the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. He headed that night to the palace in Mecca for a routine gathering of senior officials.

For months, he had known his cousin could move against him. Within the three weeks leading up to Eid, people close to Mohammed bin Nayef warned him that Mohammad bin Salman was likely preparing to oust him. But, Mohammed bin Nayef dismissed

their concerns as conspiracy theories.

Mohammed bin Nayef “thought why do it now, because it was the last three days before Eid,” says one of the people familiar with the royal court.

Guards loyal to Mohammed bin Nayef were replaced by others loyal to Mohammed bin Salman. The royal-court official said this was normal procedure and that additional royal guards have been assigned to the older prince, adding that they don't control his movements.

Mecca's black-and-white Al Safa palace looms about 10 stories over the Kabaa, Islam's holiest site. Videos show that when the king and his entourage are present, as they were June 20, its carpeted meeting rooms buzz with ministers, staffers and servers carrying trays of coffee to dignitaries in green velour armchairs.

#### Palace intrigue

The crown prince wasn't set to arrive at the palace until nighttime, after Tarwih prayers—an hour when many gatherings of high-level

officials happen in the scorching Saudi summer. After dark, Mohammed bin Nayef's motorcade set out for the palace through Mecca's busy streets.

When he arrived at the palace that evening, he was told to proceed alone, without his security detail.

“Once he went from one room to another they took the weapons, the phones, everything from everyone” in his entourage, says one of the people familiar with the royal court.

Guards ushered Mohammed bin Nayef upstairs, through the palace's flower-patterned hallways to a small lounge. They closed the doors, leaving him alone. It was close to midnight by then, and the crown prince wouldn't leave until morning.

While Mohammed bin Nayef waited, Mohammed bin Salman had calls put out to members of the Allegiance Council, the group of about 35 sons and grandsons of the kingdom's founder who weigh in on leadership structure. They were told the king wanted Mohammed bin Salman to be crown prince and asked for their support. The Saudi

government says 31 members approved.

In that room, Mohammed bin Nayef was told of his fate: The kingdom's senior princes wanted his cousin as crown prince.

Mohammed bin Nayef “was horrified,” says one of the people familiar with the royal court. He was asked to sign a resignation letter and a pledge of loyalty to Mohammed bin Salman, this person says. The crown prince resisted.

Over the next several hours, royal-court officials visited him, urging him to reconsider. An emissary from the king told him to sign the resignation letter or face serious consequences.

Mohammed bin Nayef held firm. But by dawn he was exhausted. He knew there was no way out. He made the only compromise he could—he agreed to give an oral pledge of allegiance.

The royal-court official said: “The pledge of allegiance made to the Crown Prince was made willingly.”

It was about 7 a.m. when Mohammed bin Salman's men let the crown prince out. Mohammed

bin Nayef didn't expect to confront the man taking over his title immediately.

After exiting the room, though, he was surprised to hear a crowd. He walked from the corridor to the marble-walled room and saw video cameras and photographers. A guard—not one of his—stood with his hand on a holstered gun, in what people familiar with the royal court's traditions say is a violation of protocol around the crown prince.

Then he saw Mohammed bin Salman coming quickly toward him. There was the kiss and muttered pledge of allegiance.

It took about 15 seconds. Then a guard wrapped a black cloak around Mohammed bin Nayef's shoulders and led him off to his Jeddah palace.

**Write to** Justin Scheck at [justin.scheck@wsj.com](mailto:justin.scheck@wsj.com), Shane Harris at [shane.harris@wsj.com](mailto:shane.harris@wsj.com) and Summer Said at [summer.said@wsj.com](mailto:summer.said@wsj.com)

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## ETATS-UNIS



### Trump Implores GOP Senators to Come Together Over Troubled Health Bill (UNE)

Louise Radnofsky, Kristina Peterson and Stephanie Armour

10-12 minutes

Updated July 19, 2017 10:26 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump stepped into the health-care debate with a new assertiveness Wednesday, imploring GOP senators to revive their effort to repeal and replace Obamacare after it had been left for dead earlier this week.

The president's rallying cry—part exhortation and part warning—sparked a fresh round of conversations with senators about what it will take to get their support, and Vice President Mike Pence planned to deliver another pitch Wednesday night.

“Any senator who votes against starting debate is really telling America that you're fine with Obamacare,” Mr. Trump said before a lunch with the senators

Wednesday. He gestured at one wavering GOP lawmaker, Dean Heller of Nevada, saying, “He wants to remain a senator, doesn't he?” and warned lawmakers not to leave town in August without a deal.

Senate Republican leaders conceded defeat earlier this week on their effort to roll back and replace the Affordable Care Act, known as Obamacare, but at Mr. Trump's urging, they dug in Wednesday for what is expected to be the final push. Senate Republicans said they were hoping to rustle up 50 votes for a third version of the bill.

Mr. Trump, telling the senators they were “very close” to a deal, signaled the White House would take a more aggressive role in wrangling the 50 votes need to pass the bill. The GOP president suggested that Republicans had it easy in voting for the 2010 law's repeal when his Democratic predecessor, Barack Obama, was in office because they knew he would veto it and there would be no consequences.

“I'm ready to act, I have pen in hand, believe me, I'm sitting in that office. You've never had that before,” Mr. Trump said. “For seven years, you've had an easy rap: ‘We'll repeal, we'll replace, and he's never going to sign it.’”

GOP leaders' immediate challenge is mustering 50 Republican lawmakers to approve a procedural motion that would allow debate to begin on their health-care bill.

Adding to the uncertainty, Sen. John McCain's office disclosed late Wednesday that the Arizona Republican has been diagnosed with a type of brain tumor known as a glioblastoma, and that the timing of his return to the Senate would depend on consultations with his medical team.

GOP senators said Wednesday night that the indefinite absence of Mr. McCain made their quest to get 50 votes on the health-care bill harder. “That does complicate things,” said Sen. Pat Toomey (R., Pa.).

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) said after the White House lunch that a vote on that motion would happen next week, regardless of whether it was expected to pass, and that he had “every expectation” of trying to eke out a bill with majority support after that.

“I want to disabuse any of you of the notion that we will not have that vote next week,” Mr. McConnell said.

GOP leaders hope that once debate begins and senators offer a variety of amendments, a majority will emerge for some version. Earlier this week, three Republicans—Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia—said they would oppose the motion to proceed on a repeal-only bill. Unless one of them changes her mind, debate can't begin because Democrats are uniformly opposed.

Among the amendments may be one to largely repeal the 2010 law without an immediate replacement. An estimate released Wednesday

by the Congressional Budget Office found that such a move would leave 32 million more people uninsured and would double premiums by 2026, compared with current law. The measure would reduce federal deficits by \$473 billion over the coming decade, the CBO estimated.

About 20 GOP senators huddled for more than two hours Wednesday night, but it wasn't clear if they had gotten any closer to securing the needed 50 votes. "Hard to say," Mr. Toomey said upon leaving the meeting.

White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus came to the meeting but was asked to stay in a room separate from the one where senators held their discussion because some lawmakers wanted to speak privately, an aide said.

"We're at our best when we're among ourselves," said Sen. John Kennedy (R., La.)

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R., Alaska), an opponent of the repeal-only plan, was noncommittal on her stance after the meeting. Ms. Capito, also an opponent of that approach, declined to comment on the meeting.

The GOP currently holds 52 seats in the Senate, leaving it vulnerable to defections from conservatives, centrists or any senator with a home-state concern. Democrats have remained unified in their desire to preserve Mr. Obama's signature domestic policy achievement.

GOP leaders are faced in the days ahead with finding ways to lure back at least some of the GOP senators who have said in recent days they couldn't support the latest version of a bill aimed at overhauling the nation's health-care system.

Ms. Capito, for example, is among those who have protested the bill's cuts to Medicaid, the federal-state health program for the poor. The administration is pushing the notion of waivers for

states to redesign their Medicaid programs, including more support for low-income people. Sen. Roy Blunt (R., Mo.) said Wednesday senators had discussed the idea at lunch.

Ms. Murkowski has similar concerns as well as a broader worry about her state's fragile insurance market. Mr. Trump cited the current struggles of Alaska's insurance markets as a reason for her to take action.

Another holdout, Sen. Mike Lee (R., Utah), spoke with the president Tuesday, and Mr. Trump appeared open to the changes the senator wants, a spokesman for Mr. Lee said. A White House aide said the administration is open to any provision that increases GOP support for the bill.

Mr. Lee has been especially concerned about alterations that were made to a provision of the GOP bill written by Sen. Ted Cruz (R., Texas), which was designed to lower premiums by allowing insurers to sell cheaper, less-comprehensive plans than allowed under current law.

Similarly, GOP leaders have said they could address some of the concerns of Sen. Jerry Moran (R., Kan.) that the bill could negatively affect his state.

Before this week, the president had been less active in the negotiations in the Senate than he was in helping pass health-care legislation in the House.

The question is whether his late intervention can turn the tide. Some Republicans have been quietly skeptical of the president's arm's-length approach to Senate negotiations, though others have said he has been smart to hold back.

"Do the tectonic plates break and begin to move?" said Sen. Bill Cassidy (R., La.), after the meeting. "I can tell you they weren't before that meeting. The fact that the

president comes in and very much emphasizes the need for momentum can break those plates."

"We are getting close -- the issues are narrowing," added Sen. Ron Johnson (R., Wis.), a conservative senator who has said his support for a GOP bill isn't guaranteed.

"There is still a hope on behalf of the administration and a lot of senators too that we can get there," said Sen. John Thune (R., S.D.), a member of the chamber's leadership. "We're going to take one more shot at it."

For months, lobbyists, GOP strategists and White House officials have described the GOP health bill in vivid metaphors, ranging from the biblical resurrection of Lazarus to the bathtub scene in "Fatal Attraction," where an apparently vanquished villain roars back to life.

Heading into this week, a senior White House official predicted, "This bill will have been declared dead once, and resurrected at least once." Officials also regularly cite the House's success in passing a health bill after legislation was initially pulled from the floor in March.

Democrats, for their part, are seeking to use Mr. Trump's revival of the GOP push to draw fresh fuel for their campaigns.

"Like the armored and mummified White Walkers from Game of Thrones, Trumpcare is hard to kill," Sen. Jeff Merkley (D., Ore.) wrote Wednesday in a fundraising email. "Republicans continue reanimating their terrible bill to kick millions of Americans off of their health care... Chip in now and support my efforts to kill this bill once and for all!"

Democrats also hammered senators such as Mr. Heller of Nevada and Jeff Flake of Arizona, who are facing re-election campaigns in 2018, over the prospect of Medicaid cuts.

Among those warning of dire consequences if Republican senators don't repeal Obamacare is Republican National Committee chairwoman Ronna McDaniel. She wrote in an email to GOP donors and supporters Wednesday that "we could lose the midterm elections" because "some in the Senate are refusing to even put a simple repeal bill on [Mr. Trump's] desk."

Conservative groups also joined in, including the Senate Conservatives Fund, a political-action committee, whose head Ken Cuccinelli said Wednesday the group would hold Senate Republicans accountable if they failed to pass health-care legislation.

In the Washington swamp decried by Mr. Trump, Mr. Cuccinelli said, "Mitch McConnell is the head alligator."

Such threats may have limited effect on some of the Republican dissenters. Ms. Collins and Ms. Capito don't face re-election until 2020, and Ms. Murkowski isn't up until 2022. Still, conservative activists said they hope to send a broader message to Republicans about the importance of sticking to their promises.

"It's not just about these senators; it's about the state of the Republican party," said Rachael Slobodien, spokeswoman for the conservative Club for Growth. "This is a much bigger fight."

—Byron Tau, Siobhan Hughes and Janet Hook contributed to this article.

**Write to** Louise Radnofsky at [louise.radnofsky@wsj.com](mailto:louise.radnofsky@wsj.com), Kristina Peterson at [kristina.peterson@wsj.com](mailto:kristina.peterson@wsj.com) and Stephanie Armour at [stephanie.armour@wsj.com](mailto:stephanie.armour@wsj.com)

Appeared in the July 20, 2017, print edition as 'Trump Prods GOP to Reach Health Deal.'

## **The New York Times** Trump Demands That Senators Find a Way to Replace Obamacare (UNE)

Julie Hirschfeld Davis, Thomas Kaplan and Maggie Haberman

10-12 minutes

President Trump spoke during a lunch with Republican senators at the White House on Wednesday. Senators Dean Heller of Nevada and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia sat next to Mr. Trump. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

WASHINGTON — President Trump ordered senators back to the negotiating table on Wednesday for a last-ditch effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, just one day after angrily accepting the measure's demise and vowing to allow President Barack Obama's signature domestic achievement to crater.

Mr. Trump, staring down a high-profile defeat on an issue that has confounded him and defied

Republican consensus, told the party's senators they must not leave Washington without acting on a measure to roll back Mr. Obama's health law and replace it with something better. Simply repealing the bill without an alternative would increase the number of people without health insurance by 17 million in 2018, a figure that would jump to 32 million in 2026, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

At a White House lunch, Mr. Trump warned the senators that any who stood in the way would be telling voters that they backed the current, "failed" program.

"I intend to keep my promise, and I know you will, too," Mr. Trump told them, trying to resurrect a measure that appeared dead on Monday night, after a third and fourth Republican senator declared their opposition. That death was followed on Tuesday by an 11th-hour effort



to force a vote on repealing the Affordable Care Act without a replacement, but that, too, failed when three Republican senators came out against it.

The budget office report underscored on Wednesday why the idea of repealing the Affordable Care Act without a replacement lost traction so quickly. Not only would the number of uninsured jump, but average premiums for people buying individual health insurance policies would increase by about 25 percent next year and 50 percent in 2020. By 2026, premiums would double.

The president's demands for more negotiations amounted to his fourth position in three days on the health care bill. He began the week supporting a Senate effort to overhaul the law, but when it became clear late Monday that Republicans would fall short of the votes for that measure, he abruptly declared that lawmakers should simply repeal the law and start from a "clean slate" on an effort to replace it — an approach he had previously ruled out.

Facing still more opposition for that strategy, he said on Tuesday that Republicans should "let Obamacare fail" and blame it on Democrats. But by nightfall, Mr. Trump was scheduling a lunch with Republicans at the White House, designed to pressure them to redouble their efforts to find agreement on a full-scale replacement, back where he started.

Mr. Trump usually steers clear of policy details and has grown impatient with the painstaking behind-the-scenes bargaining that has marked the health care negotiations. But he said on Wednesday that he was hopeful that the Senate would deliver a bill that he could sign.

"I think that we're going to do O.K. — we're going to see," he said in an interview in the Oval Office, just after his lunch with senators in the State Dining Room.

He was blunt about the obstacles and the difficulty of the negotiations.

"It is a very narrow path winding this way," Mr. Trump

said. "You think you have it, and then you lose four on the other side because you gave" concessions to another faction of senators.

"It is a brutal process," he added. Mr. Trump conceded that the very nature of what he had promised to do — eliminate Mr. Obama's health care program, which serves millions of Americans — made the effort an uphill slog.

"Once you get something, it's awfully tough to take it away," Mr. Trump said.

There is still little evidence that returning to the negotiating table on a replacement will win over the four Republicans who have declared their opposition.

The health care bill drafted by Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, would repeal major provisions of the Affordable Care Act, including penalties for people who go without health insurance; make deep cuts in projected Medicaid spending; and establish a new system of subsidies to help people buy private insurance.

The measure has faced resistance both from conservatives concerned that it did not go far enough in eliminating the current law and from moderates who feared it would lead to losses in insurance coverage, stingier plans and higher health costs.

Mr. Trump dispatched administration officials to Capitol Hill on Wednesday night to lobby wavering Republicans who have not yet pledged to support the measure, some of whom have publicly aired their reservations. Mr. McConnell said the goal was to get them to agree to vote next week on a procedural motion simply to open debate on the bill, but the final language of that measure had not yet been determined.

"There's no way that I, or anybody else, could prevent members from having amendments that any 51 of us can pass and change the bill," Mr. McConnell said. "But we cannot have a debate until we get on the bill."

The Trump administration also offered the insurance industry an

olive branch, approving the payment of a month's worth of subsidies to insurers that help poor customers with out-of-pocket health care expenses.

The president has never been completely engaged with the health care repeal-and-replace efforts. He was largely absent from House attempts to craft a bill earlier this year, weighing in at the end when the effort appeared on the verge of collapse to issue an ultimatum.

Then, too, he initially reacted with angry resignation to the failure by House Republicans to reach consensus — "It's enough, already," he said after leaders scrapped a vote because they could not muster a majority for the measure — only to change course later, urging lawmakers to strike a compromise, and celebrating lavishly in the Rose Garden when they did.

### How the Number of Uninsured Would Change

If Congress passes the Republican plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act without a replacement, 17 million more people would be uninsured in the first year, compared to what the number would be under the current health law.

He has occasionally cajoled members of Congress, primarily through his Twitter feed, but he has seemed hesitant at best. White House advisers have been divided on how involved he should be, leaving Mr. Trump to weigh in sporadically. And his impulse has been to keep members of Congress at an arm's length, reverting to blaming and threatening them when it appears they are not bowing to his preferences — and even privately criticizing their work product, as he did when he called the House-passed bill "mean."

"I think it'll be very bad for them" if they don't support the health bill, Mr. Trump said of lawmakers in the interview on Wednesday.

At lunch, Mr. Trump used a combination of humor and thinly veiled threats to pressure senators to do what he was asking.

"Look, he wants to remain a senator, doesn't he?" Mr. Trump

said of Senator Dean Heller, a Nevada Republican who was seated beside him and who has been outspoken about his concerns with the proposal. "I think the people of your state, which I know very well, I think they're going to appreciate what you hopefully will do."

In private, Mr. Trump was sharper, according to a person briefed on the closed-door lunch, telling Mr. Heller that if he opposed the health care effort, he would lose the Republican nomination for his Senate seat, which would bar him from seeking re-election next year. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the discussion was private.

Mr. Trump also alluded to two Republicans, Jerry Moran of Kansas and Mike Lee of Utah, who had come out against the measure Monday night, saying he had been "surprised" because the senators were "my friends."

"My friends — they really were and are," he said. "They might not be very much longer, but that's O.K."

Senator Bill Cassidy, Republican of Louisiana, said Mr. Trump was "trying to add momentum back to a process" that had stalled.

"We'll see," he said. "I like to think that we walked out with a sense of momentum."

At the White House, senators said, they discussed a proposal added to the Senate bill at the request of Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, that would allow insurers to sell policies that violate the Affordable Care Act if they also sell policies that comply with the benefit mandates and other requirements of the law.

A study by the Department of Health and Human Services, cited by Mr. Trump, said the proposal would increase enrollment and reduce premiums in the individual insurance market. But those figures are at odds with projections by insurance actuaries outside the government, who have called Mr. Cruz's proposal unworkable and warned it would lead to higher premiums and terminations of coverage.

## **POLITICO** Senate 'repeal only' bill would leave 32 million more uninsured, CBO says

By Adam Cancryn  
5-6 minutes

for following through on their seven-year vow to eliminate Obamacare. | John Shinkle/POLITICO

The CBO's analysis offers a stark look at the GOP's remaining option

A revived bill that would dismantle large parts of Obamacare without an immediate replacement would

leave 32 million more people uninsured and double premiums over a decade, the Congressional Budget Office said in a report Wednesday.

The legislation — an update of the repeal measure nearly all GOP senators voted for in 2015 — is on track to reach the Senate floor early next week, where it likely would fail.

Story Continued Below

Republican leaders pledged to put the bill to a vote after their initial effort to repeal and replace Obamacare fell apart in stunning fashion, though a number of holdout lawmakers are meeting later tonight to try to salvage the effort.

If that fails, CBO's analysis offers a stark look at the GOP's remaining option for following through on their seven-year vow to repeal Obamacare.

The nonpartisan scorekeeper's report projects that 17 million people would lose insurance in the first year after a partial repeal that includes ending Obamacare's Medicaid expansion and repealing most of the taxes tied to the law. Premiums would jump 25 percent over that same period as insurers grapple with the effective elimination of Obamacare's requirement that everyone purchase coverage.

The bill would slash the deficit by \$473 billion over a decade, the agency said.

Those findings are in line with CBO's estimates for the original 2015 bill in January and far outstrip the coverage losses associated with the Senate

and the House's own repeal bill. CBO predicted that the Better Care Reconciliation Act would leave 22 million people uninsured over a decade, a figure that alarmed more moderate Republicans and played a major role in the collapse of the legislation.

This updated, "repeal only" bill would fund Obamacare's cost-sharing subsidies for two years, an important difference from 2015 that would temporarily alleviate uncertainty for insurers relying on the money to help enrollees with out-of-pocket costs.

Still, the CBO predicts insurers would flee Obamacare markets once the repeal takes effect following a two-year delay, leaving half the nation's population with no individual coverage options by 2020.

Three moderate Republican senators have already pledged to vote against repealing Obamacare without a replacement, raising doubts about whether the Senate GOP will even have the votes to open debate on the bill.

At least 50 of the 52 Senate Republicans must support the

motion to proceed to start deliberations on the legislation.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has encouraged skeptical senators to vote for the procedural motion as a starting point that would allow them to then debate amendments to the bill.

Conservatives like Rand Paul, meanwhile, have pressed colleagues to vote for the same straight repeal measure that all except for Susan Collins supported just two years ago. Then, GOP lawmakers were secure in the knowledge that President Barack Obama would veto it.

But moderate Republicans are already skittish about capping Medicaid's funding and leaving their constituents without coverage, and the updated 2015 bill is projected to have even harsher consequences.

Federal funding for Medicaid would fall by \$842 billion over a decade, with changes to the program accounting for 19 million more people going without coverage. An additional 23 million enrollees on the individual insurance market would forgo insurance over a decade compared with current law, in response to the elimination of

both the requirement that everyone have coverage and the Obamacare subsidies designed to make insurance more affordable.

That's partially offset by CBO's estimate that roughly 11 million more people would receive insurance through their employer.

Those who do continue to buy insurance on the Obamacare markets would face much higher premiums, or not be able to get coverage at all — by 2026, CBO estimates as much as three-quarters of the population would be without an insurer on the individual market.

Those findings are in line with CBO's estimates for the 2015 bill, released in January.

This new analysis also predicts that insurers would flee the Obamacare markets in response, leaving half the nation's population with no individual market coverage options by 2020.

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## Trump threatens electoral consequences for senators who oppose health bill (UNE)

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

10-12 minutes

President Trump exhorted lawmakers Wednesday to resurrect the failed Republican plan to "repeal and replace" the Affordable Care Act, injecting fresh turmoil into an issue that had appeared settled the day before, when Senate leaders announced they did not have the votes to pass their bill.

Trump's remarks, at a lunch with 49 Republican senators, prompted some of them to reopen the possibility of trying to vote on the sweeping legislation they abandoned earlier this week. But there was no new evidence that the bill could pass.

At the lunch, the president also threatened electoral consequences for senators who oppose him, suggesting that Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.) could lose his reelection bid next year if he does not back the effort. The president also invited conservative opposition against anyone else who stands in the way.

"Any senator who votes against starting debate is really telling

America that you're fine with Obamacare," Trump said.

After the collapse of the Better Care Reconciliation Act, which would have repealed and replaced key portions of the Affordable Care Act, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) on Monday announced plans for a vote on pure repeal instead, a move that seemed designed to either allow — or force — lawmakers to record a vote on what has been the GOP's top campaign promise of the past seven years.

As he hosted Senate Republicans for a health-care meeting at the White House on July 19, President Trump touted GOP efforts to revamp the Affordable Care Act. As he hosted Senate Republicans for a health-care meeting at the White House, July 19, President Trump touted GOP efforts to revamp the Affordable Care Act. (Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

A repeal-only approach, which also lacks the votes to pass, would increase the number of people without health coverage by 17 million next year and by 32 million at the end of a decade, according to a fresh analysis released

Wednesday by the Congressional Budget Office.

The forecast by the nonpartisan CBO is nearly identical to estimates the office made in January based on a similar bill that passed the House and Senate in late 2015 — and that was vetoed by President Barack Obama.

"I think we all agree it's better to both repeal and replace. But we could have a vote on either," McConnell said after the lunch at the White House.

Trump's remarks introduced a new level of chaos into the GOP, potentially setting up Senate Republicans to take the blame from angry conservatives for failing to fulfill a long-standing GOP vow.

The effort to undo the Affordable Care Act has been fraught for months with internal GOP divisions. The intraparty tension looms over other big-ticket items Republicans are hoping to pass as they control both chambers of Congress and the White House, including passing a budget and enacting major tax cuts. After six months, they can boast no major legislative achievements.

And now, Republican lawmakers head into the 2018 midterm cycle

with a president who appears capable of not having their backs.

Despite those tensions, Trump claimed at the lunch that "we're very close" to passing a repeal-and-replace bill. It was the latest sign of the disconnect between the president and the Senate. It also came a day after Trump tweeted "let ObamaCare fail" — and two days after he called for a repeal-only bill.

As he hosted Senate Republicans for a health-care meeting at the White House, July 19, President Trump said he "worried" whether Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.) would support a revised GOP health-care bill that collapsed on July 17. President Trump says he "worried" whether Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.) would support a revised GOP health-care bill that collapsed on July 17. (Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

The White House appeared determined to keep trying for something. Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services director Seema Verma met with roughly two dozen GOP senators for nearly three hours on Capitol Hill on Wednesday evening.

The meeting was arranged by the White House to help persuade wavering senators to back the repeal-and-replace bill, according to people familiar with the meeting who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private planning.

Following the meeting, several senators described the talks as productive, but none would name specific areas of progress or new agreement that resulted from the gathering.

Even as Trump's team tried to work out policy and political disagreements among members, the president was strong-arming skeptical senators in public. Seated directly to Trump's right at Wednesday's lunch was Heller, who is up for reelection in 2018 in a state Democrat Hillary Clinton won.

"Look, he wants to remain a senator, doesn't he?" Trump asked, Heller smiling at his side. "Okay, and I think the people of your state, which I know very well, I think they're going to appreciate what you hopefully will do."

After he returned to the Capitol, Heller sized it up this way: "That's just President Trump being President Trump."

Tensions have been evident for a while. After Heller came out against an earlier version of the Senate bill, a conservative organization aligned with Trump vowed to launch an expensive ad campaign against him, angering and shocking many mainstream GOP allies of the senator. Later, the group backed off.

Now, senators are not sure what they will be voting on in the coming days — pure repeal or repeal and replace.

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

## Henninger : Obama's Last Laugh

Daniel Henninger  
6-7 minutes

July 19, 2017 6:03 p.m. ET

Like pop-up dolls, across the length of Barack Obama's presidency, Republicans voted to "repeal" the law that bears his name—ObamaCare. He laughed at them then, and he's laughing now. No repeal and no replace. They can't even do repeal and punt.

For Democrats, this doesn't quite make up for losing the election to Donald Trump, but it has to help. Schadenfreude can't get much better than watching the Republican Party self-humiliate with an abject

"See, that hasn't been decided. That's part of the discussion. So, that's why I don't take a position at this point," Heller said.

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tex.), McConnell's top deputy, said Wednesday: "I know it seems like we've got a bit of whiplash, but I think we're making progress."

But even he had no clarity on the next step. "We're still discussing," he said.

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), the chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, told reporters Wednesday that there still are not enough votes for a repeal-only bill.

Separately Wednesday, members of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus started the process of bringing a repeal-only bill to the House floor — a process meant to sidestep GOP leaders reluctant to expose vulnerable members to a politically perilous vote on legislation unlikely to become law.

The House passed its own revision to the Affordable Care Act earlier this year. Wednesday's gambit would not only allow conservatives to vote for a straight-repeal bill but also force moderates to do the same — adding to the political divisions that Trump had stoked earlier in the day.

"The American people do not know why we did not have something on President Trump's desk on Jan. 20," said Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), the group's chairman. "Here we are at July 20 with nothing to show for it, and they're tired of waiting."

Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), who has expressed opposition at various times during the months-long health-care drive, said that he understood Trump's push for repeal

inability to win while controlling the House, Senate and White House.

To reimagine the spectacle, it's as if Chuck Schumer, Bernie Sanders, Claire McCaskill and Elizabeth Warren had carved each other up over some Democratic bill. That will . . . *never happen*.

It was written here in March that the Trump win in 2016 could be either a temporary bubble or produce a Republican governing majority for a generation. What does it look like now? How did so much promise produce this week's dud?

One problem revealed by this episode is the liabilities of this presidency held by a nonideological figure, a goal of good-government types. Until this moment, the

and replace at the lunch as a call to return to the broader bill McConnell pulled back earlier this week.

"I think the president showed some real leadership here," Johnson said.

Even GOP senators who oppose the repeal efforts worry about being blamed for failing to act on health care. A recent Gallup poll found that 70 percent of GOP respondents said they support repealing and replacing Obamacare.

Conservative activists are already aggressively targeting centrist Republicans who have opposed the efforts. On Wednesday, a pair of influential conservative groups launched an "Obamacare Repeal Traitors" website attacking Sens. Lisa Murkowski (Alaska), Rob Portman (Ohio) and Shelley Moore Capito (W.Va.).

"They campaigned on REPEAL," says the website, which the Club for Growth and Tea Party Patriots launched. But now, it says, "they are betraying their constituents by joining with Democrats to defeat Obamacare Repeal efforts!"

Capito has said that she supports repealing the Affordable Care Act, but only if it can be replaced with a bill that doesn't force millions off their insurance and doesn't "hurt people."

"I think we all want to get to the right place," Capito said after the White House lunch. On Twitter, she sought to use Trump's words to defend her position, writing: "I'm glad @POTUS agrees that we cannot move to repeal Obamacare without a replacement plan that addresses the needs of West Virginians."

At the lunch, Trump said, "People should not leave town unless we have a health insurance plan,

unless we give our people great health care," meaning that recess plans should be put off if a deal isn't reached. Marc Short, the White House's legislative director, told reporters afterward that "this is not something that we can walk away from."

Trump, who had invited Republican leaders to a health-care strategy dinner Monday night, was apparently blindsided by the opposition from some conservative members, including Sens. Mike Lee (R-Utah) and Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), whose declared no votes effectively killed the legislation. At lunch, he scolded them.

The Health 202 newsletter

Your daily guide to the health-care debate.

"The other night, I was surprised when I heard a couple of my friends — my friends — they really were and are," Trump said, without directly naming the duo. "They might not be very much longer, but that's okay."

Trump, as he has done numerous times in recent weeks, reminded the lawmakers that Republicans campaigned against the Affordable Care Act for years and that their supporters are counting on them to make good on their promises.

"I'm ready to act," Trump said. "I have my pen in hand. I'm sitting in that office. I have pen in hand. You've never had that before. For seven years, you've had the easy route — we repeal, we replace, but he [Obama] never signs it. I'm signing it. So it's a little different."

Mike DeBonis, Juliet Eilperin, Ed O'Keefe, Abby Phillip and Amy Goldstein contributed to this report.

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Republican Party had become self-identifiably conservative. We have just learned two things.

The Republicans are not as conservative as they thought. As important, a complex legislative effort like this—Reagan's 1986 tax bill comes to mind—was going to require both ideological discipline and direction from the top, from the president. The unideological Mr. Trump neither conveyed nor enforced idea discipline in his public messaging, other than "get it done."

Lacking an ideological North Star, the Republicans reverted to form: They divided—first with the Freedom Caucus's rebellion from the right in the House and then with the moderate Republicans' 1970s-

like spending demands in the Senate. At that point, the Laurel and Hardy act of Sens. Mike Lee and Jerry Moran blowing up the bill was almost comic.

Left undone by this failure is a historic chance to reform the 1965 Medicaid entitlement that now will roll unchecked to the fiscal cliff. Also lost is \$772 billion in savings, which imperils both permanent tax reform's promise of strong economic growth and America's underfunded defense posture.

Republican Party conservatism always seems to be an undone symphony. It started with Goldwater. Then came Reaganomics for a decade, which gave way in the 1990s to the

religious right until the tea party displaced them, which gave way to a preoccupation with illegal immigration and the "establishment." It's one Holy Grail after another.

Now, incredibly, the party's various idées fixes seem to include expanding Medicaid's medical mediocrity to the nonpoor. A bedrock belief in individual liberty and private property endures, but beyond that, the Republican identity today looks fatally inchoate, no one idea lasting long enough to make a deep impression on the electorate.

Democrats don't indulge defection. After new Democratic National Committee head Tom Perez demanded a pro-abortion litmus test for party candidates, even Nancy Pelosi demurred. But make no mistake: Mr. Perez's crude message was heard through the

ranks. Income inequality, Medicare for all, choice—keep it simple, stupid.

When new Minority Leader Chuck Schumer expressed early support for a few of the Trump cabinet nominees, thousands of progressives demonstrated in front of his Brooklyn apartment shouting, "Get a spine, Chuck!"

Mr. Schumer hopped back in line fast. Did anything remotely like this public pushback happen to Sen. Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, which Mr. Trump won by 42 points? Democrats are in the streets. The Republicans are on Twitter.

The ObamaCare reform failure has damaged President Trump. He has come a long way with some undeniable magic, but at the

political margin, his can-do reputation has taken a hit.

The Trump White House is right that it has accomplished a lot—energy and financial deregulation, abandoning the Paris climate pact, reversing the Obama pen-and-phone executive orders. But big legislation is the big league of politics. It turns out the American Congress is not Wollman Rink.

This same Hydra-headed Republican party will now descend upon the budget and tax reform. The GOP's negative-energy factions are already in play. On cue Monday, Mark Meadows of the Freedom Caucus pronounced the House budget dead on arrival. Some might call that a Freudian slip.

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As antidote to this, let me recommend "Free People, Free Markets," an entertaining history of The Wall Street Journal's editorial page, written by my former colleague and long the page's deputy editor, George Melloan, and published by Encounter Books.

The page's first editor was company co-founder Charles Dow, who put the editorials on the front page, calling them, as today, Review & Outlook. His successors, such as William Peter Hamilton and William Henry Grimes, produced decades of consistent conservative opinion. As Mr. Melloan's history and this week's events make clear, the main job requirement for daily opinion writing remains the same: optimism.

*Write henninger@wsj.com.*

Appeared in the July 20, 2017, print edition.



## E. J. Dionne: Why Obamacare won and Trump lost

<http://www.facebook.com/ejdionne>

6-7 minutes

The collapse of the Republican effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act is a monumental political defeat wrought by a party and a president that never took health-care policy or the need to bring coverage to millions of Americans seriously. But their bungling also demonstrates that the intense attention to Obamacare over the past six months has fundamentally altered our nation's health-care debate.

Supporters of the 2010 law cannot rest easy as long as the current Congress remains in office and as long as Donald Trump occupies the White House. On Wednesday, the president demanded that the Senate keep at the work of repeal, and, in any event, Congress could undermine the act through sharp Medicaid cuts in the budget process and other measures. And Trump, placing his own self-esteem and political standing over the health and security of millions of Americans, has threatened to wreck the system.

"We'll let Obamacare fail, and then the Democrats are going to come to us," Trump said after it became obvious that the Senate could not pass a bill. But if Obamacare does implode, it will not be under its own weight but because Trump and his team are taking specific administrative and legal steps to prevent it from working.

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"I'm not going to own it," Trump insisted. But he will. And if Trump does go down the path of policy nihilism, it will be the task of journalists to show that it is the president doing everything in his power to choke off this lifeline for the sick and the needy.

As long as "repeal Obamacare" was simply a slogan, what the law actually did was largely obscured behind attitudes toward the former president. But the Affordable Care Act's core provisions were always broadly popular, particularly its protections for Americans with preexisting conditions and the big increase in the number of insured it achieved. The prospect of losing these benefits moved many of the previously indifferent to resist its repeal. And the name doesn't matter so much with Obama out of office.

President Trump on July 18 said he is "very disappointed" after the Senate GOP's effort to revamp the Affordable Care Act collapsed. "We'll just let Obamacare fail. We're not going to own it," he said. President Trump on July 18 said he is "very disappointed" after a Republican effort in Congress to revamp the Affordable Care Act collapsed. (Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

To the surprise of some on both sides, the debate brought home the popularity of Medicaid, which for the first time received the sort of broad public defense usually reserved for Medicare and Social Security. The

big cuts Republicans proposed to the program paradoxically highlighted how it assisted many parts of the population.

This creates an opening for a new push to expand Medicaid under the ACA in the 19 states that have resisted it, which would add 4 million to 5 million to the ranks of the insured.

Republicans also found, as they did during the budget battles of the 1990s, that when they tie their big tax cuts for the wealthy to substantial reductions in benefits for a much broader group of Americans, a large majority will turn on them and their tax proposals. For critics of the GOP's tax-cutting obsession, said Jacob Leibenluft of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, this episode underscores "the importance of making clear the trade-offs of Republican fiscal policy." To win on tax cuts, the GOP has to disguise their effects — or pump up the deficit.

One Democratic senator told me early on that Republicans would be hurt by their lack of accumulated expertise on health care, since they largely avoided sweating the details in the original Obamacare debate after deciding early to oppose it. This showed. They had seven years after the law was passed and could not come up with a more palatable blueprint.

The popular mobilization against repeal mattered, too. With Republican senators discovering opposition to their party's ideas in surprising places, pro-ACA activists drove two wedges into the Republican coalition.

One was between ideologues and pragmatic conservatives (Republican governors as well as senators) who worried about the impact of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's designs on their states.

The other divide was within Trump's own constituency, a large share of which truly believed his pledge to make the system better. They were horrified to learn that they could be much worse off under the GOP proposal. A Post-ABC News poll this month found that 50 percent of Americans preferred Obamacare and only 24 percent picked the Republican bill. Trump's approval ratings are dismal, but the GOP plan's were even worse. Defectors in the Trump base may have been the silent killers of this flawed scheme.

And that is why a scorched-earth approach from the president would be both cruel and self-defeating. Americans now broadly support the basic principles of Obamacare. Republicans, including Trump, would do well to accommodate themselves to this reality.

*Read more from E.J. Dionne's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.*

E.J. Dionne writes about politics in a twice-weekly column and on the PostPartisan blog. He is a senior fellow in Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution, a government professor at Georgetown University and a commentator on politics for National Public Radio, ABC's "This Week" and MSNBC. He is the author of "Why the Right Went Wrong."

## Rove : Is the Republican Congress Hopeless?

Karl Rove  
5-6 minutes

July 19, 2017 6:02 p.m. ET

Republicans began 2017 with impressive advantages. For the first time in a decade, they controlled the White House and both houses of Congress. Republicans had 33 governors to 16 Democrats and one independent, matching a record the GOP set nearly a century ago. With more state legislators than at any time since the 1920s, Republicans controlled both chambers in 32 states while Democrats commanded both in only 13.

The voters who made the GOP America's dominant party expected it to pursue a robust agenda. Angry and marginalized Democrats would complain and obstruct, but the electorate believed Republicans would deliver on their promises, such as repealing ObamaCare and replacing it with what President Trump promised would be a "terrific" new program.

Yet after this week's epic failure on health-care reform, the GOP looks like James Cagney in "White Heat," yelling "Made it, ma. Top of the world!"—just before the oil refinery explodes around him.

Republicans proved incapable of coalescing around any health-care bill. One set of objections was that

the proposed legislation would solve only some of ObamaCare's problems, not all of them. Another was that as a matter of principle not a line of the Affordable Care Act should be left on the statute books.

But dissenting Republican legislators, by opposing either the Senate bill or the House version, would leave all of ObamaCare intact and all of its problems unsolved. The rebels have let the incomplete be the enemy of the good.

Some blame this debacle on ineffective leadership from the White House or Capitol Hill. Others say doing tax reform first would have made health care easier to tackle. Still others say Republicans never had a serious plan, didn't hold enough hearings, or failed to include the critic's preferred wing of the party in enough of the negotiations.

These claims may have some truth. But the main reason the GOP failed is that party unity and discipline mean nothing to too many Republicans in Congress. For senators like Rand Paul, Mike Lee and Jerry Moran, it's their way or the highway. House leadership narrowly overcame this sentiment within the Freedom Caucus. The delay and disarray in the House deliberations, however, dispirited senators. The GOP's narrow majority in the upper chamber also encouraged defections.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is now resorting to extreme measures, bringing up a bill to repeal ObamaCare without replacing it. He's calling the vote without knowing if it can pass. In fact, three GOP senators have already announced they will vote against this, which would be enough to kill the measure. Although all but two Republican senators voted for a repeal-only bill in 2015, it didn't matter then: President Barack Obama vetoed the bill as expected.

It is a sign of Republican desperation that some think their best hope is to repeal ObamaCare and then pray something comes together in the next two years to replace it. President Trump even seems to expect that Democrats will help. Good luck with that.

Still, the repeal-only maneuver might provoke a fresh start, perhaps with a new bill drafted by some ad hoc group of legislators. Maybe failing to pass anything now will prompt wavering Republican senators to start supporting incremental, if imperfect, progress. A defeat of repeal on a procedural motion to take up the bill could cause Congress to drop health care now but return to it later, after Republicans make progress on tax reform, infrastructure, the debt ceiling and the budget.

Or maybe this really represents the end of Republican engagement on health care. If so, the GOP will

watch as enthusiasm among party activists and donors wanes, prospective candidates decide not to run, and the prospect of holding Congress in the 2018 election dims.

With Republicans in charge of everything in Washington, voters won't blame Democrats when health-insurance premiums continue to rise, the number of providers further dwindles, and Americans in more counties are left with zero options on the ObamaCare exchanges. The public knows Democrats passed the law, but Republicans are still expected to clean up the mess.

As an optimist—and only an optimist can view the situation this way—I'm hoping this plays out like a made-for-TV drama. The protagonist appears near certain death at the commercial break but is miraculously saved when everyone returns with popcorn after the final Geico ad.

In the wake of this crushing political week, believing that the GOP's health-care drama has a few more acts left to play is a thin reed of hope. But it's the only one Republicans have.

*Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of "The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).*

## Supreme Court Delivers Compromise in Latest Ruling on Trump Travel Ban (UNE)

Brent Kendall

6-7 minutes

Updated July 19, 2017 7:25 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The Supreme Court reinstated the Trump administration's plans to keep many refugees from entering the U.S., but blocked the White House from sweeping travel restrictions on extended families of American residents, a second compromise action by the justices in the hot-button case.

The court, in a one-page order Wednesday, prohibited the Trump administration from banning travel by people from six Muslim-majority countries who are grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles and other extended family members of U.S. residents. That part of the order was a setback for President Donald Trump and signaled

administration officials might have adopted too narrow a reading of the high court's ruling on the issue last month.

But in a partial victory for the president, justices said his administration could move ahead for now to ban a broad group of refugees with no U.S. family ties.

The White House didn't respond to requests for comment. The Justice Department said it looked forward to making its arguments for the ban in additional court proceedings.

The court's move marked the second time in recent weeks the justices have given Mr. Trump temporary leeway to impose travel restrictions on at least some people. In addition to suspending U.S. entry by refugees, the president has sought to bar travelers from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Mr. Trump has said the ban, which he signed in a March executive order, is needed to help protect the U.S. from terrorist threats.

The justices on June 26 allowed the president to temporarily bar travel to the U.S. by people from the countries if they had no connection to the U.S., but it said travelers with close connections to people or organizations in the U.S. couldn't be barred while the court considers the case more fully.

When the Trump administration began implementing the Supreme Court's guidance a few days later, the state of Hawaii, which had sued the president, argued that he was imposing the ban more strictly than the justices allowed.

Trump officials said extended family members weren't close enough relatives to be exempt from the ban. The administration also said only a limited pool of refugees qualified for travel under the Supreme Court's

terms. The administration argued Hawaii's interpretation of the high-court ruling would render the ban largely meaningless.

The Supreme Court will give a full review of the travel ban on Oct. 10.

Court rulings so far on Mr. Trump's travel restrictions haven't been final decisions on whether they are legal. Judges instead have been considering whether the ban could go into effect while the litigation continued on the underlying merits of the executive order.

U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson in Honolulu, who has been presiding over travel ban litigation since March, ruled recently that the White House implementation plans contradicted last month's Supreme Court ruling. The judge said the administration must allow travel by a broader group of family members and refugees.

The Justice Department filed an emergency appeal with the Supreme Court, saying Judge Watson had gutted the ban and upended the balance the high court was seeking to strike.

The court's order blocked Judge Watson's instruction that refugees aren't subject to the ban if they are covered by a formal admissions agreement between the U.S. government and a refugee resettlement agency. About 24,000 refugees covered by such agreements potentially stood to benefit from the Hawaii judge's ruling but now will not, at least in the short term.

But the Supreme Court declined the Trump administration's request to clarify its ruling from last month and thus didn't allow the president to enforce plans to bar travel by extended family members.

The court in its brief order didn't explain its reasoning.

Like its ruling last month, the court again appeared to find some ideological common ground for its action. No justice registered a dissent to the court's action on refugees.

However, three conservative justices—Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch—said they would have allowed the president to bar travel by extended family members. Those same justices registered similar objections last month, saying they would have sided more broadly with the president.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which has been challenging the Trump ban in court, expressed ambivalence about the latest outcome.

"We are glad that the order requiring the government to recognize grandparents and other close family remains in place, but are deeply concerned about the effect of today's ruling on thousands of refugees who seek to escape dangerous situations, who have been fully vetted by the United States, and whose arrival communities, congregations, and organizations in the United States have been preparing for and anticipating," said Omar Jadwat, an attorney at the ACLU.

The Supreme Court is on summer break with several justices traveling. Chief Justice John Roberts, for example, is on an itinerary that takes him through Australia and New Zealand. The court, however, still can consider emergency appeals even when it isn't in session.

On the broader issues in the case, one appeals court said the president likely disfavored Muslims in a way that violated the Constitution. Another said Mr. Trump didn't adequately justify that the ban was needed. The Justice Department argues that both courts were wrong, saying the president has broad powers over U.S. borders, especially when national security is a consideration.

The Supreme Court will review those rulings when it returns in October.

**Write to Brent Kendall** at [brent.kendall@wsj.com](mailto:brent.kendall@wsj.com)

Appeared in the July 20, 2017, print edition as "Top Court Revises Travel Ban Scope."



## Trump's wall: The inside story of how the president crafts immigration policy (UNE)

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

15-19 minutes

The Washington Post's Philip Rucker, Ashley Parker and David Nakamura look at what President Trump has done over the past six months to fulfill his pledge to build a border wall. Three Washington Post reporters look at what President Trump has done over the past six months to fulfill his pledge to build a border wall. (Video: Bastien Inzaurrealde/Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

The border wall looms large for President Trump.

Aboard Air Force One last week, talking with reporters en route to Paris, he ruminated about the wall of his dreams — 700 to 900 miles long, with transparent sections so that border agents aren't hit on the head by "large stacks of drugs" tossed over from the Mexican side, and outfitted with solar panels.

And no, Trump insisted, he was "not joking."

"There is a very good chance we can do a solar wall," he said, "which would actually look good."

The president began promoting the idea, aides explained, after a business acquaintance pitched it in one of the many conversations he has with friends — yet another example of how Trump often outsources his policy process,

including an eagerness to entertain creative, even pie-in-the-sky notions.

Critics often dismiss Trump as a chief executive uninterested in the policy process, unwilling to delve into minutiae and impatient with the pace of governing. He has been largely absent from arm-twisting on Capitol Hill, remote in interacting with many of his Cabinet secretaries and remiss in the public salesmanship of big-ticket policy items — most recently on the GOP health-care plan that collapsed this week in the Senate.

But on immigration — a challenge that has vexed presidents since Ronald Reagan and a theme that has occupied Trump for decades — the 45th president has been heavily engaged in the administration's roiling debate. Officials credit him for being relentless in framing illegal immigration as a threat to public safety and to the economic security of American workers, and for turning a border wall into a populist rallying cry.

This portrait of Trump as a policymaker at the six-month mark of his presidency — culled from interviews with two dozen top administration officials, key lawmakers and other senior Republicans — shows a president driven by gut feelings, happy to mostly skim the surface but occasionally engrossed in details.

*[Trump says he wants victories — but he isn't selling the GOP agenda to voters]*

"The president's own opinion and his natural instincts on all of these issues is what will most likely be the default winner of the day, all the time," said Reince Priebus, the White House chief of staff. "So the guiding light is always his vast experiences and his years of thought on these subjects."

Advisers said the president has strong, instinctual opinions on broad issues but is open to persuasion on details. Trump is proudly nonideological, but retains some key beliefs — especially on immigration, trade and national security. He defends his views vigorously, yet solicits alternative perspectives and can be persuaded to change his position.

"The president likes consulting a wide variety of people and viewpoints," said Robert Porter, assistant to the president for policy coordination and the White House staff secretary. "He appreciates the back and forth. Sometimes it's on paper with memos that he'll read and ask for more information, and sometimes it's in meetings, either formal structured meetings or more informal discussions."

How Trump is rolling back Obama's legacy

Trump is torn over how to address the status of the younger immigrants who were brought to the country illegally by their parents, colloquially known as "Dreamers," who were protected by President Barack Obama's administration. Debate about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy aimed at this group has been

among the most robust — and inconclusive — in Trump's White House.

By contrast, Trump is far more certain about the wall. The structure could change in design or function — he vowed to build a much longer and higher wall during the campaign — but his security argument for it has remained constant.

"He campaigned on restoring the rule of law," said Rep. Lou Barletta (R-Pa.), an immigration hard-liner who was an early supporter of Trump's campaign. "He never wavered, never backed off. He's still doing what he said he was going to do."

Yet for Trump, like his predecessors, the reality is that changing the immigration system is unlikely to be achieved in a far-reaching bill. Any broad overhaul of the nation's immigration laws would need the legislative buy-in of both parties, and there is widespread resistance to building a wall that many consider an ineffective boondoggle.

The White House intends to fight hard for border wall funding in upcoming budget negotiations with Congress. Still, Trump appears resigned to trying to remake the immigration system through a combination of executive power and rhetoric.

"What I'd like to do is a comprehensive immigration plan," he said last week, "but our country and political forces are not ready yet."

'The two Stephens'

"A nation without borders is not a nation," Trump said five days after he took office in late January.

He was speaking at the Department of Homeland Security at a signing ceremony for two executive orders aimed at cracking down on illegal immigration. His troubled travel ban grabbed the headlines, but the two orders Trump signed that day represent his administration's immigration blueprint so far — one beefing up border security and the other increasing interior enforcement with more agents and restrictions.

Leading the charge on immigration is Stephen K. Bannon, who ran the conservative Breitbart news website and now serves as Trump's chief strategist, and Stephen Miller, Trump's senior policy adviser who made his name as a young Capitol Hill aide championing hard-right immigration policies. "The two Stephens," as colleagues sometimes refer to them, work with Julia Hahn, who had covered immigration for Breitbart and was hired in the West Wing by Bannon.

Like a businessman checking the status of a project, Trump demands regular updates, calling DHS Secretary John F. Kelly multiple times a week to check in, often with little or no notice.

*[Amid immigration setbacks, one Trump strategy appears to be working: Fear]*

More recently, Trump has focused his public remarks on the threat of a specific gang, MS-13, a Salvadoran cartel that has been active in the United States since the 1980s. Trump, who is from New York City, has been briefed about a rise in homicides on Long Island attributed to MS-13.

Aides said the tough rhetoric, along with stepping up immigration arrests, has paid dividends. The number of immigrants caught trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border illegally fell to a 17-year low in March, with fewer than 17,000 apprehended that month compared with nearly 60,000 in December, according to DHS.

"What we've simply said is, if you are an illegal alien in the United States, you should be concerned about being in the United States illegally," Kelly said in an interview. "We know by polling that the Central Americans in particular are unsure of what's happening. Consequently, they are less inclined to spend what amounts to be their life savings to come up to the United States."

Trump's bluster has had other consequences. After he threatened to impose a border tax on Mexican goods to pay for the wall, Mexican

President Enrique Peña Nieto abruptly canceled a ceremonial visit to the White House. The administration's ban on travelers from some majority-Muslim nations has been the persistent subject of both outrage and court challenges. And some immigrants who have served in the U.S. military under a promise of citizenship from the Pentagon have begun to flee the country for fear that they could be deported to dangerous homelands.

But Trump's advisers view his immigration stance as savvy politics, reaffirmed by recent internal polling of 10 battleground states.

"Immigration policy affects every aspect of life — incomes, schools, hospitals, community resources," Miller said. "Prioritizing the needs of American workers over powerful special interests is not merely a core issue for Republicans, but also independents and massive numbers of Democrats."

Hugging 'angel moms'

Trump — a known germaphobe — is not a natural hugger. But every time he meets "angel moms," whose children have been killed by illegal immigrants, they expect to receive an embrace from the president.

They have become the emotional touchstone of his immigration crusade.

Michelle Wilson-Root of Iowa had arrived at her Washington hotel three weeks ago to lobby against illegal immigration when her cellphone rang. On the line was Hahn, who had written for Breitbart about Wilson-Root's daughter, Sarah, 19, who was killed last year in a car crash caused by an illegal immigrant.

Now working for Bannon, Hahn invited Wilson-Root to the White House to join a roundtable with Trump about a pair of immigration bills. One measure would cut off some federal funding for so-called sanctuary cities, while the other — "Kate's Law," named after a San Francisco woman allegedly killed by an illegal immigrant — would impose stricter penalties on criminals who have repeatedly entered the country unlawfully.

In the Cabinet Room, Trump greeted Wilson-Root and her friend Mary Ann Mendoza, whose son was killed in a head-on vehicle collision with an intoxicated undocumented immigrant, with a round of hugs.

"Every time I met with him — I'm a hugger — it's always been hugs," Wilson-Root said.

*[Blame game: Trump casts immigrants as dangerous criminals, but the evidence shows otherwise]*

The next day, the House approved both bills. They face a difficult path in the Senate, where the Republican majority is narrower, but the families said they are convinced that Trump will not forget them.

"He remembers each one of us every time he sees us, knows our stories, knows our children's names," Mendoza said. "He's our advocate."

Trump began his White House bid by labeling immigrants from Mexico as "criminals" and "rapists" — a stark departure from predecessors careful to characterize most undocumented immigrants as hard-working strivers. While Obama showcased Dreamers at State of the Union addresses, Trump invited angel families to sit in first lady Melania Trump's box during his address to Congress in February.

Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president, said the national conversation had long centered on how to help immigrants. President Trump, she said, "changed it to, 'What's fair to the American worker who's competing with the illegal immigrant for the job? What's fair to the local economy? What's fair to our local resources — law enforcement, the school system, housing? What's fair to a sovereign nation that needs physical borders that are respected?'"

A 'very hard' decision

If the campaign rally chants came easy to Trump and his supporters, the next few months will prove more daunting as he attempts to implement an immigration agenda in the wake of the health-care fiasco and other legislative failures.

Sens. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) and David Perdue (R-Ga.) have been working with the White House to introduce a bill by the end of the summer that would cut the current annual level of 1 million green cards by half in 10 years, largely by limiting visas for extended families of legal U.S. residents.

Cotton, who along with Perdue has met twice on immigration with Trump, said the legislation is popular in key states where Democratic senators are up for reelection in 2018.

"Donald Trump recognizes that it's possible to be both pro-immigrant and to believe that immigration levels are too high and skewed against educated, high-skilled, English-speaking immigrants," Cotton said.

The strategic thinking among administration members is that they can gain a political advantage on immigration once they begin talking about proposals publicly. The release of the Cotton-Perdue legislation, they hope, will mark the beginning of a public immigration pitch.

Meanwhile, Obama's DACA policy, which has granted work permits to more than 750,000 Dreamers, offers its own emotional narrative and has led to one of the most fraught debates in the White House. The program is extremely popular among Latino and Asian groups, and ending it would produce fierce blowback.

The fight over how to handle DACA largely pits Miller, who vociferously opposes the program, against most other White House advisers, who, to varying degrees, take a less dogmatic approach. Some administration officials have privately griped that they wish Miller could be forbidden from briefing the president on the issue.

Many in the administration consider DACA a workforce issue, and one possible plan being championed is to wind down the program — and stop issuing new work permits — while also making clear that Dreamers would not be a deportation priority.

As with many issues, the most compelling argument for Trump is reminding him that a tough immigration stance was his core pledge to his base, several advisers said. Bannon has printed out the president's statements from campaign rallies and shown them to him as a reminder.

Others in the White House — including Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump, and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, both senior advisers — have helped connect business executives and technology titans who support robust immigration with Trump to make the economic case in support of Dreamers.

"It's a decision that's very, very hard to make," Trump told reporters on Air Force One.

Fixated on the wall

Trump in many respects faces the same challenge his predecessors did: How to balance security with pragmatism. It's impossible, experts said, to deport all 11 million undocumented immigrants as Trump repeatedly promised during the campaign. His administration this week also nodded to the reality of employment trends when it **authorized an additional 15,000 temporary work visas** for lower-skilled immigrants over the next few months. Trump has employed such

immigrants at his golf courses and other properties, drawing criticism.

And that is why some White House aides said the border wall is so important — it could be the symbolic victory that allows him more flexibility to forge a compromise on Dreamers and other immigration issues.

Trump sees a border fortress as the physical manifestation of his identity as a builder and dealmaker — a president able to construct the nation's security almost by hand, and to somehow persuade Mexico to pay for it.

*[Good news for border residents: No one is throwing 60-pound bags of drugs over a 50-foot wall]*

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Democrats Test 2018 Strategies in Virginia State House Races

Reid J. Epstein  
6-7 minutes

July 19, 2017 4:14 p.m. ET

MANASSAS, Va.—Democrats want to take back control of the U.S. House by winning Republican-held seats where voters backed Hillary Clinton in last year's presidential election.

This fall, they will be conducting a test run in Virginia, including determining whether success comes by focusing on President Donald Trump or not when wooing voters who didn't support him last November.

"Virginia is a good proving ground and petri dish for our politics, because the state has a little bit of every type of congressional district that will be a battleground in 2018," said Jesse Ferguson, a longtime Virginia Democratic operative who also worked for the House Democratic campaign arm.

"There's a little bit of everything, so you're able to see which types of districts respond most successfully to which messages," he said.

Mrs. Clinton won 17 Virginia House of Delegates districts where voters backed GOP legislators in the state's last election in 2015. Democrats must flip 16 seats to win a state House majority for the first time since 1999.

Like the congressional map, Virginia's House district map was drawn after the 2010 Census by Republicans to favor the GOP, making the push to a majority a steep climb for the state's Democrats. Parts of the state where Democrats have won federal races have reliably sent Republicans to the state capital in Richmond.

The president has been questioning aides about the lack of progress: *When will Congress approve the funding? Where are the schematics? Will it be made of concrete or steel? Which firm will build it?*

Kelly said he is taking seriously the president's interest in an environmentally friendly solar wall, which White House aides say could make the project more difficult for Democrats to oppose.

"Certainly, if someone thinks they can hang solar panels on there and reduce the carbon emissions and sell energy both to Mexico and the United States and it benefits

"If you're a national Democratic donor being pitched on the idea of radically changing the balance of power, I'd say: Donor beware," said Tucker Martin, a longtime Republican operative in the state who is advising Ed Gillespie, the GOP nominee for governor. "The map is a lot tougher than you've been told, and the incumbents are tougher than you've been told."

Statewide, Republicans have a nearly 3-to-1 cash-on-hand advantage over their Democratic challengers.

Delegate Tim Hugo, who represents a Fairfax County district Mrs. Clinton won 53%-42%, said there was little evidence that Democrats can translate opposition to the president into votes in local races.

"Everybody talks about this big wave coming," said Mr. Hugo, the third-ranking Republican in the House of Delegates. "It might be interesting for people on cable news to talk about, but it rarely materializes."

With little media attention paid to their races, Democratic challengers in Virginia are trying an array of different messages against the GOP incumbents.

Danica Roem, a former local newspaper reporter who would be the first openly transgender person elected to any state legislature, is devoting her campaign in Prince William County to a single issue: Fixing the traffic bottlenecks on Route 28, a major north-south thoroughfare through northern Virginia. Her campaign signs feature her campaign slogan, in all capital letters: "FIX ROUTE 28 NOW."

Although Mrs. Clinton beat Mr. Trump 54% to 40% in the district, Ms. Roem doesn't mention the

everybody, sounds like a good idea to me," Kelly said.

Trump is so fixated on a physical wall that in May, White House press secretary Sean Spicer showed off photos of tall steel rods along the border, calling it a "bollard wall." Many scoffed that it looked more like a fence, and the president himself, one adviser said, had little patience for the design.

#### Local Politics Alerts

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

"He's like, 'No, no, no, no, no, no, no, I didn't say 'bollard wall,'" recalled the adviser, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to share

president in her campaign literature and rarely discusses him on the campaign trail.

She is banking on opposition to the state GOP's push to implement social conservative policies to propel her campaign against 25-year incumbent Bob Marshall, a Republican who in January introduced legislation that would regulate transgender people's use of bathrooms in public schools and other government buildings.

"Delegate Bob Marshall is more concerned with where I go to the bathroom than with how his constituents get to work," Ms. Roem said in an interview in her campaign office.

Mr. Marshall said the Route 28 traffic problems should first be addressed by the county government, not the state, and he stands by his legislation. "Acknowledging laws of biology is not bigotry," he said.

In Mr. Hugo's Fairfax County district, Democrat Donte Tanner is trying to appeal to voters who recently stopped being loyal GOP supporters.

Before backing Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Hugo's district reliably voted for Republicans. In 2013, both Ken Cuccinelli and E.W. Jackson, the conservative Republicans running for governor and lieutenant governor, won majorities.

Now Mr. Tanner, a 37-year-old small business owner from Centreville, said he hopes his district's voters will embrace Democratic proposals to improve education, transportation and redistricting.

His Republican opponent, Mr. Tanner said, is part of the "swamp" Mr. Trump pledged to drain during

a candid conversation. "I said, 'The wall. Build a wall. People think wall, they think bricks and cinder blocks.'" "

The president, the policymaker, the real estate magnate, understood one thing in his gut: He had promised a wall, and now he needed to build one.

*President Trump has never described the work of his administration in modest terms. He boasts about the "record-setting pace" of accomplishments. Six months in, we look at how Trump's government is working.*

Joshua Partlow in Mexico City contributed to this report.

his campaign. "We don't try to tie him directly to Trump, but we say what the party has done to hold people back," Mr. Tanner said.

Mr. Hugo, a 14-year incumbent, said few constituents are talking about the president and other business going on across the Potomac River in Washington. "All our guys say we're not hearing it," Mr. Hugo said. "It's not permeating yet."

But Democrats like Karrie Delaney say their constituents are talking about little else. Ms. Delaney, a 38-year-old nonprofit official, said she is running to be "the first line of defense" against the Trump administration. She is seeking to flip a Fairfax County district that has backed every Democrat running statewide since 2012, including awarding 59% of its vote to Mrs. Clinton.

"Localizing these races, that's not the right answer for this moment in time," Ms. Delaney said. "The civility and temperament of the current administration does not reflect the values of this district. People are looking for leaders to take a stand against it."

Her opponent, four-term incumbent Republican James LeMunyon, said his constituents ask him about education, traffic and problems with the Metro regional mass transit system. He said he rarely discusses Mr. Trump.

"People can draw their own conclusions about the president," Mr. LeMunyon said.

**Write to** Reid J. Epstein at [reid.epstein@wsj.com](mailto:reid.epstein@wsj.com)



## Editorial : Why Trump's chat with Putin is not just a chat

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

11-14 minutes

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

July 19 at 7:26 PM

THE ALARMS over President Trump's second meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Group of 20 summit are, in one way, overheated. Staying engaged with Russia and its leader, including through a spontaneous pull-aside at a closed dinner for world leaders, is not in itself a fault: At best, it might help alleviate mistrust and avoid miscalculation at a time of high tension. While it is possible to object to Mr. Trump's impulsive style and tendency to bypass established channels, the problem is not so

much that he sought out Mr. Putin for an informal chat. Rather, it is the deeply troubling and unresolved questions about his relationship with Russia, which mean that any such contact raises serious — and understandable — concerns.

"Engagement" is not a dirty word. Even in the worst days of the Cold War, in the shadow of the Cuban missile crisis and the 1983 war scare, the United States remained in close communication with the Soviet Union. A back channel often proved vital. During the tense days of autumn 1983, the National Security Council specialist on Soviet affairs, Jack F. Matlock Jr., met quietly in a cafeteria opposite the Old Executive Office Building with a Soviet journalist he had known, who revealed the dire situation in Moscow, including Soviet leaders' deepening uncertainty about possible war with the United States. This was important information.

Talk isn't bad; what's key is the nature of the talk. To carefully calibrate messages to world leaders, presidents usually rely on an elaborate bureaucratic machine, including the interagency process and the National Security Council staff. Mr. Trump's dinner chat showed once again his proclivity to act alone, and he undoubtedly created headaches. With no U.S. note-taker or interpreter, the U.S. national security structure was left without a record of the exchange, except for Mr. Trump's memory. Mr. Putin will have a better record.

But the deeper problem is the epidemic of mistrust Mr. Trump has created about his ties to Russia, which sensationalizes contacts that might otherwise be unremarkable. The doubts began during the campaign with his failure to release his tax returns, which could show the origins of his income, and grew worse when Russia hacked the Democratic National Committee and

the email account of Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman. Mr. Trump refused to accept U.S. intelligence community warnings of Russian interference during the election, and his family and his campaign associates have repeatedly been negligent or untruthful about their contacts with Russian officials — most recently, in the accounts of a meeting with a Russian lawyer offering dirt on Ms. Clinton. In his first meeting as president with Russia's foreign minister, Mr. Trump blurted out classified information. It's reasonable to worry about what he might have told Mr. Putin.

Mr. Trump often calls investigations of his Russia ties a "witch hunt." But the fact is that he created the swirl of suspicion. Only he can clear it up — and until he does, there will be reason for concern about any contact he has with Mr. Putin.

### NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

## Hanson : Trump & Russia: Vladimir Putin Is America's Puppet Master

6-7 minutes

About a year ago, Donald Trump Jr. met with a mysterious Russian lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya. Trump Jr. was purportedly eager to receive information that could damage Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign.

Veselnitskaya denies that she was working for the Kremlin to lobby for favorable Russian treatment. But in the past, Veselnitskaya has been connected with a number of Russian-related lobbying groups.

Trump Jr., for his part, proved naïve and foolish to gobble such possible setup bait. The Russians proved eager to confuse, confound, and embarrass everyone involved in the 2016 election.

This latest Trump family imbroglia piggybacks on six months of Russian collusion charges. National Security Adviser Michael Flynn resigned less than a month into his job after being less than candid about his contacts with the Russians. Paul Manafort, Donald Trump's erstwhile campaign manager, had some questionable Russian business interests and resigned well before the election.

01:00

Paul Ryan: From Wisconsin to Capitol Hill

All these stories were luridly headlined in the press.

Yet several intelligence officials from the Obama administration — former CIA director John Brennan, former FBI director James Comey, and former director of national intelligence James Clapper — asserted that they had found no evidence of Russian collusion with the Trump campaign to rig the election.

Former FBI head Robert Mueller is now overseeing the probe into possible Russian meddling as a special counsel. There are also several other Russia-related investigations being conducted by various agencies and congressional committees.

Some members of Congress are asking why Obama-administration officials such as Brennan, Samantha Power, and Susan Rice requested surveillance files on Trump-campaign officials, may have unmasked names, and may have allowed those names to be illegally leaked to the press.

Earlier, some Republican anti-Trump operators (and later some Clinton campaign operatives) hired former British spy and opposition researcher Christopher Steele to compile a dossier on Donald Trump that would include some ludicrous Russia-related allegations. Weirder still, Steele's firm may have had some contacts with none other than Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya.

Senator John McCain, a former target of candidate Trump's invective, acquired the anti-Trump

dossier and made sure that the FBI investigated the phony dirt. Comey did just that.

In no time, the so-called Steele dossier was leaked. The website *BuzzFeed* admitted it could not verify any of the accusations but published the entire sordid file anyway.

One of the principals of the Clinton campaign, John Podesta, was a board member of a green-energy firm that suddenly saw an infusion of Russian cash — purportedly in an attempt to sway Podesta.

Congressional science and energy committees and subcommittees are currently interested in whether the Russians funneled cash into American anti-fracking groups such as Sea Change on the expectation that they might help derail American energy exploration and production.

The Russian government has lost nearly half its oil revenue because of the innovative American ability to frack gas and oil, which has crashed world energy prices. Russian president Vladimir Putin apparently will do anything to see it stopped.

The list of Russian capers, collusions, and conspiracies could be expanded, but the picture is clear: Putin's Russia is in bad shape.

Early in 2016, investigative journalists reported that Russian interests donated to the Clinton

Foundation and offered generous speaking honoraria to former president Bill Clinton, apparently in hopes of gaining leverage with then-secretary of state and likely future presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. In one controversial deal, the U.S. government approved sales of a large amount of North American uranium deposits to Russian interests.

The list of Russian capers, collusions, and conspiracies could be expanded, but the picture is clear: Putin's Russia is in bad shape. It is economically weak and eager to do anything possible to hurt the U.S. — largely by using a fake-news disinformation campaign, spreading Kremlin cash, and playing a gullible and often unprofessional U.S. media eager to find a scandalous Russian under every American bed.

So far the Russian disinformation program has worked brilliantly.

What foreign government could possibly entangle in truth, lies, half-truths, rumors, and scandals the Trump family, Bill and Hillary Clinton, John Brennan, James Comey, John McCain, John Podesta, Samantha Power, Susan Rice, and a host of other Beltway grandees?

Who could prompt enough investigations and inquiries to overwhelm and distract the entire U.S. government at a time when North Korea is aiming missiles at U.S. territory, Iran is pressing ahead to develop a nuclear weapon, Syria

is a genocidal mess, and immigrants from the war-torn Middle East are sweeping across Europe?

Putin is now America's puppet master — and we are his empty-

headed playthings dangling from his Kremlin strings.



## The Seven Circles of Donald Trump's Russia Inferno

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

12-15 minutes

Back in May, *Lawfare's* Jane Chong began compiling an annotated set of links to the known facts in the Donald Trump-Russia affair. At the same time, one of us co-authored a piece detailing seven possible theories that could explain the available evidence, ordered from least to most sinister. The first three theories included:

- Theory #1: This is all a series of coincidences and disconnected events. Yes, Trump held positions favorable to Russia, which may have attracted supporters with Russian business interests. But that interest was unrelated to Trump himself, and each element is unconnected from every other element.
- Theory #2: Trump attracted Russophiles. A variant of Theory #1, by this read, Trump's many unsavory tendencies, including his solicitude for Vladimir Putin, meant the only people willing to work for him held similarly fringe views on the subject or had shady business ties to the Russians. The Russian hacking operation thus coexisted with a "largely unconnected incentive for people with untoward Russian business connections to attach themselves to Trump. The latter incentive may have resulted in individuals doing unsavory or even illegal things or acting on behalf of Russian interests, but it did not involve any Russian infiltration of the Trump campaign as such, much less Russian corruption of Trump himself."
- Theory #3: The Russian operation was not about helping Trump but instead about harming the more probable winner, Hillary Clinton.

With last week's revelations regarding the meeting between Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner, Paul Manafort, and multiple individuals they believed were connected to the Russian government, these theories seem less plausible. Those emails, after all, demonstrate that at least some central figures in the Trump campaign were, in fact, specifically informed — with almost comical explicitness — of the Russian government's effort to interfere in the election. They were also informed that the Russian motivation was to assist Trump. And the Trump campaign welcomed and, at a minimum, attempted to participate in that effort.

So what's left? Well, back in May, the remaining possibilities included:

- Theory #4: Russian intelligence actively penetrated the Trump campaign, but Trump was not aware.
- Theory #5: Russian intelligence actively penetrated the Trump campaign, and Trump did know or should have known.
- Theory #6: There really is some kind of *kompromat*, or compromising material, and Trump's uncharacteristic consistency in praising and supporting Putin was motivated by the fear that Russia would release negative information about him.
- Theory #7: While implausible, the final theory that accounted for all known facts was that the president of the United States is a Russian agent.

Note that merely six months into Trump's presidency, the likely explanations for his conduct now reside on the decidedly more sinister end of the spectrum. Or, at least, if you're inclined to favor the less sinister side of the spectrum, you now have to account for the known actions of individuals at the center of the campaign that seem more consistent with the theories at the more sinister end of it.

To be sure, there is no more evidence today than there was

before to support the very worst possibilities: the theory that the Russians have kompromat on Trump or that he is a true Manchurian candidate. There is, however, substantially more information to support the theory that Russian intelligence endeavored to, and in fact managed to, infiltrate the Trump campaign and that Trump knew or should have known it was happening. And there's at least some evidence that the purpose of that infiltration was to help the campaign by giving it dirt on Trump's opponent.

Remember that this is actually not the first story in which people associated with Team Trump got — or sought — help from Moscow. Before the *New York Times* broke the news on Don Jr., the *Wall Street Journal* reported that now deceased Republican operative Peter W. Smith sought to obtain emails purportedly hacked from Clinton's private server, including from groups he suspected were linked to Russian intelligence. Smith claimed to have support from high-level Trump campaign staffers, including then future and now former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. The story leaves ambiguous the extent of actual involvement or knowledge on the part of the Trump campaign of Smith's activities, as well as whether Smith was in contact with real Russian intelligence operatives or merely imposters looking to take him for a ride.

But the Trump Jr. meeting leaves no such ambiguities. The participants were the tightest of Trump's inner circle — his campaign manager, son, and son-in-law — and the disclosed emails spell out in black and white an account of the Russian government's intent and its ambitions to assist the Trump campaign. If the younger Trump was surprised to learn of this, he did not demonstrate it with his response: "If it's what you say I love it." And if he had anxieties about guiding that involvement, he suppressed them when he suggested a specific time frame — later in the summer — for the disclosure of material.

The White House insists that Donald Trump was unaware of this meeting — held by his close family one floor beneath his office in Trump Tower while he was on the premises — though it appears the president himself has wavered on

this particular talking point. He told the press pool on Air Force One that "in fact, maybe it was mentioned at some point," though he said he was unaware that it was about possible derogatory information about Clinton.

Those looking to the behavior of the Trump campaign to tie together Smith's efforts and Trump Jr.'s meetings in some sort of broader conspiracy may be looking in the wrong place. These revelations may well be further indication of "systemic, sustained, furtive" coordination not by the Trump team itself but by the Russians. As Moscow's intelligence operatives sought to make inroads, they may have found receptivity in probing in different places at different times — from the inner circle to more tangential figures.

Think of the coordination then not as some grand conspiracy on the part of the Trump camp but as a pervasive rot among those tied to Trump that created opportunities for the Russians to exploit.

Think of the coordination then not as some grand conspiracy on the part of the Trump camp but as a pervasive rot among those tied to Trump that created opportunities for the Russians to exploit. The unifying characteristic may not be some grand plan to "collude" but rather a lack of commitment to resisting intervention from hostile foreign adversaries in free and fair elections — a lack of resistance that gave a foreign adversary multiple opportunities to take advantage over time.

These newer revelations also raise more possible scenarios and theories that were not part of the original seven. One that has gotten a lot of attention is the speech Trump gave the same day his son first received the email, in which he promised to give a future speech revealing damaging information on Clinton. This suggests that the fundamental relationship between the Trump campaign and Russia may have been the opposite of espionage; typically, espionage is about exfiltrating information from a campaign, but this sought to inject information into it.

The public record actually has some other suggestive indications of a relationship along these lines. The very public elements of Trump's tacit cooperation with the Russians have been widely noted. He

welcomed the Russian release of Clinton's emails; he proclaimed to love WikiLeaks; he denied Russian involvement in the whole affair; he enthusiastically used the fruits of Russia's illicit efforts to attack his opponent; and he had a monthslong bromance with the Russian dictator, after all. There is, however, another part of the Russian operation that Trump publicly supported that has gotten far less attention — and now looks at least somewhat more sinister.

The U.S. intelligence community's assessment of 2016 election interference noted that the Russian operation comprised two distinct elements. One part was helping Trump, but there was another part, too:

When it appeared to Moscow that Secretary Clinton was likely to win the presidency the Russian influence campaign focused more on undercutting Secretary Clinton's legitimacy and crippling her presidency from its start, including by impugning the fairness of the election.

Before the election, Russian diplomats had publicly denounced the US electoral process and were prepared to publicly call into question the validity of the results. Pro-Kremlin bloggers had prepared a

campaign, #DemocracyRIP, on election night in anticipation of Secretary Clinton's victory, judging from their social media activity.

The identifiable efforts to discredit a possible Clinton victory were twofold: promoting the idea that the Democratic primary was "rigged" against Clinton's opponent, Bernie Sanders, and creating uncertainty regarding the legitimacy of the election outcome. Trump heavily abetted both of these goals.

NPR notes that on March 4, 2016, a Russian political analyst with deep ties to the Kremlin posted a YouTube video that, among other charges, impugned the legitimacy of the U.S. electoral system. Alexander Dugin called American vote counting "stupid and fake" and claimed (falsely) that while "the majority votes for Sanders," Clinton won by "bribing the electors." Between the time of the Dugin video and the inauguration, Donald Trump tweeted about a "rigged" election at least 29 times. At least eight of these tweets (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) specifically alleged that the Democratic primary was rigged against Sanders — which is to say that it closely hewed to the Kremlin's talking point.

Trump had similar critiques of the Republican primary and of the U.S. election in general. At a campaign

rally in August 2016 in Columbus, Ohio, he said, "I'm afraid the election's going to be rigged. I have to be honest." In a Fox News interview a day later, he claimed, "People are going to walk in. They're going to vote 10 times, maybe." That same month, his campaign website encouraged people to become "Trump Election Observer[s]" to "Help ... Stop Crooked Hillary From Rigging This Election!"

Furthermore, when it appeared overwhelmingly likely that Clinton would win the presidency,

Trump openly and repeatedly floated the possibility that he would refuse to concede the election.

Trump openly and repeatedly floated the possibility that he would refuse to concede the election. When asked about doing so, he told the *New York Times*, "We're going to have to see. We're going to see what happens. We're going to have to see." He refused to offer a direct answer when asked at the third debate, saying, "I will look at it at the time. I will keep you in suspense." Later, he pledged to accept the election results only "if I win."

The relationship between Trump's talking points over time and those pushed by the Kremlin does not

mean that Trump was receiving secret, covert messaging help from Russian spies. The Russians were, after all, running RT and Sputnik and had a giant influence operation as part of their active measures campaign — an influence campaign that may have influenced the election, as well as some voters. Trump's claims of a rigged outcome may have been preemptive attempts to balm his legendarily fragile ego in the event of defeat, attempts that may have dovetailed nicely with what Russia was putting out for reasons of its own. And the fact that Trump was, once again, directly mirroring the Kremlin's talking points could well be just a coincidence — or it could be that the Kremlin was mirroring *his* talking points, though the Russian government does appear to have gotten there first.

But the degree of message compatibility here is worth noting if for no other reason than that the pattern thus far is that, as one bombshell revelation follows another, the more innocent explanations do seem to slip out of the realm of the plausible.

Photo credit: SAUL LOEB/AFP/Getty Images



## Trump-Russia Scandal Now Threatens to Ensnare Ivanka

Spencer Ackerman07.19.17 4:46 PM ET

6-7 minutes

Filling out a standard federal security-clearance application took up three days of Don Beyer's life.

It was a long weekend in 2008. Beyer, a former lieutenant governor of Virginia, was preparing to spend 11 weeks at the Department of Commerce on behalf of Barack Obama's transition team.

To do that, Beyer needed to fill out a boring document known as an SF-86 — a document that now has senior White House adviser, and Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner in serious trouble. And to do that, Beyer had to get his immediate family to rack their brains to recall all their foreign contacts over the past seven years—something that now threatens to ensnare Ivanka Trump, another senior White House adviser, the president's daughter and Kushner's wife.

It was a lot of work, Beyer recalls. He had a substantial number of foreign interactions, dating back to

his origins as an Army brat, born in Trieste when it was still a free territory on the Adriatic. To get his SF-86 completed accurately, he had to canvas his wife, his sisters, his brother and his father for every foreign contact they had in the recent past.

"I think they were all a little fascinated," said Beyer, who went on to be Obama's ambassador to Switzerland before getting elected to Congress in 2014 as a Democrat representing the northern Virginia suburbs of DC. The disclosure form ended up being 99 pages long.

Were it not for that experience, Beyer and his staff might not have grasped that Kushner's SF-86 problems were also an issue for Ivanka Trump. While Beyer has no evidence Trump had dissembled about her own foreign contacts on her SF-86, he wrote on Wednesday to the FBI requesting them to review what she disclosed about those of her husband and brother, Donald Trump Jr.

"What I do suspect is that if he wasn't disclosing, then it probably never lit up that she needed to disclose also. But the law is pretty clear. We have no reason to think she didn't describe her own [foreign

contacts], unless this is a family habit," Beyer told The Daily Beast.

It's the latest subplot to the Trump-Russia scandal.

Last week, the *New York Times* revealed that Donald Jr and Kushner met in June 2016 at Trump Tower with a bevy of government-connected Russian contacts. They include Kremlin-allied attorney Natalia Veselnitskaya; Rinat Akhmetshin, a former Soviet military intelligence officer accused of spearheading a hacking enterprise; and Ike Kaveladze, whom federal investigators accuse of laundering over a billion dollars worth of Russian money.

The meeting's purpose, according to the British music publicist who set it up, was to provide the Trump campaign with dirt on Hillary Clinton from Russia's chief prosecutor, as "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump."

It turns out that Kushner disclosed that meeting — belatedly. After the *Times* reported in April that Kushner had left off two other contacts with Russian agents, the ambassador Sergei Kislyak and the FSB-tied head of a state-owned bank, the first son-in-law quietly updated his

SF-86 to include over 100 interactions with foreign officials.

"Forgetting one or two or three — you know, people amend FEC reports and financial disclosures, yeah, they do that all the time, and that's OK," Beyer said. "Forgetting everything seems more than a little unusual. And having to have three corrections before he finally gets everything, again pretty unusual."

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Beyer's history with the near-proctological clearance form got him and his staff figuring that a review of Ivanka Trump's form would determine if she engaged in what the letter termed "similar deception."

She's legally obligated to disclose Don Jr. and Jared's foreign contacts. If she didn't, it would raise questions about whether she knew about those meetings; if she did, it would raise questions about why Jared didn't.

When asked a series of questions regarding this story, a White House official responded to The Daily Beast simply by saying, "the White House has a longstanding policy of not commenting on security clearances or other personnel security matters." Kushner's legal team did not

immediately respond to a request for comment, either.

Beyer began circulating his FBI letter to House colleagues late last week. Ultimately 21 other Democrats signed on. No Republicans did, though Beyer said he sent the text to all 241 of them.

Mike Conaway, the Texas GOPer who is now co-helming the House intelligence committee's Trump-Russia inquiry, wouldn't talk about whether the FBI ought to review Ivanka Trump's SF-86.

"Well again, I'm not going to talk about what my investigation is, other than just to answer the questions that, you know, what did the Russians do or not do, what'd the Trump team do or not do—that kind of stuff," Conaway told The Daily Beast on Wednesday.

Beyer has yet to hear back from the FBI. The FBI declined comment to The Daily Beast, as did Special Counsel Robert Mueller's representatives.

"I don't think it's life or death for the future of the republic," Beyer said of

his pressure on Ivanka Trump's SF-86.

"But I do think it's potentially part of a pattern of ignoring both the spirit and the letter of the law. And it certainly gets into the incredible entanglements that the Trump family has, which makes it difficult to govern independently of all their financial entanglements across many different countries."

— with additional reporting by Asawin Suebsaeng and Andrew Desiderio

**The  
New York  
Times**

Schmidt and Maggie Haberman

12-16 minutes

## Trump on Sessions's Recusal From Russia Investigation: 'Very Unfair'

In edited audio excerpts from an interview with New York Times reporters, President Trump discussed Jeff Sessions, Donald Trump Jr., Robert S. Mueller III and the newly disclosed conversation he had with Vladimir V. Putin.

July 19, 2017. Photo by Stephen Crowley/The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

WASHINGTON — President Trump said on Wednesday that he never would have appointed Attorney General Jeff Sessions had he known Mr. Sessions would recuse himself from overseeing the Russia investigation that has dogged his presidency, calling the decision "very unfair to the president."

[Read excerpts of The Times's interview with President Trump.]

In a remarkable public break with one of his earliest political supporters, Mr. Trump complained that Mr. Sessions's decision ultimately led to the appointment of a special counsel that should not have happened. "Sessions should have never recused himself, and if he was going to recuse himself, he should have told me before he took the job and I would have picked somebody else," Mr. Trump said.

In a wide-ranging interview with The New York Times, the president also accused James B. Comey, the F.B.I. director he fired in May, of trying to leverage a dossier of compromising material to keep his job. Mr. Trump criticized both the acting F.B.I. director who has been filling in since Mr. Comey's dismissal and the deputy attorney general who recommended it. And

## Citing Recusal, Trump Says He Wouldn't Have Hired Sessions (UNE)

Peter Baker,  
Michael S.

he took on Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel now leading the investigation into Russian meddling in last year's election.

Mr. Trump said Mr. Mueller was running an office rife with conflicts of interest and warned investigators against delving into matters too far afield from Russia. Mr. Trump never said he would order the Justice Department to fire Mr. Mueller, nor would he outline circumstances under which he might do so. But he left open the possibility as he expressed deep grievance over an investigation that has taken a political toll in the six months since he took office.

Asked if Mr. Mueller's investigation would cross a red line if it expanded to look at his family's finances beyond any relationship to Russia, Mr. Trump said, "I would say yes." He would not say what he would do about it. "I think that's a violation. Look, this is about Russia."

While the interview touched on an array of issues, including health care, foreign affairs and politics, the investigation dominated the conversation. He said that as far as he knew, he was not under investigation himself, despite reports that Mr. Mueller is looking at whether the president obstructed justice by firing Mr. Comey.

"I don't think we're under investigation," he said. "I'm not under investigation. For what? I didn't do anything wrong."

Describing a newly disclosed informal conversation he had with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia during a dinner of world leaders in Germany this month, Mr. Trump said they talked for about 15 minutes, mostly about "pleasantries." But Mr. Trump did say that they talked "about adoption." Mr. Putin banned American adoptions of Russian children in 2012 after the United States enacted sanctions on Russians accused of human rights

abuses, an issue that remains a sore point in relations with Moscow.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions testified in front of the Senate Intelligence Committee in June. Eric Thayer for The New York Times

Mr. Trump acknowledged that it was "interesting" that adoptions came up since his son, Donald Trump Jr., said that was the topic of a meeting he had with several Russians with ties to the Kremlin during last year's campaign. Even though emails show that the session had been set up to pass along incriminating information about Hillary Clinton, the president said he did not need such material from Russia about Mrs. Clinton last year because he already had more than enough.

The interview came as the White House was trying to regain momentum after the collapse of health care legislation even while the president's son, son-in-law and former campaign chairman were being asked to talk with Senate investigators. Relaxed and engaged, the president sat at the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office, with only one aide, Hope Hicks, sitting in on the interview. The session was sandwiched between a White House lunch with Republican senators and an event promoting "Made in America" week.

Over the course of 50 minutes, the often-fieri Mr. Trump demonstrated his more amiable side, joking about holding hands with the president of France and musing about having a military parade down a main avenue in Washington. He took satisfaction that unemployment has fallen and stock markets have risen to record highs on his watch.

At one point, his daughter Ivanka arrived at the doorway with her daughter, Arabella, who ran to her grandfather and gave him a kiss. He greeted the 6-year-old girl as "baby," then urged her to show the reporters her ability to speak Chinese. She obliged.

But Mr. Trump left little doubt during the interview that the Russia investigation remained a sore point. His pique at Mr. Sessions, in particular, seemed fresh even months after the attorney general's recusal. Mr. Sessions was the first senator to endorse Mr. Trump's candidacy and was rewarded with a key cabinet slot, but has been more distant from the president lately.

"Jeff Sessions takes the job, gets into the job, recuses himself, which frankly I think is very unfair to the president," he added. "How do you take a job and then recuse yourself? If he would have recused himself before the job, I would have said, 'Thanks, Jeff, but I'm not going to take you.' It's extremely unfair — and that's a mild word — to the president."

Mr. Trump also faulted Mr. Sessions for his testimony during Senate confirmation hearings when Mr. Sessions said he had not had "communications with the Russians" even though he had met at least twice with Ambassador Sergey I. Kislyak. "Jeff Sessions gave some bad answers," the president said. "He gave some answers that were simple questions and should have been simple answers, but they weren't."

A spokesman for Mr. Sessions declined to comment on Wednesday.

The president added a new allegation against Mr. Comey, whose dismissal has become a central issue for critics who said it amounted to an attempt to obstruct the investigation into Russian meddling in the election and any possible collusion with Mr. Trump's team.

Mr. Trump recalled that a little more than two weeks before his inauguration, Mr. Comey and other intelligence officials briefed him at Trump Tower on Russian meddling. Mr. Comey afterward pulled Mr. Trump aside and told him about a dossier that had been assembled by

a former British spy filled with salacious allegations against the incoming president, including supposed sexual escapades in Moscow. The F.B.I. has not corroborated the most sensational assertions in the dossier.

In the interview, Mr. Trump said he believed Mr. Comey told him about the dossier to implicitly make clear he had something to hold over the president. "In my opinion, he shared it so that I would think he had it out there," Mr. Trump said. As leverage? "Yeah, I think so," Mr. Trump said. "In retrospect."

The president dismissed the assertions in the dossier: "When he brought it to me, I said this is really made-up junk. I didn't think about any of it. I just thought about, man, this is such a phony deal."

Mr. Comey declined to comment on Wednesday.

But Mr. Comey and other intelligence officials decided it was best for him to raise the subject with Mr. Trump alone because he was going to remain as F.B.I. director. Mr. Comey testified before Congress that he disclosed the details of the dossier to Mr. Trump because he thought that the news media would soon be publishing details from it and that Mr. Trump had a right to know what information was out there about him. A two-page summary about the dossier was widely reported the week before Mr. Trump's inauguration, including by The Times.

Mr. Trump rebutted Mr. Comey's claim that in a one-on-one meeting in the Oval Office on Feb. 14, the president asked him to end the investigation into his former national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn. Mr. Comey testified before Congress that Mr. Trump kicked the vice president, attorney general and several other senior administration officials out of the room before having the discussion with Mr. Comey.

"I don't remember even talking to him about any of this stuff," Mr. Trump said. "He said I asked people to go. Look, you look at his testimony. His testimony is loaded up with lies, O.K.?"

He expressed no second thoughts about firing Mr. Comey, saying, "I did a great thing for the American people."

Mr. Trump was also critical of Mr. Mueller, a former F.B.I. director, reprising some of his past complaints that lawyers in his office contributed money to Mrs. Clinton's campaign. He noted that he actually interviewed Mr. Mueller to replace Mr. Comey just before his appointment as special counsel.

"He was up here and he wanted the job," Mr. Trump said. After he was named special counsel, "I said, 'What the hell is this all about?' Talk about conflicts. But he was interviewing for the job. There were many other conflicts that I haven't said, but I will at some point."

The president also expressed discontent with Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, a former federal prosecutor from Baltimore. When Mr. Sessions recused himself, the president said he was irritated to learn where his deputy was from. "There are very few Republicans in Baltimore, if any," he said of the predominantly Democratic city.

He complained that Mr. Rosenstein had in effect been on both sides when it came to Mr. Comey. The deputy attorney general recommended Mr. Comey be fired but then appointed Mr. Mueller, who may be investigating whether the dismissal was an obstruction of justice. "Well, that's a conflict of interest," Mr. Trump said. "Do you know how many conflicts of interests there are?"

In an interview with Fox News before Mr. Trump's comments were published, Mr. Rosenstein said he was confident Mr. Mueller could avoid any conflict of interests. "We have a process with the department to take care of that," he said.

As for Andrew G. McCabe, the acting F.B.I. director, the president suggested that he, too, had a conflict. Mr. McCabe's wife, Jill McCabe, received nearly \$500,000 in 2015 during a losing campaign for the Virginia Senate from a political action committee affiliated with Gov. Terry McAuliffe, who is close friends with Hillary and Bill Clinton.

In his first description of his dinnertime conversation with Mr. Putin at the Group of 20 summit meeting in Hamburg, Germany, Mr. Trump played down its significance. He said his wife, Melania, was seated next to Mr. Putin at the other end of a table filled with world leaders.

"The meal was going toward dessert," he said. "I went down just to say hello to Melania, and while I was there I said hello to Putin. Really, pleasantries more than anything else. It was not a long conversation, but it was, you know, could be 15 minutes. Just talked about things. Actually, it was very interesting, we talked about adoption."

He noted the adoption issue came up in the June 2016 meeting between his son and Russian visitors. "I actually talked about Russian adoption with him," he said, meaning Mr. Putin. "Which is interesting because it was a part of the conversation that Don had in that meeting."

But the president repeated that he did not know about his son's meeting at the time and added that he did not need the Russians to provide damaging information about Mrs. Clinton.

"There wasn't much I could say about Hillary Clinton that was worse than what I was already saying," he said. "Unless somebody said that she shot somebody in the back, there wasn't much I could add to my repertoire."



## Trump Jr., Kushner and Manafort to Speak to Senate Panels

Rebecca Ballhaus

4-5 minutes

July 19, 2017 7:20 p.m. ET

Three top Trump campaign aides—Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, former campaign chairman Paul Manafort and Donald Trump Jr.—are expected to speak with Senate committees next week as part of the congressional inquiry into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Mr. Kushner is set to hold a private interview on Monday with the Senate Intelligence Committee, his lawyer said Wednesday. The sit-down would mark Mr. Kushner's first time speaking with congressional investigators.

"As Mr. Kushner has been saying since March, he has been and is prepared to voluntarily cooperate and provide whatever information he has on the investigations to

Congress," said Abbe Lowell, Mr. Kushner's attorney, in a statement. "Working with and being responsive to the schedules of the committees, we have arranged Mr. Kushner's interview with the Senate for July 24. He will continue to cooperate and appreciate the opportunity to assist in putting this matter to rest."

President Donald Trump has expressed skepticism about U.S. intelligence agencies' conclusion that Moscow sought to intervene during the campaign. Russian officials have denied doing so. Mr. Trump and his campaign aides have denied any collusion with Moscow.

The Senate Judiciary Committee said the younger Mr. Trump and Mr. Manafort would appear next Wednesday in an open hearing.

Jason Maloni, a spokesman for Mr. Manafort, said he had received the request for Mr. Manafort to testify "in the last 25 minutes" and said, "We're looking it over." He declined

to confirm that Mr. Manafort would testify.

A spokesman for the president's eldest son didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. The younger Mr. Trump has also said he was willing to cooperate with the congressional committees.

They would be speaking on a panel alongside William Browder, a hedge-fund manager turned human-rights advocate who has campaigned on behalf of the Magnitsky Act, and Glenn Simpson, a former Wall Street Journal reporter who runs a research firm linked to a dossier containing unverified allegations that the president had ties to Russian leaders. The Magnitsky Act is a 2012 U.S. law that punishes Russian officials accused of human-rights violations, and is named for Mr. Browder's lawyer, who died in a Russian jail in 2009.

The testimony from the younger Mr. Trump and Mr. Manafort is expected to focus in part on an

email chain Mr. Trump released last week showing he helped arrange a Trump Tower meeting to discuss allegedly damaging information about former Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton. The meeting was also attended by Messrs. Kushner and Manafort.

A Russian attorney, Natalia Veselnitskaya, who also attended the meeting, has said she used the gathering to advocate against the Magnitsky Act. Ms. Veselnitskaya has been a longtime critic of Mr. Browder.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said Tuesday she had been informed that special counsel Robert Mueller, who is conducting a criminal probe of Russia's actions during the election and any Trump campaign ties to them, had raised no objections to calling the attendees of the meeting before the panel.

Mr. Mueller has contacted the eighth attendee at the Trump Tower

meeting, Ike Kaveladze, the attendee's lawyer said Tuesday, marking the first public sign that the special-counsel probe will examine the June 2016 gathering.

While members of the Trump administration, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions, have testified before Senate panels as part of the Russia probe, next week's planned interviews show the

inquiry is extending to some people closest to the president, including two of his family members.

Write to Rebecca Ballhaus at [Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com](mailto:Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com)

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## POLITICO The Hill Staffer at the Center of the Russia Intrigue

By Ben Schreckinger

14-18 minutes

In the spring of 2016, a longtime Washington operative pulled aside French Hill during a trip to Moscow and introduced the conservative Arkansas congressman to two Russians who are now at the center of a firestorm over the activities of Donald Trump Jr.

In the brief encounter, which took place two months before their now-infamous meeting with the president's son in Trump Tower, the jet-setting pair proposed the same trade they would soon be pitching all over Washington: Lift the sanctions on Russia, and we'll make sure Americans can adopt Russian babies once again.

Story Continued Below

Paul Behrends, the operative who set up that previously unreported Moscow meeting, has worked in security and foreign policy circles in Washington for decades while keeping a low profile, but he has never been far from intrigue.

Long before he took up his most recent post as an aide to California Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, Behrends worked alongside the Afghan *mujahideen*, helped the future Blackwater founder Erik Prince get an internship on Capitol Hill (later, he navigated the security firm through the political fallout from a 2007 massacre of civilians in Iraq) and served as chief lobbyist for a firm at the heart of the Jack Abramoff scandal. More recently, he has become a confidant of the pro-Trump Silicon Valley billionaire Peter Thiel and served as the Capitol Hill point-man for the right-wing government of Hungary.

While his boss—who was jokingly described by Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy in a closed-door meeting last year as being on the Kremlin's payroll—is the most vociferous defender of Russian interests in Congress and a staunch ally of President Donald Trump, it is Behrends who does much of the actual work, a role that now thrusts him into the spotlight as investigators and media sleuths suss out links between Trump's allies and Moscow.

Behrends has been the chief Capitol Hill contact for the lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya and the lobbyist Rinat Akhmetshin, a former Soviet intelligence officer, whose contacts with Trump Jr., along with Jared Kushner and Paul Manafort, are now at the center of questions about whether the Trump campaign colluded with Russia.

After arranging their impromptu meeting with Hill in Moscow, Behrends later escorted Akhmetshin around Capitol Hill—“almost by the hand” in the words of one congressional staffer—after the Moscow meeting last year, introducing him to lawmakers as part of an effort to undermine human rights legislation opposed by Russian President Vladimir Putin, drawing on his significant experience and connections to give the Kremlin's version of events a hearing.

One longtime acquaintance described Behrends as “sophisticated” and a “charming guy with a wonderful breadth of knowledge,” adding, “He is as comfortable dealing with good ol' boys from Texas as he is with sophisticated European investors.”

But that same sophistication Washington foreign policy hands puzzling over the zeal with which Behrends—for decades a standard GOP hawk on Russia—has been promoting the Kremlin line of late.

His activities, and the scrutiny they are now drawing, have become a source of growing unease among his colleagues and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. “Paul knows better,” said one congressional staffer. On Wednesday evening, a spokesman for the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where Behrends had been working until this week, informed POLITICO Magazine that he was no longer working for the panel, but declined to comment further, leaving his current employment status unclear.

“Paul Behrends has done a terrific job for me and the committee,” Rohrabacher told POLITICO Magazine in response to the news. “I have not been told anything to the contrary. I am looking forward to discussing this with the committee leadership. I am sure we will work this out.”

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After graduating from Ohio's Xavier University in 1981, Behrends enlisted in the Marine Corps, where he first encountered Rohrabacher—who worked in the Reagan administration before being elected to Congress in 1988—as both men participated in the U.S. government's efforts to help Afghanistan's Islamist insurgents repel the Soviet invasion.

Behrends then went to work for Rohrabacher's office for most of the '90s, helping a college-age Erik Prince score a job as the California Republican's first congressional intern.

In 1997, Behrends became a lobbyist and went on to work extensively for Prince's private security firm, Blackwater, which was founded the same year. In 2004, he became chief lobbyist for Alexander Strategy Group, a firm with close ties to former House Majority Leader Tom Delay that has been described as “ground zero” in the Abramoff scandal because of its entanglements with the disgraced lobbyist.

(Ties between the four men run deep: Abramoff, Behrends and Prince all gave generously to a fund Rohrabacher created to pay for expenses related to the 2004 birth of his triplets, according to a report in OC Weekly. Rohrabacher, an old friend of Abramoff's, defended the ex-lobbyist's character in a 2007 letter to the judge deciding Abramoff's sentence for wire fraud. In February, POLITICO reported that Rohrabacher and Abramoff have teamed up once again, this time in a bid to unite African leaders against Islamic terrorists.)

Behrends continued to lobby for Blackwater—which has rebranded twice since 2009 and is now called Academi—as its name became increasingly toxic in Washington, and helped the firm navigate the fallout from a 2007 incident in which the company's security contractors killed 17 Iraqi civilians in Nisour Square in Baghdad.

In addition to Blackwater and its founder's next venture, the Prince Group, lobbying disclosures show Behrends also performed highly lucrative work for various defense contractors and mining interests, as well as Kuwaiti industrial firms and something called the “Destiny Democratic Movement,” which hired

him to promote “free and fair elections in Nigeria.”

In 2009, Behrends first became acquainted with Thiel, the tech magnate and founder of Palantir, a government defense and intelligence contractor, who would go on to become Trump's most prominent supporter in Silicon Valley and an influential outside adviser to his administration. Behrends also became involved with the Institute of World Politics, a graduate school in DuPont Circle with close ties to the Europe right, doing a stint on the school's board that ended in 2013, and forming a relationship with Sebastian Gorka, a Hungarian-American professor at the school who now works at the White House as a national security adviser to Trump.

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In July of 2014, in a career move that puzzled many of his contacts in Washington, Behrends, then in his mid-fifties, returned to work for Rohrabacher on the Hill, trading in his lobbying gig for a staff job that pays \$138,000, according to public disclosures.

Behrends referred questions to Rohrabacher spokesman Ken Grubbs, who explained, “Paul took the job because the congressman had asked him repeatedly, over the course of months, to replace his outgoing foreign affairs adviser. Because of their relationship, he took the requests seriously. He wanted to get back into government service, the world having changed since his last stint.”

But Behrends' sympathy for Russian interests since then has vexed members of Washington's foreign policy establishment, many of whom have known and liked him for decades but say his views on the Kremlin have changed radically in the past couple of years.

“I don't know why,” said a person who has repeatedly discussed the issue with Rohrabacher and Behrends. “I know that he and Dana have traveled to Moscow, but how he got turned around on this issue, I have no idea.”

Two months after Behrends returned to the Hill, in September 2014, he and Rohrabacher peeled off from New York Rep. Gregory Meeks, with whom they had been traveling in Europe and Asia, and

traveled alone to Russia for three days, according to congressional travel expenditure reports. An itinerary for that leg of the trip provided by Grubbs shows the pair met with Mikhail Margelov, then-chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the upper house of Russia's parliament, as well as representatives of Russian industry and civil society, in Moscow.

As recently as the spring of 2015, Behrends was still aggressively promoting the work of Putin critic Paul Joyal — an expert on Russian intelligence who was shot in his driveway in Maryland in 2007 by unknown assailants days after speaking out about the assassination of a Russian dissident in London — according to a person in touch with Behrends at the time.

Since then, Behrends' stance on Russia has softened remarkably, according to several people who engage with him on foreign policy. Like Rohrabacher, Behrends, who is Catholic, seems to have bought into Putin's narrative that the United States and Russia are part of a shared Christian civilization whose biggest threat comes from the encroachment of radical Islam.

"He was your typical GOP hawk until Trump came around," said one foreign policy hand who interacts regularly with Behrends.

For the past several years, Jim Denton, director of the World Affairs Institute, has hosted regular meet-ups at his home and on the second floor of the Monocle restaurant on Capitol Hill to discuss transatlantic relations. At the meet-ups—which draw think-tank types, congressional staffers, journalists like Washington Post columnist Anne Applebaum and government officials like Kurt Volker, who was tapped this month to lead the Trump administration's efforts to end the conflict Ukraine—Behrends, attendees say, has become the sole consistent voice sympathetic to the Kremlin's worldview and intentions. At one dinner at Denton's home in December, Behrend confronted the

guests of honor—former Lithuanian ambassador to the U.S. Zygimantas Pavilionis and Lithuanian MP Emanuelis Zingeris—asking them why the United States should have to defend their country from Russia, according to a person present.

"We don't agree on everything certainly, but he's informed and has reasonable points, agree or not," said Denton, one of the few people willing to speak on the record about Behrends' foreign policy views. Denton added that Behrends is "no softy" on Russia. "He's a decent guy and he gives a damn."

"He's been critical of Putin," said Grubbs, the Rohrabacher spokesman, "but he believes that a more cooperative relationship is a result of a realistic analysis of our national security interests."

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In the House, Behrends, like his boss, often goes against the grain. Fellow staffers regularly receive emails from him with links to Breitbart articles and YouTube videos that push back against Washington's prevailing foreign policy narratives. ("Like many staffers, Paul sends around news reports that contribute to the general fund of knowledge," said Grubbs. "Breitbart adds a perspective that is often missed.")

He is also known for spicing up the itineraries of congressional delegations abroad — often to the chagrin of staffers and lawmakers.

During last April's congressional trip to Moscow, Behrends pulled aside Rep. Hill after a public roundtable discussion and asked him to meet with Akhmetshin and Veselnitskaya, who huddled with the congressman and pitched him on a deal to end Russia's adoption ban, offering him opposition research on Bill Browder, the London-based investor who has championed Magnitsky Act sanctions against Russian officials.

Hill had no advance knowledge of the meeting, according to his spokeswoman, Caroline Thorman. "He was invited by Paul. Paul

initiated all these different meetings."

According to another aide to Hill who was not authorized to speak on the record, the congressman listened to the pair's pitch and took their research back to Washington, where Foreign Affairs Committee staffers informed his office it was "not legit," and the congressman then dropped the matter.

It has not been previously reported that Akhmetshin and Veselnitskaya interacted with U.S. officials in Moscow during last April's congressional delegation to Moscow. Grubbs did not respond to questions about Behrends' relationship with the pair.

Earlier this year, CNN reported that Rohrabacher met with Akhmetshin in a hotel lobby in Berlin during another congressional delegation this April. According to a congressional staffer, Behrends was also present at that meeting, which was just one of several notable incidents to take place during the trip.

Behrends also arranged for the Russian-born investor Yuri Vanetik, a Rohrabacher donor who traveled with a personal bodyguard, to join the delegation in Berlin and the Hague, according to the staffer.

Rohrabacher had originally wanted the congressional delegation to go to Russia, but Foreign Affairs Chairman Ed Royce requested that he not do so at such a politically sensitive moment. On the trip, which a staffer described as "Dana's weed legalization tour" — a cause the congressman supports — Rohrabacher traveled to meet with the separatist leaders of Spain's Catalonia region and made waves by declaring support for its independence.

Royce had pressured Rohrabacher to add a stop in Madrid to meet with Spain's national government, and when the delegation left Catalonia and arrived in the Spanish capital, they were berated by an angry official from the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs. "They were pissed," said a congressional staffer who was present. "That was the first time I ever saw Dana apologize for something."

The government of Russia is not the only controversial regime that looks to Behrends for access to the halls of power in Washington. He has also become a crucial point-man for Hungary's government, which in recent years has taken the country in an increasingly illiberal direction, forcing the temporary closure and sale of a leading opposition newspaper and waging a campaign against a university backed by liberal financier George Soros.

Last summer, Behrends arranged a meeting between Thiel and Jeno Megyesy, a senior to adviser to Hungarian Prime Minister Orban, during the Republican National Convention, when Thiel was holed up at a house in nearby Shaker Heights, Ohio, according to a person briefed on the meeting. More recently, Behrends facilitated meetings on the Hill in June to give Megyesy a chance to lobby against a proposed congressional resolution condemning Orban for his harsh treatment of migrants and his efforts to "stifle any opposition to his rule, including by suppressing free speech and assembly, from universities, civil society groups, and independent think tanks."

As time has worn on and scrutiny grown, House Republicans have become increasingly exasperated with Behrends' exploits and the unwelcome attention they bring to the Foreign Affairs Committee, according to interviews with several staffers and operatives, but Rohrabacher's office, no stranger to controversy, simply shrugs.

"The congressman's subcommittee oversees Europe and Russia, so Paul, being his chief foreign policy adviser and coordinator, is the contact point for any and all leaders from the region, including the Orban government," said Grubbs. "It is his job."

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## John McCain, Republican senator from Arizona, diagnosed with brain tumor

<https://www.facebook.com/paul.kane.3367>

9-12 minutes

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) has been diagnosed with a brain tumor, his office said Wednesday, throwing into doubt when and if he will return to Washington to resume his duties in the Senate.

The Mayo Clinic said doctors diagnosed a tumor called a glioblastoma after surgery to remove a blood clot above McCain's left eye last week. The senator and his family are considering treatment options, including a combination of chemotherapy and radiation, according to the hospital.

McCain, 80, has been away from the Senate this week, recovering from the surgery and undergoing tests. His office issued a statement describing him "in good spirits" and noting that his doctors say his underlying health is excellent — but not indicating when he will return to the Senate.

Glioblastoma is an aggressive type of brain cancer, and the prognosis

for this kind of cancer is generally poor. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) survived less than 15 months after his was found in 2008. McCain's doctors said the "tissue of concern" was removed during the blood-clot procedure.

*[5 questions about the brain cancer diagnosed in Sen. John McCain]*

Dr. Philip D. Pulaski, a neurologist at The Neurology Center, explains what Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) faces as he recovers from surgery after having a blood clot removed from the area above his left eye. A neurologist explains what Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) faces as he recovers from surgery after having a blood clot removed from the area above his left eye. (Video: Ashleigh Joplin/Photo: Reuters/The Washington Post)

(Ashleigh Joplin/The Washington Post)

McCain's significance inside Congress is hard to overstate — and his absence, however long, will reverberate across the Capitol.

The Arizonan's illness leaves Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) — and by proxy President Trump, who has openly mocked the Arizona senator — with 51 votes, the barest of majorities at a time when Republicans are divided on such issues as health care, taxes and defense spending.

McCain's absence would also deprive the Senate of its moral conscience on many key issues, particularly in the ongoing investigation of the Trump campaign's potential involvement in Russian meddling in the 2016 campaign.

Colleagues from both parties reacted swiftly to McCain's announcement with sadness and encouragement. Trump exhorted McCain to "get well soon" and declared the senator a "fighter." Former presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton both tweeted their good wishes.

McConnell said: "I know that he will face this challenge with the same extraordinary courage that has characterized his life. The entire Senate family's prayers are with John, Cindy and his family, his staff, and the people of Arizona he represents so well.

"We all look forward to seeing this American hero again soon."

*[Give it hell': Obama, lawmakers react to John McCain's cancer diagnosis]*

McCain, a prisoner of war in Vietnam and a two-time presidential candidate, is known for his unfiltered opinions and willingness to buck Republican Party orthodoxy. Along with Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.), perhaps his closest friend in the Senate, McCain has become one of Trump's leading Republican

critics, particularly on issues of foreign policy and national security.

Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.) said the news of McCain's diagnosis was announced during a meeting between GOP senators and White House staff on health care. Hoeven said the news left the group in "stunned disbelief."

"It was very emotional," Hoeven said. "I think for all of us he's a special person."

Graham also attended the meeting and told others there that he had spoken with McCain and described him as "resolved and determined."

"He said, 'I'm going to have to stay here a little bit longer and take some treatments, but I'll be back,'" Graham said of McCain. "He said, 'I've been through worse,' and basically then we started talking about health care and the NDDA" — a reference to the National Defense Authorization Act.

McCain has staunchly defended Trump's national security team — he has particular respect for Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and national security adviser H.R. McMaster. But McCain has criticized the president for campaigning on a promise to fortify the country's defenses without, in his view, devoting enough money to the task.

McCain has also criticized Trump's apparent affinity for Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, warning that Russia is an enemy that should not be trusted and becoming one of the earliest Republicans to lend his support to a congressional investigation of Russia's ties to the election.

"John McCain has always been a warrior. It's who he is," said House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.). "I know John is going to fight this with the same sheer force of will that has earned him the admiration of the nation. And all of us, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans, are behind him. The prayers of the whole House are with Senator McCain and his family."

McCain's formal title is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, but McConnell essentially deputized him after his second presidential bid, in 2008, to run all national security issues for Senate Republicans.

But McCain's standing — from his stature borne of overcoming torture in Vietnam to his denunciations of Trump as a candidate and as

president — reaches far across the aisle. He is an iconic figure as beloved by Democrats as Republicans.

Almost every major bipartisan deal of the last 15 years has come with McCain's backing, on issues including immigration, outlawing torture and the Senate's internal rules.

Democrats line up to travel with McCain overseas because foreign leaders treat him as if he's a prime minister, winning audiences that are usually reserved for a secretary of state.

His fights with fellow senators have been legendary, but so have his dealmaking skills.

"Heartbreaking news," wrote Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) on Twitter. He said he "traveled the world" with McCain and "learned a lot from him. Murphy added: "there is no one tougher."

In a written statement she posted on Twitter, McCain's daughter, Meghan McCain, said the news of her father's illness has "affected every one of us in the McCain family." She said they live with "anxiety about what comes next," which they have endured before. McCain has a history of melanoma, a dangerous form of skin cancer.

She added, "it won't surprise you to learn that in all this, the one of us who is most confident and calm is my father. He is the toughest person I know. The cruelest enemy could not break him."

McCain's absence could complicate the fate of the annual National Defense Authorization Act, massive legislation that McCain has played an outsized role in shepherding through Congress since he took over as chairman of the Senate's Armed Services Committee in 2015.

From that perch, McCain has made a name for himself attempting to hold contractors to account over stalled projects while driving an overhaul of the acquisition process. He has pushed for greater investments to improve the quality and availability of materiel and training, an expansion of the U.S. military footprint abroad, particularly in hotspots like Afghanistan and Iraq, and an unprecedented focus on improving the country's ability to safeguard against cyberthreats and hacking.

McCain was relentless in his criticism of Obama's understanding of national security, accusing him of

compromising the nation's security by making nuclear deals with Iran and pulling troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq. But McCain was also open to working with the president to explore closing the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. That effort ultimately failed.

McCain's absence from the Senate this week came as GOP leaders struggled to bring their failing push to rewrite the 2010 Affordable Care Act to a conclusion. Leaders had intended to vote on a bill this week but postponed their plans late Saturday after McCain said he would be out recovering from the surgery to remove the blood clot.

On Monday, McConnell scrapped plans to vote on the bill altogether once it became clear it would not have the support to pass even with McCain in town to vote. McCain had voiced skepticism about the GOP "repeal and replace" plan. It was unclear that he would ever get to yes on it.

About 12,400 new cases of glioblastoma are expected in 2017, according to the American Brain Tumor Association. It is the most common of all malignant brain tumors, and a tumor that more commonly occurs in older adults than younger people.

The Finance 202 newsletter

Your daily guide to where Wall Street meets Washington.

Matthias Holdhoff, an associate professor at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins, said the first step after a diagnosis is to surgically remove as much of the glioblastoma as possible. But that can be difficult; it is a tumor that spreads through extensions into the tissue, "more like a mesh work than a lump."

"It's not just a matter of the cancer, but where it is and what it's doing to the patient," said Chevy Chase, Md., oncologist Frederick Smith, speaking generally about glioblastomas and not specifically about McCain's case. A blood clot over the eye tends to indicate the tumor was in the brain's frontal lobe, which controls cognition among other things, he said.

Again speaking generally of patients with this diagnosis, they "might be fine for a number of months or even years." But they are never cured.

Lenny Bernstein, Laurie McGinley, Kelsey Snell, Lena H. Sun and Ed O'Keefe contributed to this report.

Read more at PowerPost



July 19, 2017 7:23 p.m. ET

President Trump sometimes campaigned on deporting every illegal immigrant in the U.S., but in office he has been measured and charitable to those he calls the "incredible kids" who were brought to the U.S. as children. So it's regrettable that Republican state politicians are trying to bully Mr. Trump into deporting tens of thousands of young adults with no criminal record.

Last month 10 state attorneys general wrote to Attorney General Jeff Sessions asking that the Secretary of Homeland Security end an Obama Administration program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. DACA currently allows about 750,000 individuals brought to America as kids to stay in the U.S. for two years subject to renewal without the threat of deportation. These are the so-called Dreamers.

The letter asks that the government "rescind the June 15, 2012 DACA memorandum and order that

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL.**  
Board

4 minutes

July 19, 2017 7:25 p.m. ET

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos admitted last week that the adjudication of campus sexual assault is "an issue we're not getting right." Before correcting course, Mrs. DeVos is meeting with rape survivors, their advocates, administrators—and even students who say they were wrongly punished under the Title IX law that covers such cases.

Far from seeing the wisdom in this multitude of counsels, progressives are outraged. Pennsylvania Sen. Bob Casey complained that meetings with the latter group constitute a "slap in the face to the victims of campus sexual assault," while Guardian columnist Jessica Valenti accused the secretary of

**The  
New York  
Times**

6-8 minutes

Doug Chayka

The Democratic Party is at risk of repeating the billion-dollar blunder that helped create its devastating losses of 2016. With its obsessive

the Executive Branch will not renew or issue any new DACA or Expanded DACA permits in the future," and it threatens to sue if the Administration declines to act. The ringleader seems to be Ken Paxton of Texas and the AG list includes Patrick Morrisey of West Virginia and Derek Schmidt of Kansas.

Earlier this year Homeland Security rolled back the Obama Administration's Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, or DAPA, which usurped Congress's law-writing power and applied prosecutorial discretion to an entire class of individuals. The courts blocked that Obama order.

DACA has similar constitutional deficiencies, but the way to address them is through Congress, not by Republicans suing a GOP President who didn't write the law. There is also the legal question of what to do now that the government has invited individuals to identify themselves. Is it fair to coax them out of the shadows and then deport them to

"enabling rape deniers."

But Mrs. DeVos is right to consider the plight of the accused. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education estimates that more than 170 students have brought legal challenges against universities over Title IX decisions. In more than 50 completed cases, courts have sided with the accused.

Many of these lawsuits hinge on the lack of due process for the accused. The Obama Administration's infamous 2011 Dear Colleague letter mandated that students can be punished based on a "preponderance of evidence," a burden of proof far less rigorous than the earlier "clear and convincing evidence" standard.

That same Dear Colleague letter also "strongly discourages" cross examination, which it says "may be traumatic or intimidating" to alleged victims. The accused frequently lack legal counsel and have often been prevented from presenting

focus on wooing voters who supported Donald Trump, it is neglecting the cornerstone of its coalition and failing to take the steps necessary to win back the House of Representatives and state houses in 2018.

In the 2016 election, the Democratic Party committees that support Senate and House candidates and

countries where they have no family and little memory?

Remember: Dreamers were brought here as minors and are not criminals, and those who commit an offense forfeit their legal status under DACA. A January Cato Institute analysis by Ike Brannon says that Dreamers as employees tend to "be younger, better educated, and more highly paid than the typical immigrant."

The average Dreamer is 22 and holds a job, and many pay tuition for higher education. More than 15% are seeking an advanced degree. Texas and other states rightly claimed that under DAPA the feds commandeered state resources because they had to provide driver's licenses. But the states may be net beneficiaries under DACA due to tuition payments.

Cato's Mr. Bannon adds that deporting the Dreamers would cost \$60 billion and even more to the U.S. economy, as the legal reprieve allows many to enter the labor force. The cost of granting DACA status is de minimis; applicants pay

exculpatory evidence. Even when students are initially found not guilty, their accusers can appeal the decision. Meanwhile, the Title IX adjudicators who make life-changing determinations sometimes have as little as five hours of training.

Accused students suing their college often invoke Title IX's own protections against gender bias, saying universities discriminated against *male* students, who account for 99% of those facing allegations of sexual assault, harassment or misconduct. Last week Columbia University settled with Paul Nungesser, the man accused of sexual assault by Emma Sulkowicz, who famously hauled a mattress around campus for months to publicize her charges. The university cleared Mr. Nungesser, but his lawsuit claimed the university abetted her "gender-based harassment" against him.

In higher ed these days, it's taboo to admit that current Title IX tribunals

processing fees and are ineligible for food stamps or Medicaid. The federal government routinely claims to lack the funding and personnel to remove convicted criminals from the U.S., yet the state AGs would dedicate scarce enforcement resources to going door-to-door in a University of Texas dorm.

The better solution is for Congress to rewrite national immigration law to recognize reality, including that it isn't a political winner to deport people brought to the country as five-year-olds. A majority in both parties would favor legalizing Dreamers as part of a border enforcement bill. The state AGs have higher priorities than chasing down law-abiding young people contributing to American society, and a lawsuit would be political grandstanding rather than sensible law enforcement.

Appeared in the July 20, 2017, print edition.

are tipped in favor of the accuser. A recent article in the Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities even argued that demanding due process for accused students is a form of rape-culture propaganda that "exclude[s] victims and their advocates from having a voice in the discussion."

Sexual assault charges deserve to be investigated, but liberal academia is using Title IX to silence ideological opponents, often complaining that peaceful dissent constitutes actionable harassment on the basis of gender or sexual orientation. Mrs. DeVos is right to revisit the Obama-era guidance that has turned the law into an ideological weapon, and part of that is learning from its victims.

Appeared in the July 20, 2017, print edition.

## Editorial : Betsy DeVos's Due Process

The Editorial

## Phillips: The Democratic Party's Billion-Dollar Mistake

Steve Phillips

Predictably, African-American turnout plummeted. According to new census data, 59.6 percent of eligible black voters cast ballots last year, down from the 66 percent who voted in 2012. The problem cannot simply be attributed to the absence of Mr. Obama on the ticket: A slightly higher percentage of black voters, 60 percent, turned out for John Kerry in 2004, than cast ballots last year. In Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, the tens of thousands of African-Americans who voted in 2012 but didn't vote in 2016 far exceeded the minuscule losing margins for Hillary Clinton.

Nonetheless, Democrats seem to be doubling down on their 2016 strategy. In January, the Senate Democratic Caucus trooped to West Virginia for its annual retreat. According to published reports, the senators heard from panels of voters who had once voted for Mr. Obama but then chose Donald Trump.

The Democratic National Committee's "Unity Tour," featuring the committee chairman, Thomas Perez, and Senator Bernie Sanders, included visits to overwhelmingly white states like Kentucky, Maine, Nebraska and Utah. Meanwhile, African-American women — who voted at a rate of 94 percent for Mrs. Clinton last year, the party's most loyal voting bloc — had to write a letter to Mr. Perez

demanding time and attention.

In Georgia's Sixth Congressional District special election last month, the Democratic nominee, Jon Ossoff, raised a record \$23 million and spent dollar after dollar to cast himself as a moderate in a failed attempt to appeal to Republican voters.

The Democratic Party's fixation on pursuing those who voted for Mr. Trump is a fool's errand because it's trying to fix the wrong problem. Although some Democratic voters (in particular, white working-class voters in Rust Belt states) probably did swing to the Republicans, the bigger problem was the large number of what I call "Obama-Johnstein" voters — people who supported Mr. Obama in 2012 but then voted for Gary Johnson, the Libertarian candidate, or Jill Stein, the Green Party candidate, last year (according to the exit polls, 43 percent of them were nonwhite).

In Wisconsin, for example, the Democratic vote total dropped by nearly 235,000, while Mr. Trump got only about the same number of votes as Mr. Romney in 2012. The bigger surge in that state was for Mr. Johnson and Ms. Stein, who together won about 110,000 additional votes than the candidates of their respective parties had received in 2012. And in Michigan, which Mrs. Clinton lost by fewer than 11,000 votes, the Johnson-

Stein parties' total increased by about 202,000 votes over 2012.

The Democratic Party committees and its allies are likely to spend more than \$750 million on the 2018 midterms. Will they spend it fruitlessly trying to lure Trump voters, or will they give uninspired black Democrats a reason to vote and offer disaffected Obama-Johnstein voters a reason to return to the fold?

Democrats have an opportunity in 2018 because of the significant enthusiasm gap between the parties. By concentrating their firepower on inspiring, organizing and mobilizing people who voted for Hillary Clinton to vote again in 2018, Democrats can take back the House and also win the governor's office in six key states — Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin — for a fraction of their \$750 million budget, less than \$100 million.

In the congressional special elections and primaries for governor this year, just 39 percent of the Republicans who voted in the 2016 presidential election came back out to vote this year, while 57 percent of Democratic voters returned to the polls. That's a normal pattern for midterm elections: The in-power party almost always sees a sizable drop-off in enthusiasm.

Too many Democrats sit out midterm elections (in 2014, drop-off was slightly over 40 percent). Those infrequent but Democratic voters hold the key to the balance of power in America. Democrats need to pick up 24 seats to take control of the House, and there are 28 Republican-held seats in districts Hillary Clinton won or nearly won. If Republican turnout drops by the 36 percent that it did the last time a Republican held the White House, Democrats need to get 951,000 drop-offs to vote again in those 28 districts. Civic engagement experts have found that an effective canvassing and mobilization program costs about \$50 per infrequent voter who actually casts a ballot.

By that metric, it would cost \$47.6 million to get enough infrequent voters to the polls in the 28 congressional districts that will determine which party holds the House. In the six battleground-state contests for governors, the cost to bring out the necessary number of infrequent voters is \$42.1 million.

The country is under conservative assault because Democrats mistakenly sought support from conservative white working-class voters susceptible to racially charged appeals. Replicating that strategy would be another catastrophic blunder.



## Milbank: Democrats finally have an agenda. Here's what it looks like.

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

6-7 minutes

"The Democrats," Vice President Pence said recently, "have already settled on their agenda, and it can be summed up in one word: resist."

He isn't the only one with that view of Democrats. In the latest Washington Post-ABC News poll, only 37 percent of Americans think the Democratic Party "stands for something," while 52 percent say it "just stands against Trump."

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the House Democrats' campaign arm, seemed to admit as much two weeks ago when it sent supporters an email with the proposed slogan: "Democrats 2018: Have you seen the other guys?"

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Now Democrats are trying to fix that — and not a moment too soon.

On Monday, I am told, congressional Democrats — in the Senate and the House together — will roll out a legislative policy agenda, their de facto 2018 campaign platform. The details, after months of haggling and cat-herding, could yet disappoint, but the broad outlines as described to me are exactly what the doctor ordered.

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer promised Democrats will fight Republicans' proposed health-care bill on June 27 at the Capitol. Schumer on health care: 'We're going to fight the bill tooth and nail' (Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

(Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

As important as what's in it is what's not. Democrats jettisoned social and foreign policy issues for this exercise, eschewing the identity politics and box-checking that has plagued Democratic campaigns in the past, most recently Hillary

Clinton's. This will be purely an economic message.

They also resisted invitations to steer the party toward the center (as pollster Mark Penn advised) or in a more progressive agenda. This is meant to be a populist manifesto that doesn't conform to the left/right debate but instead aims to align Democrats with ordinary, middle-class Americans fighting powerful special interests.

Titled "A Better Deal: Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Wages," it is expected to have many Democratic staples — tax increases on the rich, affordable college, infrastructure spending, higher wages, job training, paid family leave and the like — and a few new ones.

Hashed out over several months by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (N.Y.) and Sen. Chris Van Hollen (Md.), with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (Calif.), DCCC Chairman Ben Ray Lujan (N.M.), and Reps. Hakeem Jeffries (N.Y.), Cheri Bustos (Ill.) and David Cicilline (R.I.), it will be outlined Monday with a few sample proposals, to be followed in the coming weeks by more proposals,

some to be introduced as legislation and some to be offered as Contract With America-style promises that a Democratic Congress would implement. Schumer told me in December that Democrats would have "five, six sharp-edged [policies] that can be described in five words," although it sounds as if the plan hasn't come out quite so lean.

The goal is to avoid repeating Clinton's problem in 2016. She had so many proposals, and she scratched the itches of so many Democratic constituencies, that she lacked a coherent economic message. The full-throated populist agenda should also make it harder for President Trump to claim that he is the one fighting special interests, which he did to great effect against Clinton.

Democrats have been little but the anti-Trump party lately, successfully fighting his legislative agenda, particularly health care, and raising a ruckus about the Russia scandal and Trump's other outrages. The danger is that an impression solidifies among voters that the party has nothing else to say.

As if to illustrate the point, 23 liberal House Democrats announced Wednesday morning that they were filing a “resolution of no confidence” in Trump. It contains no fewer than 88 “whereas” clauses (whereas “the embassy of Kuwait held its national day celebration at Trump International,” and whereas “Trump referred to United States Senator Elizabeth Warren as ‘Pocahontas’”). The idea might work — if Democrats had a majority

and if the United States had a parliamentary system.

A reporter asked Rep. Steve Cohen (Tenn.), sponsor of the no-confidence resolution, if he was focusing too much on Trump over jobs. “Bubble-gum chew and walk at the same time,” he recommended.

Except Democrats haven’t been doing both. Some think they don’t have to, because polls show that voters prefer a Democratic Congress. But as The Post’s Mike

DeBonis and Emily Guskin point out, more Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (65 percent) say they will definitely vote next year than Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (57 percent). To boost Democratic turnout, the party needs to be more than just anti-Trump.

Even if it doesn’t help their electoral prospects, Democrats need a clear agenda so they can govern if they do win. If they win without a sharp agenda, they would end up where

congressional Republicans are now: in power but without a popular mandate for their agenda.

On Wednesday, I asked Rep. Linda Sánchez (Calif.), the No. 5 Democrat in the House, about the search for a unified agenda, and she bristled. “We’re not *searching* for an agenda,” she replied. “Democrats have always known what we stood for.”

They just did a really good job of keeping it under wraps.



## Klain : The one area where Trump has been wildly successful

By Ronald A. Klain

13-16 minutes

Progressives breathed a sigh of relief recently when Justice Anthony M. Kennedy decided to remain on the Supreme Court for presumably at least one more year. But no matter how long Kennedy stays, a massive transformation is underway in how our fundamental rights are defined by the federal judiciary. For while President Trump is incompetent at countless aspects of his job, he is proving wildly successful in one respect: naming youthful conservative nominees to the federal bench in record-setting numbers.

Trump’s predecessors all slowly ramped up their judicial nominations during their first six months in office. Ronald Reagan named Sandra Day O’Connor to the Supreme Court and made five lower-court nominations in that period; George H.W. Bush made four lower-court nominations; Bill Clinton named Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the high court but no lower-court judges; and George W. Bush named four lower-court judges who were processed by the Senate (plus more than a dozen others sent back to him and later renominated). The most successful early actor, Barack Obama, named Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court and nine lower-court judges who were confirmed.

What about Trump? He not only put Neil M. Gorsuch in the Supreme Court vacancy created by Merrick Garland’s blocked confirmation, but he also selected 27 lower-court judges as of mid-July. Twenty-seven! That’s three times Obama’s total and more

than double the totals of Reagan, Bush 41 and Clinton — combined. For the Courts of Appeals — the final authority for 95 percent of federal cases — no president before Trump named more than three judges whose nominations were processed in his first six months; Trump has named nine. Trump is on pace to more than double the number of federal judges nominated by any president in his first year.

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Moreover, Trump’s picks are astoundingly young. Obama’s early Court of Appeals nominees averaged age 55; Trump’s nine picks average 48. That means, on average, Trump’s appellate court nominees will sit through nearly two more presidential terms than Obama’s. Many of Trump’s judicial nominees will be deciding the scope of our civil liberties and the shape of civil rights laws in the year 2050 — and beyond.

How conservative are Trump’s picks? Dubbed “polemicists in robes” in a headline on a piece by Slate’s Dahlia Lithwick, Trump’s nominees are strikingly ... Trumpian. One Trump nominee blogged that Kennedy was a “judicial prostitute” for trying to find a middle ground on the court, and said that he “strongly disagree[d]” with the court’s decision striking down prosecution of gay people under sodomy laws. Another equated the Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v. Wade*, upholding a woman’s right to choose to have an abortion, to the court’s 19th-century *Dred Scott* finding that black people could not be U.S. citizens. Another advocated an

Alabama law that denied counsel to death-row inmates.

Progressives who are increasingly counting on the federal courts to be a bulwark against Trump’s initiatives will increasingly find those courts stocked with judges picked by, and in sync with, Trump. With federal judges serving for life, one might think that the process of dramatically changing the makeup of the federal judiciary would take a long time. But given Trump’s unprecedented pace, in just one more year, one-eighth of all cases filed in federal court will be heard by a judge he appointed.

With the abolition of the filibuster, Trump’s nominees need only the votes of Republican senators to win confirmation. Yes, if Kennedy resigns and Trump nominates someone who might overturn *Roe v. Wade*, pro-choice Republicans could balk; and a few of Trump’s most outrageous lower-court nominations might be unnerving enough to attract GOP opposition. But the reality is that most of Trump’s rapid-fire, right-wing, youthful lower-court nominations are poised to make it to the bench.

What can Democrats do?

First, they need to contest every procedural change the Republicans are making to speed Trump’s nominees. Republican leaders are threatening to curtail “blue slip” rights that allow senators to block unacceptable home-state nominees; Trump is nominating candidates before they are reviewed by the American Bar Association; Judiciary Committee Republicans are arguing that nominees’ writings, legal representations and public statements are irrelevant to confirmation. Democrats should

oppose these changes in the process — and, if they lose these fights, insist that any new laxity should apply when a future Democratic president sends nominees to the Senate.

Second, Democrats need to overcome their historic unease about working closely with progressive legal groups. The pace and conservatism of Trump’s judicial nominees reflect his close alliance with a conservative group, the Federalist Society. But in the past, Democrats in the White House and on Capitol Hill have been reluctant to form a similar alliance with the Federalist Society’s progressive counterpart, the American Constitution Society, to identify potential judicial nominees. (Disclosure: I have long been active in the ACS.) When the Democrats regain control over the nomination or confirmation process, they need to be as enthusiastic about working with the ACS and other progressive groups as Republicans have been about their alliance with the Federalist Society.

And finally, nothing is more important than taking back the Senate in 2018. The only thing that can stop the Trump train of judicial transformation is a Senate Judiciary Committee in Democratic hands. Absent that, the next two generations of Americans will live under laws interpreted by hundreds of judges picked by the president with the greatest disdain for the rule of law in our history.

Ronald A. Klain, a Post contributing columnist, served as a senior White House aide to both Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton and was a senior adviser to Hillary Clinton’s 2016 campaign.



## Will : What is the future of the Air Force?

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

5-7 minutes

MONTGOMERY, Ala.

It is said that America’s armed forces have been stressed by 16 years of constant warfare, the longest such in the nation’s history.

For the Air Force, however, the high tempo of combat operations began 26 years ago, with enforcement of no-fly zones in Iraq after Desert

Storm. With an acute pilot shortage, particularly in the fighter pilot community, and with a shortfall approaching 4,000 among maintenance and staffing personnel, the service is, as Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson says, “too small for what the nation expects of it.”

At the Air University here at Maxwell Air Force Base, officers are studying what expectations are reasonable.

Technological sophistication — America’s and that of near-peer adversaries (Russia and China) — is changing capabilities. This, and the political and military primitivism of some adversaries (e.g., the Islamic State), is reshaping the environment in which air power operates, and the purposes of this power. The traditional U.S. approach to warfare — dominance achieved by mass of force produced by the nation’s industrial might — is of limited relevance.

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Lt. Gen. Steven L. Kwast, president of the Air University, recalls that Gen. George Marshall, who in 1939

became Army chief of staff, asked a two-star general in the horse cavalry how he planned to adapt to the challenges of tanks and planes. The two-star, who replied that the horses should be carried to the front in trailers so they would arrive rested, was retired in 1942.

Kwast notes that in 1940 the Navy was preparing to devote most of its budget to building the sort of battleships that had been “kings of the sea” since President Theodore Roosevelt sent the Great White Fleet around the world. After Pearl Harbor, the Navy turned toward aircraft carriers and away from big battleships. Twenty years earlier, Gen. Billy Mitchell had used an airplane to sink a battleship, but changing the trajectory of military thinking, and hence procurement, often requires changing a service’s viscous culture.

Kwast wonders: What are the horses and battleships of our age? Some say: aircraft carriers, because they are too vulnerable to long-range weapons and too expensive for the budget constraints of America’s entitlement state. Also, some say, remotely piloted aircraft, a.k.a. drones, flown from, say, Nevada are many times cheaper than most manned aircraft and are

capable of loitering over a contested area to conduct “find, fix, finish” missions for up to 48 hours without refueling.

When military air power was born a century ago, just before World War I, the hope was that it would save casualties by preventing what that war quickly became, a slog of attrition. But in World War II, air power was used to attack civilians in order to destroy morale and damage the enemy’s capacity to wage industrial-era war. Now, says Kwast, war is shaped by the digital networked age, when power does not flow in industrial-age channels. U.S. forces can spend millions to kill one high-value target in Syria, where the enemy, for a few hundred dollars, can recruit 10 men who flow up from entry-level positions.

Only the United States has the capacity to be, as retired Adm. Gary Roughead and Kori Schake say in a Brookings Institution study, “guarantors of the global commons — the seaways and airways, and now the cyber conduits.” Nuclear weapons are still essentially a 70-year-old technology delivered by a 60-year-old technology, ballistic missiles. Before long there will be space-based sensors and directed-energy (DE) weapons — war at the

speed of light, 186,000 miles a second. It is preferable to shoot down an enemy’s cruise missiles, which cost a few hundred thousand dollars, with space-, ground- and sea-based DE weapons rather than with defensive missile interceptors costing up to \$20 million apiece.

The Air University’s military intellectuals are impressive enough to be forgiven for using “architect” as a verb: Hitler was defeated using great violence, but it would be better to architect responses to threats by projecting power in ways that are less expensive and much more efficient than even today’s precision-guided weapons — never mind World War II gravity bombs, 80 percent of which fell at least 1,000 feet from their targets.

Viewed from the not-too-distant future, Kwast says, today’s Air Force, although it is a century distant from the Flanders trenches, might seem to have dug into the equivalent of trench warfare by operating below the altitude of 70,000 feet. Such thoughts are considered here at a university where “trigger warnings” and “safe spaces” are serious matters.



## Clement: I’m a scientist. I’m blowing the whistle on the Trump administration.

By Joel Clement

6-8 minutes

On July 19, the former top climate policy official at the Department of Interior filed a complaint and a whistleblower disclosure form with the Office of Special Counsel. The official, Joel Clement, says the Trump administration is threatening public health and safety by trying to silence scientists like him. On July 19, former top climate policy official at the Department of Interior Joel Clement, filed a complaint and a whistleblower disclosure form. (Adriana Usero, Kate Woodsome/The Washington Post)

(Adriana Usero, Kate Woodsome/The Washington Post)

By Joel Clement July 19 at 4:10 PM

*Joel Clement was director of the Office of Policy Analysis at the U.S. Interior Department until last week. He is now a senior adviser at the department’s Office of Natural Resources Revenue.*

I am not a member of the deep state. I am not big government.

I am a scientist, a policy expert, a civil servant and a worried citizen.

Reluctantly, as of today, I am also a whistleblower on an administration that chooses silence over science.

Nearly seven years ago, I came to work for the Interior Department, where, among other things, I’ve helped endangered communities in Alaska prepare for and adapt to a changing climate. But on June 15, I was one of about 50 senior department employees who received letters informing us of involuntary reassignments. Citing a need to “improve talent development, mission delivery and collaboration,” the letter informed me that I was reassigned to an unrelated job in the accounting office that collects royalty checks from fossil fuel companies.

Evening Edition newsletter

The day’s most important stories.

I am not an accountant — but you don’t have to be one to see that the administration’s excuse for a reassignment such as mine doesn’t add up. A few days after my reassignment, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke testified before Congress that the department would use reassignments as part of its effort to eliminate employees; the only reasonable inference from that testimony is that he expects people

to quit in response to undesirable transfers. Some of my colleagues are being relocated across the country, at taxpayer expense, to serve in equally ill-fitting jobs.

I believe I was retaliated against for speaking out publicly about the dangers that climate change poses to Alaska Native communities. During the months preceding my reassignment, I raised the issue with White House officials, senior Interior officials and the international community, most recently at a U.N. conference in June. It is clear to me that the administration was so uncomfortable with this work, and my disclosures, that I was reassigned with the intent to coerce me into leaving the federal government.

On Wednesday, I filed two forms — a complaint and a disclosure of information — with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel. I filed the disclosure because eliminating my role coordinating federal engagement and leaving my former position empty exacerbate the already significant threat to the health and the safety of certain Alaska Native communities. I filed the complaint because the Trump administration clearly retaliated against me for raising awareness of

this danger. Our country values the safety of our citizens, and federal employees who disclose threats to health and safety are protected from reprisal by the Whistleblower Protection Act and Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act.

Removing a civil servant from his area of expertise and putting him in a job where he’s not needed and his experience is not relevant is a colossal waste of taxpayer dollars. Much more distressing, though, is what this charade means for American livelihoods. The Alaska Native villages of Kivalina, Shishmaref and Shaktolik are perilously close to melting into the Arctic Ocean. In a region that is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet, the land upon which citizens’ homes and schools stand is newly vulnerable to storms, floods and waves. As permafrost melts and protective sea ice recedes, these Alaska Native villages are one superstorm from being washed away, displacing hundreds of Americans and potentially costing lives. The members of these communities could soon become refugees in their own country.

Alaska’s elected officials know climate change presents a real risk to these communities. Gov. Bill

Walker (I) and Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R) have been sounding the alarm and scrambling for resources to help these villages. But to stave off a life-threatening situation, Alaska needs the help of a fully engaged federal government. Washington cannot turn its back.

While I have given small amounts to Democratic candidates in the past, I have no problem whatsoever working for a Republican administration. I believe that



## Editorial : Trump's 'Made in America' spin manufactured in fantasyland

The Editorial Board, USA TODAY

4-5 minutes

President Donald Trump hosted a 'Made in America' product showcase at the White House on Monday, an event that celebrated American-made products, according to the administration. AP

### Push is a bit like the promotion of healthy foods in the Obama administration: Our view

President Trump in a firetruck at the White House on July 17, 2017. (Photo: Michael Reynolds, epa)

Welcome to "Made in America Week," the White House effort to celebrate domestic products.

Perhaps this is a brilliant ruse to obscure the fact that virtually none of the clothing lines, fashion accessories or home décor items marketed by either Donald Trump or



## Navarro : Donald Trump: Made in America presidency

Peter Navarro  
Published 5:36 p.m. ET July 19, 2017 | Updated 6:53 p.m. ET July 19, 2017

3 minutes

President Donald Trump hosted a 'Made in America' product showcase at the White House on Monday, an event that celebrated American-made products, according to the administration. AP

### This will be truly a Made in America presidency: Opposing view

President Trump introduces products made in America on July 17, 2017. (Photo: Michael Reynolds, epa)

The cynics criticizing "Made in America" show just how out of touch they are with the challenges

every president, regardless of party, has the right and responsibility to implement his policies. But that is not what is happening here. Putting citizens in harm's way isn't the president's right. Silencing civil servants, stifling science, squandering taxpayer money and spurning communities in the face of imminent danger have never made America great.

Now that I have filed with the Office of Special Counsel, it is my hope that it will do a thorough

his daughter Ivanka is actually — well, you know — made in America.

Or perhaps it is an oversight that will only cast more light on the aforementioned outsourcing.

With President Trump, you never know. Seemingly oblivious to the irony, he has spent the week gamely promoting U.S.-made products ranging from horseshoes to firetrucks to guitars.

Made in America Week follows the same general approach of President Ford's WIN buttons (snappy little red-and-white fashion items that stood for "Whip Inflation Now"). They both confront a complex problem that presidents have little control over with a campaign that pretends to be doing something about it.

Fact is, American manufacturing employment has been battered by powerful forces of technology and globalization. And any free and prosperous country with an economy based on consumption

confronting American workers and manufacturers.

Since 2000, the year before China entered the World Trade Organization, the United States has lost more than 60,000 factories — not jobs, entire factories.

President Trump has been hard at work to save our jobs and revive manufacturing.

He signed an executive order targeting the abusive use of waivers and exceptions to "Buy American" laws, which are meant to prioritize U.S. government spending on American companies, and we are already seeing strong results.

He signed an executive order promoting more flexible apprenticeships to fully equip our workers for the jobs of the future. Around the country, companies are

investigation into the Interior Department's actions. Our country protects those who seek to inform others about dangers to American lives. The threat to these Alaska Native communities is not theoretical. This is not a policy debate. Retaliation against me for those disclosures is unlawful.

Let's be honest: The Trump administration didn't think my years of science and policy experience were better suited to accounts receivable. It sidelined me in the

is going to support a healthy dose of imports.

Absent tax code changes that encourage consumers to save and invest, the push for Made in America is a bit like the promotion of healthy foods in the Obama administration. Yes, Americans should eat better. And, yes, it is a good thing to buy American. But people don't like lectures on what they consume. And they don't like being told to buy something that might be more expensive, especially if they are struggling to make ends meet.

In some ways, Trump's little bit of ceremony is worse than prior ones because it provides justification for his misguided environmental and trade policies, most notably his decisions to withdraw from the Paris climate accord and the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The first of these actions is based on the fallacy that American

responding by dramatically boosting their workforce training initiatives.

### OUR VIEW:

President Trump's decision to withdraw from the disastrous Paris climate accord will save the U.S. economy an estimated 6.5 million industrial-sector jobs, and his regulatory rollbacks have already saved more than \$60 billion in unnecessary costs for American companies.

He has unleashed America's energy potential — a great boon for American manufacturers and consumers. And employment in the coal industry is up, contrary to the cynics' forecast.

He has empowered the Department of Homeland Security to enforce our laws to put the needs of American workers first. We are finally on a path to collect the import duties we

hope that I would be quiet or quit. Born and raised in Maine, I was taught to work hard and speak truth to power. Trump and Zinke might kick me out of my office, but they can't keep me from speaking out. They might refuse to respond to the reality of climate change, but their abuse of power cannot go unanswered.

companies would hire significantly more workers if they were just allowed to pollute more. Actually, pulling out of the Paris Agreement will do far more to stir resentment of America in potential export markets than it will to create jobs at home.

The second is a more complex matter. But compared with previous trade deals, the TPP has less to do with manufacturing than it does with financial services, copyright protection, pharmaceuticals and high-tech. By pulling out, the United States has hampered some of its most promising export industries while encouraging Asian nations to seek their own agreements with China.

But far be it from us to spoil the fun. It's Made in America Week, so let's all celebrate. Might we suggest a nice Asian-made necktie from the Donald J. Trump collection?

are owed, and we are working to ensure that counterfeiters and pirates cannot smuggle their goods into our markets.

Finally, President Trump has withdrawn from the job-killing Trans-Pacific Partnership and instructed the U.S. trade representative to improve our trade deals with the NAFTA region and South Korea. Our trading partners are on notice that the president will approve deals only if they are good for American workers.

This is "Made in America Week," and the president's actions have already shown that this will be truly a Made in America presidency.

*Peter Navarro is director of the White House National Trade Council.*



# Senator Tammy Duckworth: Trump is derelict in his duty

Tammy Duckworth

6-7 minutes

## Story highlights

- Tammy Duckworth: In and out of uniform, I've always held a deep -- nonpartisan -- concern for the security of our country
- That concern is why I am so appalled that our commander in chief refuses to recognize that Russia is working against us

Tammy Duckworth is a Democratic senator from Illinois. She is an Iraq War veteran, Purple Heart recipient, and former assistant secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs under the Obama administration. The views expressed in this commentary are solely those of the author.

(CNN)When I enlisted in the United States Armed Forces in 1992, I swore an oath — the same oath members of my family dating back to the Revolution had sworn — to protect and defend our Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic and to "bear true faith and allegiance to the same." I also pledged to follow the orders of the officers appointed above me, as well as the President of the United States.

In 2004, I lost my legs fighting in a war with which I disagreed, and following orders from a President for whom I did not vote.

That oath, this country and its institutions meant more to me than any political party could, and they still do. It didn't matter who occupied the Oval Office.

I retired from military service in 2014, but during my 23 years, I regularly trained and participated in exercises to keep our military prepared to fight at the Fulda Gap. That area in Germany is

one of the avenues of approach

that the former USSR would likely have used to launch a kinetic strike (a military strike involving lethal force) against the West. Nearly all Americans who've served in the last 50 years have taken part in similar exercises, because our military leaders — and commanders in chief from both political parties — recognized the threats posed to our country by the Soviet Union's, and later Russia's, expansionist desires.

When I enlisted in the 1990s, our main security concerns with the USSR were the threat of ground invasion of our allies in Europe, and the threat their stockpile of nuclear weapons posed to our own nation. After the demise of the USSR and its Cold War ideological struggle with democratic nations, former KGB officer Vladimir Putin has shifted Russia's focus toward espionage, hacking and cracking, and destabilizing democracies to support the expansionist goals of their country, and personal profit for their leaders. The wolf may put on slightly different clothing, but it is still a wolf. Russia is not our friend.

This past January, I swore a slightly different oath and began my first term in the United States Senate. That oath still includes defending the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Whether in or out of uniform, I've always held a deep concern for the security and safety of our country—and it's never been partisan. That concern is why I was flying that Blackhawk over Iraq in 2004, and it's why as a US senator I am so appalled that after our nation's voting system

came under cyberattack

by Russia, a known adversary, the commander in chief is derelict in his duty to recognize definitively that Russia is working against us.

After one of the the most blatant attacks on our democracy to date, he has taken no steps to punish Putin and protect the nation. Despite the fact that defense and intelligence experts agree that Russian hacking and meddling present a clear and present danger, our commander in chief continues to deny the evidence,

takes Putin's word

as more credible than all our national intelligence agencies combined, and

refuses to even admit

directly that Russia is responsible for meddling in our elections.

For a full year, candidate and then President Trump and his team have denied any connection or collusion between his campaign and the Russian government, all while failing to do anything to counter their persistent attacks against our democracy, our electoral institutions and our nation's standing in the world.

Instead, he honored Russia's foreign minister with a private Oval Office meeting where he

reportedly

disclosed highly sensitive intelligence and put lives in danger. His administration is also working

behind the scenes

to weaken a Russian and Iran sanctions bill that the Senate passed with overwhelming support. Just last weekend, he bizarrely

suggested

partnering with the Russians on a so-called "cybersecurity unit" to protect America from election hacking, and then abruptly took it back.

Last week, we learned the President's closest advisers and his son knowingly and gleefully sought help from people they thought were Russian government officials who were trying to interfere in our election. President Trump is now changing his tune

and claiming,

"Most people would have taken that meeting." Note his language; he refers to a potentially traitorous act with the business euphemism "taking a meeting" and he doesn't claim that it was legal or the right thing to do. He only gives his opinion that most people would do it.

I would not do it. My moral compass tells me that such a thing is wrong. I do not believe that most American people would do it, either.

The President has also stated that there is nothing wrong with his son's actions because "nothing happened from the meeting" -- in other words, he didn't get any good dirt on Hillary Clinton out of it. That's a peculiar defense that rings as hollow as a bank robber pleading his innocence because the teller didn't happen to have any money in the till. It doesn't even pass the laugh test.

Some things must rise above petty partisanship. All Americans should be unified against foreign attempts to influence our government. And every American should expect their commander in chief to put this nation's security above personal, financial, or political gain. Sadly, it seems one of the few people who disagrees is the man who currently sits at the Resolute Desk.