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# FRANCE - EUROPE

**The  
New York  
Times**

## France Plans to End Sales of Gas and Diesel Cars by 2040

Jack Ewing

France is joining a growing movement to force the extinction of vehicles that run on fossil fuels, saying on Thursday that it would aim to end the sale of gasoline and diesel cars by 2040.

The target is less ambitious than ones set by countries like Norway and India. Still, coming from a major car-producing country, France's declaration gave additional momentum to efforts to fight climate change and urban smog by promoting the use of electric cars.

The timing of the announcement was also significant, a day after the automaker Volvo said it would phase out the internal combustion engine, and during a visit to Europe by President Trump. The announcement by Nicolas Hulot, the French environment minister, was an expression of European leaders' determination to pursue an environmental agenda despite Mr. Trump's repudiation of the Paris agreement on climate change.

"It's a very difficult objective," Mr. Hulot said Thursday. "But the solutions are there."

The plan to phase out gasoline and diesel cars is part of a broader effort by France to limit global warming, which Mr. Hulot outlined Thursday. The country will also stop issuing new oil and gas exploration permits this year, and stop using coal to produce electricity by 2022, he said.

Mr. Hulot's statement was the latest sign that the century-long reign of the internal combustion engine may be slowly coming to an end.

On Wednesday, Volvo said that all of its new models beginning in 2019 would be either battery-powered cars or hybrids that combined electric motors with diesel or gasoline engines.

The company, based in Sweden, said it will not introduce any new designs powered solely by conventional internal combustion engines — a first for a major carmaker. Mr. Hulot referred to Volvo's announcement during his remarks in Paris on Thursday.

There was no immediate reaction to the government's statement from France's two major carmakers, Renault and the PSA Group, which makes Peugeot and Citroën cars.

Renault began selling battery-powered cars in 2011, and was among the first major carmakers to do so.

While electric cars still only amount to a sliver of the market, sales have been growing fast. Renault sold 17,000 of its battery powered Zoe compact cars in the first six months of 2017, almost as many as in all of 2016.

France faced some criticism that its plan was not ambitious enough. Norway plans to sell only electric cars starting in 2025, and India plans to do so in 2030.

Since cars usually last about 15 years, France's target means that gasoline and diesel cars would be on the road until 2055. That is too long to meet France's own climate change goals, said Greg Archer, director of clean vehicles at Transport & Environment, an advocacy group in Brussels.

But Mr. Archer added that France's move "is absolutely the right direction to be taking."

Such an expression of government resolve can prompt companies to devote more resources to

developing electric vehicles, and encourage investors to put money into clean transportation start-ups. France's move could also put pressure on Germany and other European countries to promote electric vehicles.

Mr. Archer said, though, that it was essential for France to follow up with incentives and regulations that encouraged the use of electric cars. Mr. Hulot gave no specifics about how the government planned to meet its target.

The German government originally planned to put one million electric vehicles on the country's roads by 2020, but has admitted it will fall far short of that goal. The government was slow to offer financial incentives and build public charging stations.

"It's great to have a vision," Mr. Archer said. "We have to now see the policies put in place to deliver on that vision."

**The  
New York  
Times**

## When the Tour de France Comes to Town

Andrew Keh

**NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES, France** — The women were crouched on the sidewalk early Monday morning, their eyes narrowed in concentration. The four of them, retirees with salt-and-pepper hair, worked quickly, pulling colorful T-shirt shapes from shopping bags and stringing them along the metal railing that lined the street.

Each mock shirt had been crafted of brightly colored yarn to resemble one of the iconic jerseys of the Tour de France: yellow, green, white and even one with red polka dots. The women have made more than 400 of them since January, and now, with a stage of the famed cycling race set to finish in their town Friday afternoon, it was finally time to put them on display.

"We're proud of our work," said Jocelyn Finck, 62, a retired nurse. Finck had organized the "yarn-bombing" project as the head of the Renewal Club, a social group in this small village just south of the

eastern city of Dijon. "We're proud of ourselves."

About 250 cities and towns, most in France but some abroad, raise their hands each year for the opportunity to welcome a stage of the three-week, 2,200-mile Tour de France. Following an idiosyncratic and largely secretive planning process, the Amaury Sport Organization (A.S.O.), which owns and operates the race, selects around 40 of them for the task every year.

Some cities and villages are regulars; the Tour finishes in Paris every year, and Pau, strategically located in the Pyrenees, and Alpe d'Huez, an iconic climb, are mainstays. But a few, like Nuits-Saint-Georges, have never been on the route, and for these locales, the honor of inclusion on the exclusive list offers short- and long-term benefits thought to be well worth the considerable expense and prodigious effort required to secure and accommodate the race.

The Tour, which has been staged since 1903, features 10 first-time

cities and towns this year. One of the first on the route is Nuits-Saint-Georges, about 100 miles north of Lyon, and closer to Switzerland's capital, Bern, than it is to France's. Its 5,600 or so inhabitants reside at the foot of a tree-dotted span of hills whose rich soil produces some of the world's most delicious wines.

The Tour's seventh stage, a mostly flat trip from Troyes, will end here. So over the last week, the town's picturesque streets underwent a festive metamorphosis, as local government officials, business owners and enthusiastic residents came together to prepare for the tens of thousands of guests expected to arrive on Friday. As they saw it, they had one day to leave a lasting, positive impression, to maximize their rare moment in the international spotlight.

To that end, the sexagenarian yarn-bombers worked diligently on Monday under an increasingly hot sun. Midway through the morning, a Peugeot minivan swerved to the curb and slowed for a moment. The

driver poked his head out the window. It was the town's mayor, Alain Cartron.

"Oh, this is very pretty," Cartron said. "Nice job, ladies."

For Cartron, who was born in Nuits-Saint-Georges and became its mayor in 2008 after a 34-year career in the French army, the arrival of the race will signal the conclusion of a process that, in his view, began more than six years ago.

On March 8, 2011, Nuits-Saint-Georges played host to a stage of the Paris-Nice, a shorter race also managed by A.S.O. That night, Cartron, members of the town council, and prominent local business owners descended to the cellar beneath the mayor's office for a dinner with A.S.O. officials. For several hours, the group luxuriated over classic Burgundian plates and bottles of local pinot noir and chardonnay. The atmosphere was jovial: At one point, Philippe Gavignet, a council member and winemaker, stood before the group to introduce one of his own bottles.

"My wine, it's like me: round," he declared as he cradled his belly.

Amid the merriment, the locals sensed an opportunity to plant the seeds for something bigger. Yvan Dufouleur, 52, a prominent local winemaker, was seated at the same table as Christian Prudhomme, the general director of A.S.O. since 2007. As they chatted, Dufouleur, an avid cyclist, mentioned to Prudhomme that he wished the Tour de France could come through Nuits-Saint-Georges one day.

"We need to study this on our end, and I promise we'll do what we can," Prudhomme replied, according to Dufouleur. "If you do all you can on your end, I promise that you'll get this."

The men shook hands, but there was a long way to go.

Prudhomme, 56, makes the final decision on the route personally each year, with input from his organization's sports officials. Aside from a few certainties — climbing stages in the Alps and the Pyrenees and the finish in Paris — the race's structure allows for considerable flexibility. In an email, Prudhomme said his broad aims were to visit each region of France at least once every five years and to chart a course that is aesthetically pleasing but also physically and intellectually challenging, so that teams feel encouraged to employ interesting tactics.

Officials from A.S.O. are famously secretive as they move around France evaluating potential sites. In the years after the group dinner in 2011, Cartron kept his eye out for clues that Nuits-Saint-George might be under consideration. He

convinced himself, for instance, that every stranger in town driving a Skoda — a car company that sponsors the race — was a Tour official on a clandestine scouting assignment.

But Cartron also gently worked on Prudhomme, giving him periodic calls, writing him official proposal letters and sending him Christmas cards with pictures of the town. Finally, last spring, Cartron received a call from Prudhomme, who asked if he was still interested in having the Tour. Cartron said yes, and to his surprise, Prudhomme told him there was an A.S.O. official already waiting in town, ready to discuss the project.

Prudhomme said the factors in picking Nuits-Saint-Georges included the local officials' enthusiasm, the town's accessibility to roadways, and the existing brand recognition from the local wine industry.

"The name of the city, world famous, lent the Tour a certain grandeur," he said.

Towns pay fees to A.S.O. for the opportunity to host — 60,000 euros (about \$68,000) for a start and €110,000 for a finish, according to Prudhomme — but they commonly expect to make back around three to six times their investment. Cartron said the total outlay for the Nuits-Saint-Georges project this year has been 180,000 euros — just over \$200,000. Much of the money came from the regional government.

Arguably more important than the immediate economic bump is the global marketing potential. Television viewership over the three-week race numbers in the

billions — with glamorous footage from the ground and air broadcast to 190 countries worldwide — and hundreds of journalists follow the race from stage to stage, and town to town.

"Having a tour stage is probably the best publicity you can do for a small town," said Andy Schleck, a former Tour de France winner whose hometown, Mondorf-les-Bains, Luxembourg, was another first-time host this year, handling the start of the fourth stage earlier this week. (Incidentally, Schleck said that the riders might be the only people involved who are utterly indifferent, or oblivious, to the host locales. He recently watched footage from the 2011 race. "All that beautiful scenery," he said. "I don't remember seeing any of that.")

Down in Nuits-Saint-Georges, the yarn-bombing ladies took Tuesday off — they had plans, they said, to meet for wine and frog legs — but were back at work Wednesday decorating signposts, trash bins and trees around town.

Each day brought some new decorative flourish: colorful wreaths, painted storefronts, bicycles artistically draped in flowers or hung from apartment windows. An intern at the town's tourism office spent a full day blowing up balloons as she attended to visitors.

The outlook from local businesses ranged from skeptical to cautiously hopeful; either way, they prepared to seize the opportunity. The bakers at Boulangerie Pâtisserie Saint Georges planned to start baguette production at 1 a.m. on Friday. Nathalie Meyers, 52, the owner of the Ascott Pub, said she would open her bar at 8 a.m., nine hours earlier

than usual, and guessed she could make a little less than half her normal monthly revenue in the one day.

The mayor's office asked the wineries to keep their tasting rooms open late into the night.

"We get publicity for the town, it gets publicity for the region, and of course, for the Nuits-Saint-Georges brand," said Dufouleur, who noted, too, that fans of cycling were not necessarily connoisseurs of wine.

The pieces of the infrastructural puzzle were being fitted together up to the last minute.

Earlier this year, the town repaved the road on the route's final straightaway and renovated some of the subterranean waterworks. With terrorist attacks recently in the news, Cartron, the mayor, attended regional security briefings every few weeks over the last year. Nuits-Saint-Georges, like other stage hosts, planned to have increased safeguards, like stone traffic barricades for its plazas.

The final steps — the installation of fencing, the erection of the finish line and podiums, the wiring for the media center — were to be completed around dawn on Friday. Hours later, the race and its accompanying horde would transform the town's little streets. Nuits-Saint-George has been preparing for this moment for years — and hopes it will benefit the town for years to come.

"It's not good if they come just one day for the Tour de France," Cartron said. "They have to want to come back."

**The  
New York  
Times**

## As E.U. and Japan Strengthen Trade Ties, U.S. Risks Losing Its Voice (UNE)

Peter S. Goodman

LONDON — In the master plan advanced by President Trump, an unabashedly aggressive United States is supposed to reclaim its rightful perch as the center of the commercial universe, wielding its economic dominance to dictate the rules of global trade.

As it turns out, the rest of the planet has its own ideas.

Major economies show no inclination to accept American designs on trade — an attitude on display on Thursday as the European Union and Japan agreed to the broad outlines of a free trade deal before a summit meeting of world leaders. If completed, the deal would further the exchange of goods

and services between their two markets while, in relative terms, diminishing opportunities for American companies.

These two trading powers, both bedrock American allies, are effectively proceeding with plans to bolster globalization just as the United States is turning to protectionism. Large areas of the global economy are now on divergent paths, creating more uncertainty for multinational companies.

Last fall, Canada and the European Union struck a mammoth trade deal, establishing the rules for a significant chunk of commerce across the Atlantic. The bloc's latest deal tethers its fortunes closer to

Asia and to Japan, which has the world's third-largest economy.

By contrast, the United States debates the merits of erecting a wall along its southern border, argues about the legality of barring immigrants from several predominantly Muslim nations, and contemplates imposing tariffs on steel imports.

"We were able to demonstrate a strong political will to the effect that Japan and the E.U. will hoist the flag of free trade high amidst protectionist trends," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan said at a news conference in Brussels announcing the agreement. "This is an achievement we should be proud of which also sends a strong message to the world."

The European Union and Japan are placing a bet on global integration as a source of enhanced prosperity — economic ties that come with geopolitical benefits.

For Japan, the deal would strengthen its relationship with Europe and reinforce economic links in an era in which Tokyo is obsessed with adjusting to China's rise as a global commercial power. Japan is particularly eager to forge stronger alliances as protection against China's naval-backed territorial claims.

For the European Union, the deal reinforces the power of its single marketplace stretching from Ireland to Greece while delivering proof of its global aspirations. This, just as Europe contends with Britain



abandoning the bloc in a step that will diminish its size.

In simple economic terms, the new deal could deliver considerable punch, laying down common rules aimed at promoting Japanese investment in Europe. The pact also explicitly affirms the Paris climate accord, which Mr. Trump recently shunned.

It is expected to bolster sales in Europe for Japanese carmakers like Honda and Toyota, while enabling European agricultural industries to sell more products in Japan. Tokyo is also likely to make it easier for European companies to bid for major government contracts, potentially giving an edge to industrial giants like Siemens of Germany and Alstom of France.

The deal “sends a very powerful signal to the rest of the world that Japan and the E.U. are partners, are friends, are allies and we want to stand up together to defend free and fair and sustainable trade in a climate where that is not taken for granted,” said Cecilia Malmstrom, the European trade commissioner.

As Mr. Trump has pressed his “America First” mantra, he has consistently pointed to trade agreements when decrying what he sees as his country’s unenviable status as the suckers in the global economy. In this spirit, he pulled the United States out of a sprawling trans-Pacific trade agreement forged by President Barack Obama. He has begun renegotiating the terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement linking the United States, Canada and Mexico. He has even

suggested that he might revoke American participation in the World Trade Organization.

This week, Mr. Trump deployed his favorite bully pulpit, Twitter, to issue a broadside against American trade deals.

To the Trump administration, the United States is best served by striking bilateral trade arrangements, which are confined to two participants. With the world’s largest economy, the United States owns the advantage in any such deal, enabling Washington to demand favorable terms.

“They see bilateral deals as a way for us to bully other countries,” said Chad P. Bown, a trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

In taking this approach, the United States risks having less of a voice in the global trade discussion as other economies take their own paths.

Japan, for example, has long lavished extraordinary protections on its farmers, walling off dairy in particular from international competition.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership — the giant trade deal that Mr. Trump renounced — would have forced Japan to open its market to agricultural imports, probably increasing sales of American goods in Japan. Now, Europe will have the edge, since Japan is expected to lower tariffs on European cheese like Gouda from the Netherlands.

An analysis from the London School of Economics concluded that the

United States was in a far stronger position than Europe to exploit the Pacific deal by selling more wares in Japan. The United States has a far more developed commercial relationship with Japan, selling nearly \$108 billion worth of goods and services to the Asian nation last year. By contrast, Europe sent goods and services worth 58 billion euros, or about \$66 billion, to Japan.

“I’m not sure that they understand that when two other countries have a free-trade agreement and we don’t have one with either country, that’s bad for us,” said Mr. Bown, the trade expert. “Our companies are now discriminated against.”

If Mr. Trump makes good on his protectionist threats, the United States could also find itself on difficult geopolitical ground.

As Europe and Japan were working on their deal, the Trump administration was weighing plans to slap punitive tariffs on imports of steel by citing a threat to national security.

By political designs, that step would seem to be aimed squarely at China, whose prodigious production of steel has flooded global markets with cheap product, bringing howls of protest from competitors around the world.

But much of the steel China sends to the United States is already limited by tariffs and other barriers invoked under W.T.O. rules, which allow countries to protect their industries from a surge of low-cost imports. The real impact of across-the-board tariffs would be likely to hit

other nations that export steel, among them Germany, Japan and South Korea.

In citing threats to national security to justify tariffs — widely viewed as a nuclear option within the context of trade — the Trump administration heightens the sense that it does not respect rules or international agreements.

Not that the rest of the world is waiting for Mr. Trump to gain an appreciation for global commerce. Other nations are going about their business to the exclusion of the United States.

In Asia, China is advocating the formation of a regional trade bloc that has been positioned as a competitor to the Trans-Pacific deal. The deal would encompass 16 countries, including Japan, a group accounting for around 40 percent of the world’s population.

In Europe, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany appears increasingly receptive to overtures from the new French president, Emmanuel Macron, for coordinated economic policies aimed at accelerating the integration of Europe. This process is gaining momentum as Europe absorbs Mr. Trump’s recasting of American policy with a singular focus on its own interests.

“We, as the European Union, firmly believe in the political purpose of a world which is built on openness, cooperation and trade,” Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, said on Thursday.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Japan, European Union Strike New Trade Deal

Laurence Norman and Emre Peker in Brussels and Alastair Gale in Tokyo

BRUSSELS—Japan and the European Union agreed on the terms of a new trade deal, hours before U.S. President Donald Trump was expected to clash with them and other world officials over how global trade works.

Thursday’s announcement is a fresh sign of major global powers responding to Mr. Trump’s “America First” policies. If approved, the pact would represent a significant opening of the once heavily protected Japanese market. Japan is seeking to pursue new export opportunities following Mr. Trump’s withdrawal from the pending Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, which now has 11 countries.

Mr. Trump arrived on Thursday in Hamburg, Germany, for a meeting

of the Group of 20 major economies, where differing views on trade are likely to loom large.

With €125 billion (\$142 billion) of exports and imports in 2016, an EU-Japan trade deal would be one of the most significant the bloc has reached. Officials have said it could eventually knock an annual €1 billion off customs duties.

Negotiations have taken four years and significant hurdles remain. Still, leaders on both sides hailed the deal, which they hope will take effect in two years, as a blow to protectionism.

“Some are saying the time of isolationism and disintegration is coming again, we are demonstrating that this is not the case,” European Council President Donald Tusk said at a media conference.

Negotiators must still agree how to resolve disputes that arise after the

pact is launched and create a mechanism for protecting investments. Months of work are needed to complete detailed legal texts and ratify any deal in Europe and Japan.

Meanwhile, domestic opposition is rising against the pact, which addresses tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade, such as regulations.

However, negotiators recently resolved some of the thorniest issues, revolving around the auto and dairy industries, helped by top-level political encouragement.

Not all details of the deal are completed and public yet, but Japanese auto makers stand to gain from the eventual elimination of import tariffs ranging from 10% to 22%, although a safeguard clause is built in to allow tariffs to snap back if Japan restores non-tariff barriers to European exports. Tokyo would

harmonize its regulatory standards with the EU.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called the deal “a major pillar in our economic growth under Abenomics,” referring to his domestic economic platform. European companies are expected to see a significant boost in agricultural and food product sales, despite longstanding political sensitivities about the sector in Japan. Tokyo has committed to lift most, but not all, tariffs on key EU exports like pig meat, cheese and wines, although in some cases, the transition periods are as long as 15 years.

Before Mr. Abe’s election as prime minister in 2012, Tokyo had shown little interest in free-trade talks with major economic powers, reflecting strong domestic resistance to opening up markets such as agriculture.

But as Japan's economy faced headwinds from persistent deflation, a declining birthrate and an aging population, Mr. Abe looked to improve foreign market access for Japanese companies, as well as seeking competition from imports as a way to drive reform of inefficient industries.

Emboldened by a strong mandate for economic reform, Mr. Abe drove Japan's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, seen as key to increasing exports to the U.S., Japan's largest overseas market. Once Mr. Trump abandoned the

deal, Japan gave the EU agreement priority. Earlier in 2017, Tokyo dispatched officials to reignite negotiation, with an eye on Mr. Abe's visit to Europe for the G-20 meeting as the finish line.

Still, a disagreement over dispute arbitration and protection for investors could derail the pact. Japanese officials were also cautious Thursday about committing to an early-2019 deal, which coincides with Britain's planned exit from the EU. Japanese officials acknowledged Britain's exit from the bloc could cause further

complications, potentially requiring some renegotiation of low-tariff quotas.

Political hurdles are also likely. In Japan, politicians want the government to ensure local producers of pork, wood and dairy products are able to compete against European rivals.

European concerns range from preventing the sale of illegal logging products to protecting the car sector. Depending on the final details, the agreement could need ratifying by all 28 member states plus the European Parliament, exposing the

agreement to the kind of delays the EU's Canada trade deal experienced because of opposition in Belgium's regional Wallonia parliament.

Separately Thursday, the EU and Japan issued a statement condemning North Korea's recent nuclear and ballistic missiles tests. They called for the swift enactment of a new United Nations Security Council resolution restricting Pyongyang's access to products, technologies and funding for its missile program.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Japan and Europe counter Trump with colossal trade deal

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on July 6 that the new trade deal with the European Union shows "a strong political will" that "will hoist the flag of free trade high amidst this protectionist trend." (Reuters)

Thirty years ago, as Donald Trump gave what is widely considered to be the first campaign speech of his career, he criticized one country above all for cheating the United States in trade: Japan.

On Thursday, Japan took on the mantle of the global rules-based trading system, as it sidestepped a failing trade agreement with the United States to forge a historic new pact with the European Union.

Leaders from Japan and the European Union on Thursday announced their agreement on the broad strokes of a trade deal that will cover nearly 30 percent of the global economy, 10 percent of the world's population and 40 percent of global trade.

Wonkbook newsletter

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If the nations agree to the terms, the deal will create a trading bloc roughly the same size as that established by the North American Free Trade Agreement, a 1994 deal between the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Coming on the eve of the Group of 20 meeting of global leaders in Hamburg, the announcement appeared to be a calculated rebuke of both the United States, which has spurned global trade agreements in favor of more protectionist policies under President Trump, and Britain,

which voted to leave the European Union last year.

Shinzo Abe, the prime minister of Japan, greeted the announcement as "the birth of the world's largest free advanced industrialized economic zone."

"Japan and the European Union will hoist the flag of free trade high amidst protectionist trends," Abe said in a news conference Thursday.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, said the agreement "shows that closing ourselves off from the world is not good for business, nor for the global economy, nor for workers. As far as we are concerned, there is no protection in protectionism."

Japan and the European Union announced a broad trade deal that will cover nearly 30 percent of the global economy on July 6, sending a signal against President Trump's protectionist trade policies. Leaders from Japan and the European Union announced a broad trade deal that will cover nearly 30 percent of the global economy on July 6. (Reuters)

Japan and the European Union announced a broad trade deal that will cover nearly 30 percent of the global economy on July 6, sending a signal against President Trump's protectionist trade policies. (Reuters)

The deal would lower trade barriers for a sweeping array of products, including pork, wine, cheese and automobiles. The pact would also protect so-called "geographical indications" — products that derive their identity by being produced only in a specific region, like champagne or parmesan.

In a news conference Thursday, Juncker said that more than 90 percent of European exports to Japan would have freer terms of trade under the deal.

The pact would be a heavy blow to American producers of these goods, by making U.S.-made goods relatively more expensive and less competitive in the major markets of Japan and Europe.

Because it contains a clause in which both sides review the issue of data privacy, the pact could eventually run counter to the interests of major U.S. technology companies and other multinationals, said Matthew Goodman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. In past trade agreements, these companies have argued for the ability to freely move and store data around the world.

Talks over the deal have stretched over more than four years, in part because Japan was more focused on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a 12-country trade deal that included the United States. But after Trump's election last year, negotiations between Japan and Europe accelerated, as the countries saw that the United States might take a new posture on trade, said Goodman.

President Trump signed an executive order formally withdrawing the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, an order establishing a federal hiring freeze and a third order reinstating the "Mexico City policy," on Jan. 23 at the White House. Trump signs orders on TPP, federal hiring freeze, 'Mexico City policy' (Reuters)

President Trump signed an executive order formally withdrawing the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, an order establishing a federal hiring freeze and a third order reinstating the "Mexico City policy," on Jan. 23 at the White House. (Reuters)

On his third day in office, Trump officially withdrew the United States from negotiations for the TPP. It was a blow to Abe and his party, who

had invested much political capital in pushing the Pacific agreement forward.

On Thursday, Abe said that he would continue to push ahead with TPP negotiations without the United States in meetings with the remaining 11 countries next week, and that he would continue to try to persuade Trump of the TPP's importance.

Trump has accused China, Germany, Japan, South Korea and other countries of cheating on agreements with Washington and exporting more to the United States than they import from it. "The United States made some of the worst Trade Deals in world history. Why should we continue these deals with countries that do not help us?" Trump tweeted Wednesday.

The deal suggests that other countries are responding to the Trump administration's protectionist rhetoric not by following suit, but by seeking other efforts at globalization and cooperation, said Chad Bown, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"These countries are now looking for an alternative path, given what's happened with the Trump administration," said Bown.

Europe and Japan have agreed to their trade deal only "in principle," meaning they concur on its broad outlines. As such, the deal could still founder because of internal political opposition. At the news conference, Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, said the countries were aiming to bring the deal into force in early 2019.

*Correction: A previous version stated the deal contained firmer protections for data privacy. The deal contains a review clause where the parties will review the issue after three years.*

## Editorial : The Japan-EU Trade Warning

Japanese and European Union leaders on Thursday announced an agreement in principle to remove tariffs on 99% of goods as well as other barriers to trade. While it will be phased in over many years and some obstacles remain, the deal overcomes Japan's reluctance to open its market to food products as well as Europe's resistance to a free market for Japanese cars. Some have dubbed the deal "cars for cheese," but its effects will be more far-reaching than bilateral trade.

In particular it contains a message for Donald Trump, who pulled the U.S. out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal with Japan and 10 other Pacific nations and has halted negotiations with Europe on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Trade will go on around the world whether or not the U.S. decides to participate. Had the U.S. remained in the Pacific pact, American farmers and other

exporters could have enjoyed the increased sales to Japan that are now on offer to Europeans.

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration is considering punitive tariffs on imported steel and other products under an obscure provision of a 1962 law. This could lead to tit-for-tat sanctions against American exporters, tie up the U.S. in cases at the World Trade Organization and make it more difficult to secure the opening of foreign markets to American goods.

If the U.S. continues on this protectionist path while the rest of the world pursues far-reaching trade deals, the effects are predictable. American exporters will have to pay more for their materials and face higher barriers abroad than their competitors. Consumers will pay higher prices. This will cost American jobs and reduce incomes.

The Trump Administration says it still plans to pursue bilateral trade

deals, which is in keeping with the President's transactional view of diplomacy. But this may prove difficult if the U.S. is simultaneously raising tariffs and defending WTO cases brought by trading partners.

The U.S. will pay a steeper price if trade blocs such as TPP proceed without America and forge links with other regions. While other countries' firms will benefit from new multilateral rules, U.S. companies will have to navigate what Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati calls a "spaghetti bowl" of rules under bilateral agreements.

For instance, a preferential tariff on a particular product may only be available if the exporter can show that a certain percentage of the content was made in that country. The bureaucratic complications mean that many companies don't even apply to use the benefits offered under bilateral deals, and it may mean U.S. companies with

global customers must move plants out of America to stay competitive.

That's why multilateral agreements are key to the formation of the complex supply chains trading the components that make up most consumer goods. The Japan-EU deal is still bilateral, but it could become the basis for more deals that exclude the U.S. If Washington cedes trade leadership, it risks being left behind as other countries set the rules and expand trade among themselves.

The irony is that the productivity of American manufacturers leads the world, and employment is rebounding. At a moment when U.S. firms could grow their exports, the Trump Administration is burning bridges. The EU-Japan deal is a warning that others will take up trade leadership and capture the prosperity that Americans should enjoy.

## Schenker : Euro Shorts Better Give Up Before It's Too Late

Jason Schenker

The euro has had an impressive rally since mid-April, including a surge last week that took it to its highest level against the dollar since May 2016. The logical question now is whether the run is over, especially after the currency's softness this week in the face of some strong euro-zone economic data. Based on market fundamentals that have led analysts to rethink their pessimistic views and technicals that convey corporate hedging strategies, the euro is likely to strengthen further.

Fundamentals have been supportive for the euro since the beginning of 2017, when many analysts were calling for the currency to weaken to parity with the dollar. Currently, the euro-area inflation rate is 1.3 percent, but it was around 2 percent for a few months earlier this year. And growth in the euro zone looks strong, with the Ifo index, a leading indicator of overall German GDP, rising to an all-time high in June. Plus, the euro-zone manufacturing purchasing managers index, which is a critical leading indicator of growth, rose in June to the highest level since April 2011. The June reading also showed a 48th monthly consecutive expansion.

So, despite the schadenfreude shorts that U.S.

traders have had on the euro, the euro-zone economy has now expanded for four full years, without a single monthly contraction. As a point of contrast, the last time the U.S. ISM manufacturing index contracted was less than a year ago, in August. And there have been contractions in six of the last 24 months for that indicator.

The euro-zone economy looks good, and the European Central Bank should be thinking about when it needs to become less accommodative -- and when it needs to raise policy rates. Unlike the Federal Reserve, the ECB hasn't even started yet. With ongoing ECB monthly net asset purchases of 60 billion euros and its policy rate levels (including a negative deposit facility rate), the ECB has a much longer way to go in terms of becoming full-on hawkish.

As for trading technicals, they have also been painting a bullish picture for the euro since the beginning of the year. In fact, there's been an unbroken trend of higher lows and higher highs since December 2016. Critical trading technicals, including the stochastic, relative strength index, on balance volume, and the critical 30-day and 100-day moving averages have been flashing an

unmistakable buy signal to foreign-exchange markets.

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The trend of higher lows also should reflect something important: inherently risk-averse corporate risk managers -- rather than traders -- may be sending the euro higher. After each missed opportunity to hedge at low prices, a pattern of consecutively higher lows has formed since January. Of course, in the current rising trend since January, the euro has fallen, but when it has fallen, it hasn't gotten back down to a previous low. And so, a pattern of higher lows has been formed.

This could reflect corporate hedging, as companies with risk exposures are more likely to follow a market when it rises because they are exposed to risks that they do not want to own. For example, delaying putting a hedge in place in a rising market in the hopes that the market falls does not offer big monetary rewards to someone in a corporate risk function, but it could present career risk. And so, risk managers may be more willing to chase a

market with buy orders at increasingly higher levels, which can allow a support of higher lows to develop, driving the market even higher. This could certainly explain part of the euro trend of higher lows that we have seen so far this year.

Beyond bullish fundamentals and technicals, dollar bears are now almost extinct. This was not the case even a few months ago. As of the end of December, 16 out of 91 forecasters surveyed by Bloomberg expected the euro to fall to dollar parity or lower this year, and it was a fairly reputable cast of characters, too. The most recent survey showed just two still see parity. That's a big change, and it reflects a major shift in the directional bias of the euro trade. The downside isn't the biggest risk to the euro anymore. Instead, it may be the upside.

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## Who Dictates Global Bond Yields? Europe for Now

Richard Barley

Bond investors, look to Europe. The delicate dance of expectations



between the European Central Bank and government-bond markets is the biggest driver of yields right now.

Ten-year German bond yields Thursday broke decisively above 0.5% for the first time since January 2016, extending a selloff that started with a speech from ECB President Mario Draghi last week that seemed to surprise investors.

What happens in Germany matters immensely to U.S. markets at the moment, as the trans-Atlantic bond trade rebalances. The move in Germany once again pushed

Treasury yields higher and lifted the euro against the dollar, while weighing on stocks.

It now seems likely that bonds were mispriced before Mr. Draghi's speech. The minutes of the ECB's June meeting, published Thursday, show policy makers increasingly confident in the growth outlook and perplexed why stocks, but not bonds, reflected that in their pricing.

The minutes show policy makers also wondering if they should change their guidance on bond purchases, which still suggests the

ECB stands ready to buy more bonds if needed. In the end they decided only to change the guidance on interest rates, dropping a reference to the possibility of rates going lower. But further steps, including scaling back the commitment to bond purchases, could clearly be in the cards, although the ECB remains worried that "even small and incremental changes in the communication could be misperceived."

That sums up the challenge for the second half of the year. The ECB and counterparts at the U.S. Federal

Reserve clearly don't want to shock markets. But the big picture is that bond markets that have relied upon price-insensitive central-bank buying will have less support if the ECB moves to slow its purchases, the Bank of Japan continues to buy less than expected, and the Fed starts selling its holdings.

Central bankers are likely to continue to stress they are moving very gradually. But markets may find it difficult to move as slowly as central bankers might like.

**THE WALL  
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Verlaine

## U.K. Firms Offered Sweeteners as They Shop for Post-Brexit Homes

Max Colchester

and Julia-Ambra

LONDON—Regulators and government officials across Europe are trying to lure London finance companies ahead of Brexit, sparking a continentwide backroom bidding war.

The sweeteners range from the promise of cheap rents to protection of bankers' bonuses. "It's like an auction," says a lawyer advising several finance companies on their Brexit plans. The jockeying is fostering tension among European regulators and raising concerns that risk is being siphoned unchecked into the trade bloc.

Take Lloyd's of London Ltd. One of the world's oldest insurance markets, Lloyd's needed a Continental base so its members could sell to European Union clients after Brexit. It explored Ireland, the Netherlands and Luxembourg as part of its hunt for a European home before settling on Belgium.

Part of the attraction: Belgian law allowed for a structure that would minimize disruption post-Brexit. Lloyd's was given permission to reinsure all the business done on the Continent back to London—a move some other European regulators deemed too risky. That means Lloyd's likely won't need to park hundreds of staffers in its new Belgian unit, officials say.

"Not everyone was willing to allow this," says Inga Beale, Lloyd's of London's chief executive. A Belgian official said the structure adheres to EU-wide rules and is based on existing Belgian laws.

In Brussels, the export agency points also firms to consultants who advise on ways to reduce the country's nearly

70% tax on cash bonuses, officials said. Belgium isn't alone in making life simpler for incoming financiers. The Dutch central bank recently posted an explainer on its website outlining how bankers can circumvent the country's 20% cap on bonus payments. In Vienna, officials discussed giving the European Banking Authority a rent-free office if the regulatory agency decamped there from London, according to people familiar with the matter.

Still, the efforts are raising eyebrows. Around the time insurer American International Group Inc. chose to set up a subsidiary in Luxembourg in March, aggrieved Irish officials complained to European authorities that some countries weren't playing fair, people familiar with the matter say. European officials responded by saying EU laws should be applied consistently across the region and, in some instances, releasing nonbinding guidelines for regulators on handling financial firms moving from the U.K. to stay in the bloc's single market.

The EU's financial sector is governed by a series of continentwide guidelines. But the patchwork of national authorities still has significant leeway to interpret their own rules. Danièle Nouy, who chairs the European Central Bank's supervisory arm, said in a speech last month she was concerned lenders "may exploit supervisory loopholes by carrying out banklike activities" by operating through foreign branches or broker dealers, "which are not supervised at euro-area level, but rather at national level."

A key issue is how much EU and national regulators will allow companies to keep operations in the U.K. while selling products to

European clients. Lloyd's of London, founded in a London coffee shop in the 17th century, doesn't have a major outpost in Europe, but will likely need one after Brexit so that members using the market can sell policies to European clients.

But picking up and moving can be messy and expensive, so Lloyd's had a key demand for prospective nations: Underwriters should remain based in London—an important ask given the EU accounts for 11%, or £2.93 billion (\$3.8 billion), of Lloyd's gross written insurance premiums. Lloyd's also wanted to keep as many back-office staffers in its headquarters as possible.

This setup could be done by creating an entity that reinsures all of Lloyd's European business back into the U.K. EU rules give discretion to individual countries on how much reinsurance they allow. But not all regulators are comfortable with having 100% of business shifted through a subsidiary.

There is a risk that if Lloyd's got into trouble, its EU entity would be on the hook to reimburse European policyholders without the funds to pay for it. Irish authorities told Lloyd's they would only allow 90% of business to be reinsured out of the country, according to people familiar with the matter. U.K. regulators wouldn't normally allow more than 50% of business to be reinsured to a foreign entity, says Hilary Evenett, a London-based partner at law firm Clifford Chance who specializes in insurance.

Beyond the reinsurance allowance, Brussels had other advantages. One of the Lloyd's executives leading the search, a Belgian native, knew the city well. The city is a two-hour train ride from London and home to influential European policy makers.

Language was also a factor; the Belgian regulator, which juggles news releases in French, Dutch, and English, said it would supervise Lloyd's in English.

The Belgian finance ministry saw Lloyd's as a juicy prize. If the company set up in Brussels, they guessed several insurance firms would likely follow, according to a person familiar with the central bank's thinking.

Belgian officials say by shifting the risk back to London they are minimizing their exposure to future problems. Regulators there also initially agreed to let Lloyd's keep most back office workers in London during the transition. There will be about 20 staffers in Brussels and others in branches throughout Europe.

The Belgian central bank has been in touch with the U.K.'s regulator, the Prudential Regulation Authority, and is planning to arrange joint supervision of Lloyd's. The Lloyd's Brussels office, which hasn't yet been granted its license, is expected to be operational by mid-2018, so it can write insurance contracts starting Jan. 1, 2019.

Soon after Lloyd's announced the deal, Irish officials asked some at the Belgian central bank how they snared the insurance market, according to people familiar with the matter. "We indeed have the feeling that we will have to defend ourselves," says one Belgian official.

But luring Lloyd's is already paying off for Belgium. Two other insurance companies have approached the regulator; one has already officially filed for a license, according to a person familiar with the matter.

**Bloomberg**

## Editorial : Britain Isn't Greece, Prime Minister

Britain's

government isn't due to announce a

new budget until the autumn, but

debate is already raging over public-



sector pay. With Brexit bearing down, the embattled prime minister, Theresa May, will have to choose between making another embarrassing U-turn and defending a policy that is both unpopular and unnecessary.

Sadly for May, the U-turn makes better sense.

For years it was an article of faith among Britain's Conservatives that the budget deficit had to be eliminated -- by 2020, if not yesterday. Some Tories are now ready to abandon that line of thinking; others still hold the principle, if not the timetable, sacrosanct.

Speaking in Parliament on Wednesday, May came down firmly on the side of austerity: Greece shows you where fiscal indiscipline leads, she argued. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was unmoved. He

decried the "low-wage epidemic" and argued that the 1 percent cap on increases in public-sector wages should be removed.

Corbyn has a point. Britain's workers are getting squeezed, especially in the public sector, thanks to rising inflation caused in part by the Brexit-induced fall in sterling. But he's wrong to look at wages in isolation. Public-sector pay is only one of many claims on the government's budget. The National Health Service, for instance, is in a state of permanent crisis; spending on care for the elderly and other needs is woefully inadequate. The list of other worthy expenditures is endless. Trying to meet all such claims would indeed be a formula for fiscal collapse.

The government has to prioritize. Where higher wages are needed to recruit and retain workers for essential services, raise them.

Where additional public spending is needed to provide vital infrastructure, spur productivity, and support growth, make the investment. In such cases, higher taxes and/or higher public borrowing can be justified. If caps and ceilings are used in a way that makes this necessary flexibility impossible -- not as emergency measures, moreover, but as a system of long-term control -- they'll do more harm than good.

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May's embrace of blanket austerity, by the way, is bad politics as well as bad economics. Most British voters have forgotten, or never experienced, the ruinous consequences of profligate public spending. That's why Corbyn's expansive promises are more

popular than you might expect -- and why there'll be greater support for fiscal control if it's seen to be smart and discriminating, rather than an act of blind ideological faith.

To be sure, the timing for a change of fiscal strategy is hardly propitious. Brexit has alarmed investors, giving the government less room for maneuver. Even so, the government shouldn't be paralyzed -- and shouldn't argue that cautious flexibility would make the country another Greece. That line won't fly. Targeted spending to improve vital services and drive future growth is good policy, and Britain's best buffer against the perils ahead.

--Editors: Therese Raphael, Clive Crook



## Krauss : Italy's Bank Bailout Serves German Interests Too

Melvyn Krauss

As Europe's politicians digest the lessons from Italy's recent 17 billion euro (\$19.34 billion) bailout of two Venetian banks, two schools of opinion have emerged. The majority view is that the bailout, while less than ideal, at least brought greater financial stability to Italy.

Italians themselves seem pleased with the outcome. So far there has been no great taxpayer outcry, a sign that the Italian public is ready to pay a price for returning stability and confidence to the country's banking system. Further evidence that Italian taxpayers are willing to pay up for bank stability is the injection of 5.4 billion euros in Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena, a transaction that was approved this week by European Union officials.

And then there is the German view. German politicians appear to be competing with one another over who can sound the most outraged. An ally of Angela Merkel, Markus Ferber, claimed that the promise of no taxpayer money for failing banks has been broken for good.

Not to be outdone, a prominent Social Democrat, Carsten Schneider, warned that the bailout undermines the

completion of the banking union -- which has no taxpayer bailouts as one of its pillars -- and pushes back the common deposit guarantee scheme.

The German view is shortsighted and for the most part guided by pre-election posturing. It has been clear for some time now that without adequate growth, Italy's non-performing loan crisis would require public intervention. Persisting with the fiction that there was a private sector solution to the Venetian banks' troubles made the eventual bailout costlier and more dangerous than it had to be. But it would have been worse still had the government of Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni, with the acquiescence of the European Commission and regulators, not found a way to sidestep the EU's unrealistic rules prohibiting state aid.

Though there were disagreements over the prospect of contagion given the small size of the banks, the Italian government, the Commission and some within the ECB clearly felt the risk that it might impact other bank bonds, or even Italian sovereign debt, was still too big and dangerous to ignore.

Moreover, the bailouts buy time for economic growth -- the real cure for the NPL problem -- to pick up in Italy. The wait may not be long. Last month the IMF revised its 2017 economic growth forecast for Italy to 1.3 percent gross domestic product from 0.8 percent. Confindustria, the Italian employer federation, last week increased its 2018 growth forecast to 1.1 percent from 1.0 percent. But even those forecasts might have been jeopardized had the distressed Venetian banks been left to fester.

The growth numbers are still too low to fully dispel the risk that Italy's NPL problem will prove an economic drag. And Rome cannot rescue bigger banks the same way; only robust growth of, say, 2 percent to 2.5 percent per year can hope to make a real dent in the NPL problem given the fact that many of the NPL are in obsolete industries like clothing and textiles for which growth is largely irrelevant. Private capital inflow into the banks is still required to finance the write down of these loans which often are carried on the banks books at inflated prices.

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Still, the rescue encourages a more stable, growth-oriented Italian economy, and that is to Germany's benefit too -- especially since a more settled banking situation in Italy is likely to speed the process of bringing the tighter monetary policy favored by Germany itself and other northern economies. The ECB's asset purchase program has hurt pension funds and pensioners in the Netherlands and is generally regarded in Germany as a subsidy to southern countries that are undisciplined in their public spending. But the ECB would find it hard to take measures that might be destabilizing for so important a euro-zone member as Italy.

Whatever they may say in public, one suspects that even the Germans don't see Italy's bailouts as all bad.

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## Trump Hails Poland as a Beacon of Freedom. Rights Groups Beg to Differ.

Megan Specia

President Trump praised Poland's democratic values in a speech on Thursday and lauded the country as a beacon.

"I am here today not just to visit an old ally, but to hold it up as an example for others who seek freedom," Mr. Trump told a crowd in Warsaw.

Not everyone agrees. Since Poland's conservative Law and Justice Party came to power in 2015, the country has been criticized by international organizations over measures that

they say undermine freedom. Here are some of their concerns:

### Judicial independence

Shortly after the Law and Justice Party assumed power, it took

several steps to gain more control over the nation's Constitutional Tribunal. It appointed more judges aligned with the party to the court, limited the court's ability to overturn new laws and made it possible for the government to appoint the country's top prosecutor directly.

The European Union's executive arm has begun an inquiry into the judicial measures over concerns that they violate the bloc's rules.

#### Press freedom

The new government moved swiftly in 2015 to replace the management at state-run television and radio

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Anton Troianovski

HAMBURG, Germany—The U.S. president has accused her of ruining Germany. The Turkish president says she harbors terrorists. The Russian president, her spy agencies warn, may be about to interfere in her reelection campaign. In the coming days, German Chancellor Angela Merkel meets all three of them

In Hamburg, her birthplace, the 62-year-old pastor's daughter hosts the Group of 20 summit thrust into a role no German chancellor has had to navigate in the postwar era. The leader of a country that generally disdains international confrontation is now the foil to three of the world's most polarizing heads of state. Three countries that Germany had prized as partners have, in different ways and to varying degrees, become antagonists.

"The world is turbulent," Ms. Merkel said in a speech to parliament last week. "It has become less united."

Germany, with its export-oriented businesses and its bloody past, long shied away from global power struggles or military engagements and instead sought to build deep ties with a variety of states. Like no other country, German officials often say, Europe's largest economy relies on a harmonious, rules-based world order.

But at the two-day gathering in Hamburg, which officially begins Friday, global disunity that has been years in the making will become personified. Ms. Merkel will be in the middle of it, and her patient, deliberate style of diplomacy will be

outlets, and it then passed a law giving itself direct control over the hiring and firing of executives of state news media.

More recently, it has discussed plans to restrict foreign investment in privately run Polish media companies and "repolonize" the industry.

"The Polish government's attacks on the media are attacks on liberal democracy," said Michael J. Abramowitz, the president of Freedom House, an organization that monitors press freedom around the world. The group said that

put to the test.

U.S. President Donald Trump, whom she met Thursday evening, castigated Ms. Merkel for her refugee policy during the election campaign. He is threatening to slap tariffs on German steel exports and has undermined one of Ms. Merkel's top priorities by exiting the Paris climate accord. After the meeting, a spokesman for her said the two had spent an hour discussing G-20 issues and foreign crises.

Then she sat down with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who said this week that "Germany is committing suicide" by not allowing him to deliver a speech to his countrymen on the sidelines of the summit. Later on, she will join French President Emmanuel Macron to face Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose annexation of Crimea three years ago now looks like the opening act in Europe's era of geopolitical instability.

German lawmaker Cem Özdemir of the opposition Greens, recently referred to Messrs. Trump, Putin, and Erdogan as "the new authoritarian axis of testosterone." But Ms. Merkel plays down the personal contrasts.

"Even if likability perhaps doesn't come on a silver platter, I have the responsibility to take care of things and to try to understand the person, the partner, across from me," the chancellor said in an interview with women's magazine Brigitte last week.

In dealing with difficult counterparts, people who have worked with her say, Ms. Merkel, a trained physicist,

legislative, political and economic means were all being used to "stifle the media and limit dissent."

#### Women's rights

The government has come under fire for legislation aimed at women, especially a 2016 bill to ban nearly all abortions in the country. The bill failed after thousands of people protested in 90 Polish cities.

Last month, the government passed a bill requiring a prescription for the morning-after pill for emergency contraception, which had been available over the counter to any woman over the age of 15. The

health minister cited concerns about harmful health effects, even though the World Health Organization says the pill poses little to no risk.

"Restricting access to the 'morning-after pill' will have devastating consequences for women and girls living in a country which already has some of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe," Anna Blus of Amnesty International said in a statement.

## Merkel's Patient Diplomacy Is Tested by Trump and Putin's 'Axis of Testosterone'

can be relentless in presenting her demands and the facts to back up her point of view. She is also willing to listen through sometimes angry monologues and to seek compromise to inch toward a solution, they say. The approach means that even adversarial leaders are willing to engage with her, analysts say, though it opens her up to criticism for being soft.

"She knows exactly what she wants, but because of her relatively quiet and mediating manner, it doesn't come across as very threatening," said Claudia Major at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. "Much of Germany's increased power, or responsibility, in recent years was extremely well framed by Merkel's calm and measured demeanor."

That was her approach as she led the West's response to the Ukraine crisis, holding dozens of phone calls and meetings with Mr. Putin in which she repeatedly confronted him with evidence of Russian intervention in Ukraine while taking in his frustration over an alleged Western plot against Russia. Her government is now girding for possible Russian interference ahead of the Sept. 24 national election, and German intelligence officials say that the same suspected Russian hackers who stole Democrats' emails in the U.S. campaign broke into the German parliament's network in 2015.

"I don't count myself as a fearful person," Ms. Merkel said when asked about Russian hacking at a news conference alongside Mr. Putin in May.

Amid growing tensions with Mr. Erdogan, Ms. Merkel is also banking on repetition—stating over and over, for instance, that an imprisoned Turkish-German journalist, Deniz Yücel, needs to be set free because Turkey's terror charges against him are without merit.

"The fact that Ms. Merkel placed the saving of a terror suspect on the agenda was something I found very, very peculiar," Mr. Erdogan told Germany's Die Zeit newspaper in an interview published this week.

With Mr. Trump, she tried to lay out facts to convince him of the merits of open markets when the two met in March, bringing German CEOs to the White House to underline her country's investment in the U.S. But she has sounded increasingly disappointed with the U.S. president's moves. In the Brigitte interview, she cited an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal by two Trump aides as evidence that Mr. Trump sees globalization as a zero-sum gain, not a "win-win" opportunity.

"President Trump was certainly elected by many who are skeptical of globalization, and he feels he has a duty to those voters," she told Die Zeit. Asked whether she could have imagined a year ago a G-20 meeting with Messrs. Putin, Trump, and Erdogan, she responded: "We have to accept these constellations as they are."

## The New York Times

### Merkel Knows She Has to Deal With Trump. The Question Is How.

Glenn Thrush and Alison Smale

HAMBURG, Germany — Over her 11 years in power, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany has proved uncommonly adept at

solving the puzzle-box challenges posed by the world's most unpredictable leaders. But she has

never met a problem like Donald J. Trump.

Mr. Trump and Ms. Merkel — estranged by widely diverging temperaments, worldviews, leadership styles and visions of Europe — had a breakthrough of sorts just before their brief meeting on the eve of the Group of 20 conference in Hamburg on Thursday night. They got the handshake right.

The 40-minute meeting that followed was mostly uneventful, touching only lightly on the hot-button topics of climate change, trade and “burning foreign policy questions” on North Korea, Ukraine and the Middle East, according to a brief statement from Ms. Merkel’s government.

People close to these two most powerful Western leaders say the brevity and bonhomie were, in fact, the main goal. Both sides are hoping for a series of low-octane interactions in which the two articulate their differences without the awkward optics of previous meetings.

But those differences, especially since Mr. Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris climate accord last month, are inescapable. Ms. Merkel, already grappling with violent anti-globalism protests on streets outside the conference, has been intensely focused on divining a way to coexist with a president whose disruptive views differ so drastically from her own.

The best she has come up with so far is to cultivate a backdoor channel through the president’s daughter Ivanka, who tried unsuccessfully to persuade her father to remain in the Paris accord.

But Ms. Merkel is up for re-election in the fall, and challenging Mr. Trump has become essential in German politics. So Ms. Merkel, the courteous daughter of a Protestant cleric, is doing something she finds awkward: calling out Mr. Trump in public and questioning his commitment to the American leadership that Europeans had taken for granted since World War II.

“Merkel is clearly trying to figure out how to deal with Trump, and it isn’t easy for her,” said Klaus Brinkbäumer, the editor in chief of *Der Spiegel*, the country’s largest-circulation newsmagazine.

“She doesn’t like to make news in speeches, but publicly, she’s been more critical of Trump than I would have expected,” Mr. Brinkbäumer said on Thursday, a few hours before Air Force One arrived in Hamburg from Mr. Trump’s one-day stop in Warsaw.

“Privately, the only obvious path is through the president’s daughter, which is why she invited Ivanka to that conference in Berlin earlier this year,” he said. “But even that doesn’t seem to be working. German diplomats still don’t know who to call in the State Department on serious issues, or even who their counterparts are in the White House.”

Ms. Merkel and her tight circle of advisers had hoped that other White House officials — especially H. R. McMaster, Mr. Trump’s national security adviser, and Gary D. Cohn, the National Economic Council chairman — would provide a more reliable conduit. But that has not proved to be the case. Ms. Merkel’s team was deeply discouraged by a *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece written by Mr. McMaster and Mr. Cohn in May that defended Mr. Trump’s “America First” slogan, prioritizing the country’s “vital interests” over international partnerships.

The relationship between Ms. Merkel and Mr. Trump has unfolded in stages, said Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, a former German government official who is a vice president at the German Marshall Fund. “At first, I think she thought she could manage him,” he said. “After all, she’s made a study of all these leaders — Putin, Bush, Obama.”

“You could almost see her analyze Trump, run through the various scenarios and approaches for dealing with him,” he said. “Now I think she realizes there aren’t really any.”

German officials were reticent when asked about possible disputes that might overshadow Ms. Merkel’s meeting with Mr. Trump. Her spokesman, Steffen Seibert, noted that there were many differences of opinion, “and it is not just with one delegation.” This is “also why the chancellor is scheduling bilateral

meetings to explore difficult themes,” Mr. Seibert said.

Daniela Schwarzer, the director of the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin, said it appeared that German officials were operating under the axiom of “rather than surfacing conflict, better not to say too much.”

Yet Ms. Merkel cannot afford to remain silent as Mr. Trump’s unpopularity grows on the Continent. A former German diplomat who keeps in touch with her staff said Ms. Merkel had studied the February visit to the White House by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, and had determined that Mr. Abe’s charm and flattery, coupled with a blunt public articulation of their differences, was the best approach.

That influenced her decision to invite Ivanka Trump to a women’s conference in Berlin in April. Yet around the same time, Ms. Merkel began intensifying her public criticism of Mr. Trump. Her party, the Christian Democratic Union, has conspicuously dropped language from its campaign literature describing the United States as Germany’s “most important friend outside Europe.”

“Merkel is a contradiction because she understands that she is the most powerful figure in Europe but doesn’t necessarily want to admit that,” said Jeremy Shapiro, a former State Department official who worked on European affairs under President Barack Obama. “But I think she realizes that she needs to assert principles publicly to counter Trump.”

A few days before Mr. Trump arrived in Hamburg, Ms. Merkel took a shot at the president’s “America First” slogan, albeit in her typically muted language.

“While we are looking at the possibilities of cooperation to benefit everyone, globalization is seen by the American administration more as a process that is not about a win-win situation, but about winners and losers,” she told the German weekly *Die Zeit*.

Mr. Trump has told his staff that he “gets along fine” with Ms. Merkel, though he finds the interactions

awkward, two people close to him said.

But those grievances are not personal, aides insist. He is deeply displeased with Germany’s policies, they say, and will continue to hammer Germany about its trade surplus with the United States and its refusal to pay what he believes to be its fair share for self-defense in NATO.

Still, Mr. Trump — who is almost as allergic to private confrontation as Ms. Merkel — entered Thursday’s short meeting with no set of objectives apart from exiting quickly and without much controversy.

He praised Ms. Merkel for hosting the event under tense circumstances, one aide familiar with the interaction said, and participated in the bilateral meeting partly out of courtesy to her, not because he had any business to transact, the aide added, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe a private meeting.

Still, it will be hard to avoid confrontation. Ms. Merkel’s aides have 48 hours to help produce a communiqué from the summit meeting that all can accept, despite disagreements on climate change, immigration and trade.

In addition to the risk that the G-20 will end up 19-to-1 on the issue of the Paris accord, some advisers to Ms. Merkel fear that Mr. Trump will try to weaken support for the agreement, which was reached in 2015 with America’s backing.

“There are various options that can be discussed,” was all that Ms. Merkel would say before the world leaders began arriving.

For all of these challenges, the G-20 gathering began on something of a high note for both Ms. Merkel and Mr. Trump.

Mr. Trump had fumbled a handshake in front of photographers during Ms. Merkel’s visit to the Oval Office in March, as the two sat uncomfortably in wingback chairs.

On Thursday, the chancellor extended her hand to the president, who answered with a firm and decisive grip of his own.



## Trump Is in the Heart of German Anarchist Country

Lucas  
Hermesmeler

This Friday and Saturday, world leaders will assemble at the Hamburg Messe und Congress, a convention center in the heart of the St. Pauli neighborhood of Germany’s second-largest city.

Just down the road — a 10-minute walk away — stands the Rote Flora, a theater-turned-squat house that is now the spiritual heart of Hamburg’s anti-capitalist left. The building was constructed in 1888 and has been, at various times, a theater, a concert venue, a cinema, and a department

store. But in 1987, plans to convert the building again, this time into a theater for crowd-pleasing musicals, met with widespread protest from an alliance of residents and radicals. They took over the empty building, squatting in it in protest, and there they remain to this day. The building

has seen police raids, street battles, and infiltration by government spies in the city’s efforts to take it back in the decades since. The last major standoff saw more than 7,000 people protest a fresh eviction attempt in 2013 under the slogan “The City Belongs to Everyone!”



Riots ensued, and, in response, the Hamburg Senate declared the St. Pauli and Sternschanze neighborhoods “danger zones” and implemented a policy of stop and frisk and curfews. In one incident, police confiscated a toilet brush from a local resident; it soon became a satirical symbol of defiance.

When Donald Trump goes to Hamburg this week, the famously protest-averse president will be attending a forum — the G-20 — that regularly brings out mass demonstrations by anti-capitalist and anarchist groups, regardless of whom the U.S. president is at the time. He will be attending having recently pulled the United States out of the Paris climate agreement and will be joined by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a particularly hated foe of the German left — two more ingredients that also would likely bring out large-scale protests, regardless of the choice of host city.

But this year’s summit is explosive for one other reason: Hamburg itself — a city with a noted history of fierce leftist dissent.

“The government’s decision to bring the G-20 into the center of Hamburg is risky,” said Sven Brux, the head of organization and security for Hamburg’s famed football club, FC St. Pauli, the beloved team of punks and leftists. “Some people on the left are reading it as a declaration of war.” The team’s home venue, Millerntor Stadium, sits less than a mile south of the convention center; there, the football club plans to host an “Anti-G-20” amateur tournament and an “alternative media center” during the period the forum is in town.

In several speeches over the course of the last year, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was born in Hamburg, emphasized the city’s role as the “gateway to the world,” due to its gigantic harbor. She called it a “beacon of free trade” and proudly mentioned Hamburg’s new architectural marvel, the Elbphilharmonie concert hall, which sits on the Elbe River and which, along with the Messe, will serve as

one of the venues for the summit. And it’s true that Hamburg, Germany’s media hub and largest port (and the third largest in Europe), was likely chosen for logistical reasons: Like any major city, it has a large convention center and sufficient transportation infrastructure and lodging. What Merkel left out — unsurprisingly — was Hamburg’s long activist history, which continues to inform the city’s political and social terrain.

By the 19th century, the sheer number of people working in and around Hamburg’s port had made it a focal point for union organizing and leftist politics. In October 1923, Hamburg was the site of an attempted communist revolution inspired by events in Russia. Workers and members of Germany’s Communist Party, led by famed politician Ernst Thälmann, took up arms and stormed two dozen police precincts.

Hamburg was supposed to be the starting point for a revolution that would eventually go Germany-wide — but the insurrection failed.

Hamburg was supposed to be the starting point for a revolution that would eventually go Germany-wide — but the insurrection failed. By the time the so-called “Hamburg Uprising” was over, at least 100 people had died. Thälmann remains a controversial character to this day, celebrated by some as a model anti-fascist and denounced by others as an anti-democrat.

Although Berlin was the center of Germany’s student protests in the 1960s, one of the core slogans of the movement was born in Hamburg. In 1967, students from Hamburg University protested Germany’s postwar institutions, which remained staffed with former Nazis. They displayed a banner emblazoned with the phrase “*Unter den Talaren Muff von 1000 Jahren*” (“Under the Gowns the Musty Stench of a Thousand Years”), a reference to Adolf Hitler’s ambitions for a Thousand-Year Reich. The phrase quickly became a rallying cry across the country.

In 1986, only a couple of months after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, an anti-nuclear demonstration in Hamburg led to the largest mass arrest in postwar German history. Nearly 900 people were held in custody for more than 13 hours, with food, water, and toilet access deliberately withheld: The tactic was dubbed a “Hamburg kettle” and remains a feared police tactic today.

Since the 1980s, activism in Hamburg has been largely animated by struggles over property and gentrification. Anarchists and police have long battled over squatted houses along Hafen Street in the St. Pauli quarter, and for decades now there have reliably been mass demonstrations in the city on May Day that see confrontation between protesters and security forces.

The possibility for massive disruption of this weekend’s events already looms large — as do the odds of ugly clashes. Police expect 100,000 protesters from all over the world to attend, 8,000 of whom, they warn, have been deemed radical and “ready to use violence.” Twenty-seven different protest groups have obtained permits: Some plan to protest the G-20 as a tool for neoliberalism; others are rallying around Trump’s climate change denial and nationalism; still others are focused on Erdogan, whose detention of a German journalist and efforts to influence German Turks draw particular ire. (Hamburg rapper Johnny Mauser, a hero of the local leftist scene, even wrote a rousing track, “Welcome to Hell — Hamburg 2017,” for the occasion: “Erdogan, this bastard, is reason enough for everyone who doesn’t fear jail to come to Hamburg,” he raps.)

Meanwhile, organizers on the very far left aim to bring “the biggest black bloc that has even been seen” to the city under the same “Welcome to Hell” banner. The black bloc, an anarchist tactic in which participants wear masks and all black for anonymity and aesthetic force, has been a mainstay of the German protest landscape for decades, especially on the yearly May Day marches. Videos with calls for mass disruption of the summit

have circulated online for some months. In one, a voice-over announces: “I’m a walking time bomb, and I’m going to explode.” In response, government and police officials are turning the city into a fortress. They’ve declared 15 square miles around the convention center, spanning much of the city, off-limits for demonstrators. This seems unlikely to cool tempers: What authorities have called counterterrorism measures, protest organizers have dubbed a “democracy-free zone.” An extra jail with room for 400 people has been erected especially for what will be, according to a police department statement, “the biggest operation in the history of Hamburg’s police.”

In the weeks leading up to the summit, radical leftist groups have already claimed responsibility for several arson attacks on police vehicles and railway tracks, as well as incidents of property damage and theft as a preemptive strike against the coming summit. On Sunday, riot police stormed and razed a protest camp in central Hamburg, where 600 activists were staying in preparation for the summit.

Does Trump know what he’s in for? It’s not clear. The U.S. president has gone out of his way to avoid protests against him in the past: His state visit to Britain has been put on indefinite hold mainly due to the promise of large-scale demonstrations, and there were reports last week that if he did visit, it would be a last-minute decision to minimize the chances of activist groups mobilizing in time; he’s largely steered clear of his hometown of New York, in part because of the potential for disruption in a city where there are still periodic protests in front of Trump Tower.

But come Friday, he will be in Hamburg. The flags bearing the skull and crossbones logo of FC St. Pauli, the banner of leftists across the city, are already hanging from windows ready to welcome him.

## INTERNATIONAL

The  
Washington  
Post

### The watchers: Airmen who surveil the Islamic State never get to look away (UNE)

JOINT BASE  
LANGLEY-EUSTIS, Va. — Her day begins following a man on a red motorcycle as he bumps down a

rutted road past palm trees and cement block houses. An assault rifle is slung across his back.

While her partner stares at the video feed from an armed Air Force drone, Courtney, 29, a staff sergeant and intelligence analyst, fires off

questions and compiles a running narrative.



"What's the driver wearing?" she asks, keeping one eye on the action as she types.

"Black Western wear," says Aaron, 20, the airman assisting her.

The motorcycle driver is speeding through Qaim, an Islamic State-controlled city in western Iraq, where the midday sun has driven temperatures over 100 degrees.

Courtney is sitting in a chilly cubicle, where purplish-pink overhead lights, designed to make the video stand out, give the room a feeling of perpetual dusk. It's the start of another shift at this base outside Hampton, Va., on a recent morning in mid-June.

For more than three years, this has been Courtney's war — 10 hours a day, four days a week, thousands upon thousands of hours of live video footage from Iraq and Syria.

It is an existence characterized by long stretches of boredom and grim flashes of action as she helps guide pilots' decisions on when to shoot and watches the last seconds of another person's life. The Air Force allowed a Washington Post reporter to spend a day with a team of its analysts — the first time a journalist was allowed to spend a full shift watching their secret work — on the condition that their last names were withheld for security reasons.

With President Trump likely to send thousands more troops to Afghanistan and maintain a military presence in Iraq indefinitely, some airmen will spend most of their careers immersed in the war zone, watching an ever-expanding flood of live video. Trump's proposed defense budget would continue the rapid growth in worldwide drone missions. The Air Force is on pace to fly as many as 70 missions a day next year, up from fewer than 15 missions a day a decade ago.

"Our airmen never get to unplug," said Lt. Col. Alison Kamataris, the deputy commander of the 497th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Group here.

Infantrymen typically serve nine- to 12-month combat tours; pilots deploy for four months. Even U.S.-based drone pilots rotate off war duty every three or four years.

"We don't have the same ability to give breaks to train or innovate," Kamataris said of her analysts.

*[How a woman in England tracks civilian deaths in Syria, one bomb at a time]*

Air Force officials are just beginning to grapple with the long-term effects of this life. For now, they mostly have questions: How long before the intensity of the troops' war zone

experience begins to overwhelm the relative quiet of their lives off-base? Can repeated exposure to remote killing over a long career lead to moral exhaustion? What should Air Force officials do to rebuild boundaries between the war zone and home — "combat and the cul-de-sac," in the lingo of the modern Air Force — that technology has obliterated?

Courtney, meanwhile, has more immediate concerns. On this morning, she is both watching life in a distant city and waiting to see whether her name is on a list, due to be released in about an hour, of airmen selected to go to officer training school. The promotion would free her from the daily grind of the video feed and give her broader responsibilities overseeing airmen and positioning Air Force intelligence assets on the battlefield.

A few cubicles away, her fellow airmen, anticipating good news, have bought a celebratory cake. "It's going to be a sad cake or a happy cake," she says. "Either way, we're having cake."

'A lesson in patience'

Courtney was working as a paralegal at a law firm near her home town in Louisiana and weighing law school when she first applied to be an Air Force officer. The Air Force had seemed like a chance to serve and see the world.

When she wasn't selected for officer training in 2013, she decided to enlist as an intelligence analyst, a job that would put her quickly into the fight. Unlike most enlistees, she has a college degree.

Courtney is the first link in a chain that runs from her base in Virginia to the air operations center in Qatar to the drone pilots scattered across the United States. The targets are chosen by commanders who rely on voice intercepts, satellites, human intelligence, high-altitude surveillance planes and the analysis of people such as Courtney.

Only a few months into her work here, she was looking for a gathering of Islamic State fighters in northern Iraq. She found their trucks parked in the desert and, as the drone's camera panned, spotted the fighters who were firing their weapons into a mass of about 50 unarmed men, packed shoulder to shoulder in a ditch.

The fighters rumbled past two more mass graves before coming to a stop on the side of the highway. Courtney scanned the area for women and children. There were none, so the Air Force planes let loose.

Courtney's next job was to tally the dead. "I hadn't witnessed anything that gruesome before," she says. "It was shocking." She stayed after work to talk with Air Force mental-health counselors. The next day she was back behind the screen.

The toughest part of the job, she says, has been forgetting about it when she goes home and not second-guessing decisions. "We're at war," she says. "We don't experience bullets flying, but our decisions have direct impacts on people's lives."

Analysts such as Courtney typically take part in strikes or witness acts of killing every two to three weeks. In between, they spend hours upon hours watching scenes of everyday life unfold on their screens: children playing, women shopping, men gathering for evening prayers.

*[Air Force is trying to improve drone pilot morale — with memes]*

Now Courtney and her partner are orbiting a crossing over the Euphrates River, moving from Iraq into Syria.

"On the south side of the river there's a ferry carrying a white truck and two adult males," Aaron says. "It looks like there's also a motorcycle on board."

"Yeah, it's a motorcycle," Courtney says, leaning in for a better look.

Neither she nor Aaron can make out any weapons, which suggests it's just another scene of everyday life in Islamic State territory.

She checks her watch and notices it's a few minutes before 10 a.m., when the list of airmen selected for officer training is due to be released online.

Another airman takes her place behind the video screen. Courtney slides her chair a few feet to her left and logs onto the Air Force personnel website. A banner at the top of the screen reads: "Active FY17 Officer Selection Board Updates!" But the names have yet to post.

"A lesson in patience," she says, drumming her fingers on the desk.

She refreshes the page a few more times. Nothing.

Courtney's colleague watches as the drone moves from the river crossing to a suspected Islamic State "operations center," which on the screen looks like almost every other blocky, cement house in eastern Syria. A woman in a black abaya glides past, trailed by a child.

Courtney, still waiting, pops her knuckles and refreshes the screen.

"Oh, goodness gracious," she whispers under her breath.

Eventually, another airman who has also applied for an officer slot tells her to type PSDM, short for "personnel services delivery memorandum," into the website's search bar.

It takes only a few seconds for Courtney to scan the list and realize she's not among the airmen who were selected. She looks to see whether any other intelligence analysts were picked and texts her disappointing news to a friend: "No cigar. Only 63 selected."

A deep breath, and then she's back to the drone feed.

"There's a child in the alley to the south of the building," Aaron is saying.

"What?" Courtney asks, an edge of sadness and frustration in her voice.

'A single word'

For the next few hours, the pace is unrelenting. They orbit a warehouse complex, another Islamic State "operations center," an enemy checkpoint. They follow a truck, a motorcycle and then another truck.

Courtney's immediate supervisor, a tech sergeant, approaches her cubicle and asks gingerly about the officer list.

"Sorry," he says.

"Don't be," she replies, her eyes fixed on the screen. "That makes nobody feel better."

"You'll make it next time," he offers.

Courtney's job is to watch the video feed and make judgments: Are the people on the screen civilians or enemies? Do they pose a threat to U.S. troops or allies? Does it make more sense to shoot now, or wait and see where they go or what they do?

To mitigate civilian casualties she keeps a tally of men, women and children in the area. She makes note of anyone who crosses her screen.

"One previously unobserved adult male pushed a wheelbarrow on the south side of the target building," Courtney writes while observing a suspected Islamic State drone factory. "He took a box — already present in the wheelbarrow — into the building."

She types her observations in a chat room that is monitored by dozens of U.S. military and intelligence officials around the world, where even the smallest details can have life-or-death consequences. After U.S. and coalition airstrikes last September mistakenly killed 62 Syrian troops, a

military investigation honed in on communications among the pilots, commanders and the analysts, who had doubts about the target.

"A single word made the difference between shooting and not shooting," said an Air Force intelligence officer who oversees operations at the base here.

To sharpen the analysts' vigilance, the Air Force is experimenting with different lighting schemes. And to help with stress, particularly after strikes that result in civilian casualties, a psychiatrist and mental-health counselor have been assigned full-time to the operations floor.

"Our suicide and suicidal ideation rates were way higher than the Air Force average; they were even higher than for those people who had deployed," said Col. Jason Brown, commander of the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing. "Something had to be done."

The suicide rates in the small community have fallen with the introduction of the mental-health teams, Brown said. The stressors,

though, haven't diminished. In the past three years, Air Force officials said there has been a tenfold increase in weapons expended on the battlefield. The heavier fighting has meant more scenes of carnage on the feed.

In some instances, the demands of urban combat and a more aggressive approach to the war have meant taking shots even when analysts determine civilians are present. The number of allowable civilian casualties can vary with the importance of the target.

"For us, it can be kind of demoralizing," says Christopher, a tech sergeant and Courtney's immediate supervisor on this day. "We're aware of civilians," he says, but the analysts don't set the limits for pilots. "We can't tell them, 'This is your cutoff,'" Christopher says.

Somewhere over Syria

"We're shifting," Courtney says as her drone heads for what she is told is a suspected Islamic State war "spoils camp."

"That's an interesting name," says Aaron, who assumes it's a place

where the Islamic State stashes captured loot.

Night has fallen in the desert, and the men at the camp are stretched out on mats under the stars.

"Was that a cigarette he just tossed?" Aaron asks, pointing to one of the men on the screen.

"Yeah," Courtney says. "This doesn't really seem nefarious."

In fact, it looks like a typical Bedouin campsite. Camels lope across the screen. No one appears to be armed.

Courtney's squadron commander pulls her aside to offer her some words of encouragement on becoming an officer.

"The service didn't see fit this time," he says. "But it doesn't mean no. It just means not right now."

She walks back to her cubicle, passing people eating her celebration cake. A few minutes later she's back at the screen, transiting to the next location in her target deck: an Islamic State safe house. She studies the cluster of buildings, the curve of the road and

the placement of the satellite dishes on the roofs.

"Hey, I've been here before," she says. "I just recognized it."

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

"It's like driving through your home town," Aaron replies. "You get familiar."

Courtney watches a man shoo a dog and children at play. Her relief arrives and boots up his computer a few minutes before 4 p.m.

"Your eyes are free," he tells her.

She stands up and stretches.

Her first call when she leaves the building is to her parents to let them know she wasn't selected for officer training. Early the next morning, she's back in her chair, back in the war, floating somewhere over Syria.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## No Escape From Mosul, and Unlikely Chance of Surrender

Michael R.  
Gordon

MOSUL, Iraq — Perched on a rooftop near the ruins of the Al Nuri Grand Mosque, Lt. Gen. Abdul-Wahab al-Saadi used a rock to sketch out the endgame for Mosul.

The Islamic State was down to perhaps 150 fighters, hemmed in on all sides, defending a bastion that seemed to be shrinking by the day, said the general, a senior commander in Iraq's counterterrorism service.

On a visit to the old city of Mosul with General Saadi and his men, it was clear that the militants' resistance was still fierce and often fanatical, even by the Islamic State's macabre standards.

Earlier this week, 17 suicide bombers, some of them women, infiltrated the streams of desperate civilians trudging out of the city, which the Islamic State took control of three years ago. When the bombers blew themselves up, they sent a wave of casualties to the trauma centers set up by international humanitarian groups on the edge of the urban battlefield.

On Wednesday morning, frantic Iraqi soldiers raced their wounded comrades in battle-scarred Humvees to two of those trauma stations. By the time they arrived, two of them were already dead —

one blown apart by a roadside bomb and the other a victim of a sniper shot to the head.

Some Islamic State fighters have been stripping the uniforms off dead Iraqi soldiers and donning them to try to sneak out of the city, Iraqi military officers say. But many of the militants appear to be determined to die and to take as many Iraqi soldiers as they can with them.

More than eight months after the Iraqi forces, supported by American airstrikes and advisers, began to wrest Mosul back from the Islamic State extremists, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi appears to be poised to announce that the forces have finally retaken all of Iraq's second-largest city. In Mosul, that victory appears to be tantalizingly close, but not quite at hand.

I had traveled with General Saadi in west Mosul in April only to see an offensive that had slowed to a crawl.

The Iraqis' decision to open a northern front in early May had re-energized the campaign, though the battle has proved costly for civilians and the military alike.

Before the battle began last year, the worst-case estimate by United Nations experts was that 750,000 of the city's population of more than a million would be displaced. As of this week, 920,000 people have left.

As many as 15,000 civilians, the experts fear, may be trapped in a small pocket of the city that Islamic State militants are struggling to defend.

Emptied of much of its population, the old city in western Mosul remains a baking battlefield where parched and defenseless civilians vastly outnumber ruthless extremists, who have their backs against the Tigris River and seemingly nothing to lose.

Much of the combat takes place in the morning before the midday sun sends temperatures soaring to more than 115 degrees. Early Wednesday, I joined General Saadi again as we drove through old city's battered streets.

Soon the ruins of the mosque came into view: Its 12th-century minaret was severed, and its walls were shattered, but its green dome was somehow intact. The area in front of the ruined mosque had been cleared by the counterterrorism force and was now occupied by their black, armored Humvees equipped with gun turrets.

Disembarking, we climbed over huge slabs of debris clogging up an alleyway. There was a whistling sound and an explosion — supporting American firepower for a street battle that was about 100 yards away.

"Hellfire," General Saadi said approvingly. "To support my army."

The best view was from the roof of a large building where the counterterrorism service officers have set up an outpost. As we reached the roof, Iraqi soldiers in nearby positions were trading volleys with Islamic State snipers. More American airstrikes sent plumes of smoke into the sky.

The elite counterterrorism service, known as the CTS, has had to move carefully through the narrow, bombed-out alleyways of Mosul and across exposed rooftops. Its soldiers are now pressing the fight in the center of their enemy's resistance, flanked by the Iraqi Army and federal police on either side.

The militants included a large number of foreign fighters: Of the 100 Islamic State extremists that were killed this week, 26 came from outside Iraq, the general said. Russian-speaking foreigners, most likely Chechens, were among the best snipers, he added, though he did not think highly of the Islamic State's infantry tactics.

Nobody, however, questioned their proficiency in making and using explosives.

"They can't drive car bombs at us anymore, so they hide bombs in abandoned vehicles or just try to run

up to us and blow themselves up," he said.

The Iraqi military searches civilians as they try to escape the remains of the city. Men who have sought to flee have been told to remove their shirts, and some strip down to their underwear to show that they are not hiding a bomb. Believing that women are less likely to be screened as carefully, the Islamic State has been using female suicide bombers.

Three members of a CTS battalion dispatched to Mosul from Basra, in southern Iraq, were killed in the recent suicide attacks, the unit's commander said.

The fact that some militants have managed to get their hands on Iraqi uniforms means that the CTS has to be especially vigilant. "We know our guys well, and

can tell when it's them," General Saadi said.

He also insisted that he was not surprised by the recent spate of suicide attacks. Tips from civilians and drones flown by the Iraqi forces, he said, had given him valuable intelligence. Still, all 17 of the recent bombers, he acknowledged, succeeded in blowing themselves up.

At the trauma stations a short drive from the front, it was clear that the Islamic State's bombs were claiming their share of victims: among them, an Iraqi soldier who was already dead when he arrived Wednesday morning at a triage point run by Global Response Management, a nonprofit organization.

Alex Potter, a nurse at the center, said she could gauge the flow of the battle for Mosul from the casualties

that arrived. A surge in gunshot wounds to Iraqi troops was an indication that they were making another push against Islamic State positions. Civilians with limbs and torsos crushed by debris were a sign of airstrikes. Suicide bomb blasts often resulted in severe burns and worse.

The casualties arriving from the bombings in recent days had been "half civilians, half Iraqi military," said Pete Reed, an emergency medical technician who runs the Global Response Management. "The majority of suicide vest attacks in the past few days have been by females," he added.

At another nearby trauma center run by the Iraqi Army and CADUS, a humanitarian organization based in Germany, an Iraqi Humvee rushed up, straight from battle in the old

city. Anxious Iraqi soldiers unloaded their comrade wrapped in a thick, blood-soaked blanket.

A gaping bullet hole was in the back of the soldier's head, the work of an Islamic State sniper. The doctors quickly pronounced the soldier dead, and he was lifted into a black body bag. His name and unit were inscribed on a strip of paper that was taped to the outside. A small bag containing his possessions and athletic shoes was placed alongside. He was soon taken away, and a small pool of blood was wiped from the floor.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Raja Abdulrahim **Syrian Refugee Deaths Point to Crisis in Lebanon**

QAB ELIAS, Lebanon—The deaths of four Syrians in Lebanese army custody and lethal fires in two Syrian refugee camps all in the past week have refocused attention on the worsening plight of more than a million displaced persons in Lebanon.

On Thursday, the Lebanese human rights minister urged an investigation into the deaths of the men, who were among more than 300 people that the Lebanese army rounded up on Friday after it raided two refugee camps. The army said it was searching for "terrorists, weapons and explosives" in the camps, located in the Bekaa Valley town of Arsal, near the Syrian border.

The military, which receives millions of dollars in annual U.S. aid, said Tuesday that the four men died of chronic health conditions that worsened after their arrests, without giving any further details about their health issues.

Syrian refugees and activists in Arsal and the human rights organization The Working Group for Syrian Detainees alleged this explanation was a coverup. The deceased men's families couldn't be reached for comment.

"It's clear they died from torture," Muhammad Raed, a Syrian activist living in Arsal. "Everyone saw the

bodies and the torture marks are evident on their corpses."

Lebanese Human Rights Minister Ayman Choucrair called for "a transparent investigation into everything that was shared recently from photos and news about the latest arrest operation in Arsal and into the reasons that led to the death of a number of detainees."

An estimated one fifth of Syrian refugees registered with the United Nations live in camps like the ones that were raided over the past week, with ramshackle shelters made of timber, plywood and tarps. They are frequently threatened with evictions and Lebanese laws that don't allow them to build more permanent homes.

Soldiers regularly raid the camps, arresting men who lack legal residency.

The Syrian refugees comprise about a quarter of Lebanon's population, straining the country's already fragile infrastructure and stoking tensions as they compete for jobs. Lebanon imposes tough restrictions on Syrians' ability to work or gain legal residency and officials here regularly discuss repatriating them even in the midst of the war.

"From an economic perspective and a social perspective, the situation is deteriorating," Dana Sleiman, a spokeswoman with the United Nations refugee agency in Lebanon.

She added that 70% are living below the poverty line.

Living in the tent camps offers little protection from the elements or from disaster. On Sunday, a fire broke out in the Qab Elias camp in the Bekaa Valley, jumping so quickly from tent to tent that residents said they ran out without shoes. In the chaos, they grabbed any child nearby as they fled the growing blaze, unsure of where their own children were.

Within an hour, flames destroyed the entire encampment and a 2-year-old girl was dead. Two days later, a second fire broke out at another refugee camp in the Bekaa Valley, killing a 4-year-old girl.

The tarps distributed by U.N. refugee agency are treated with a flame retardant chemical but few tents appear to have them. Most are swathed in plastic banners advertising everything from 12-year-old whiskey to scratch-resistant kitchenware to American movies. Next to the banners, garbage piles up and flies swarm.

"Things are not getting better," said Josep Zapater, who heads the UNHCR office in the Bekaa Valley.

On Tuesday, residents of Qab Elias watched as workers laid a new foundation of gravel and unloaded timber and tarps for new shelters to replace the more than 170 that burned down. Before the charred detritus was cleared away, residents

were given an hour to pick through the rubble. But little could be salvaged.

"Our money, our passports, our ID cards and our family books, all of it is gone," said Hannah Ahmad Ibrahim, 19, who got married four months ago. She tried searching for the jewelry she wore on her wedding—three gold rings, a necklace and earrings—but she said they were lost.

"I barely escaped with just myself," she said.

Human Rights Watch called for a transparent and independent investigation into the deaths of the four refugees after the army said "the health condition of the detainees deteriorated" while in custody.

The mayor of Arsal said the municipality helped transfer the bodies back to their families, who took photos before they buried them and posted them online. The images show bruised and bloodied corpses.

"The army acknowledged not one but four deaths in custody without revealing the chain of events that led to these deaths," said Lama Fakih, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "In case of wrongdoing, those responsible for the deaths should be held accountable."



## This Is Trump's Plan to Team Up With Putin in Syria—and Leave Assad in Power

Spencer Ackerman

For once, Rex Tillerson is not freelancing.

Late Wednesday, ahead of the first-ever meeting between Donald

Trump and Vladimir Putin, the secretary of state suggested that the U.S. is willing to explore “joint mechanisms” with Russia to stabilize the vicious Syrian civil war.

After a dizzying series of policy shifts on Syria, administration and congressional sources tell *The Daily Beast* that Team Trump is introducing the beginnings of a new strategy for Syria—one that, in the short term at least:

- leaves dictator Bashar al-Assad in power;
- acquiesces to the idea of “safe zones” proposed by Russia and its allies;
- leans on cooperation from Moscow, including the use of Russian troops to patrol parts of the country.

It’s the sort of plan that observers have long suspected would ultimately emerge as Trump’s approach—despite his pledge that Assad has “no role” in governing the Syrian people. Top Trump aides from Jared Kushner to former national security adviser Michael Flynn have pushed for closer coordination with Russia on Syria for months.

A knowledgeable senior administration official discussed the emerging strategy with *The Daily Beast* on the condition that what the official said could only be paraphrased, not quoted, as the official was not cleared to discuss the issue publicly. The account was backed up by two White House sources and a congressional source.

The goal of the emerging strategy is to deal the so-called Islamic State a lasting defeat. Right now, the American government’s Syrian allies, backed by special operations forces, are outracing the larger questions about what happens after they oust ISIS from places like its Raqqa stronghold. The U.S. has learned to its sorrow in Iraq that without a real force to hold territory taken from insurgents, the insurgents will return.

Complicating matters is the convergence of U.S. and Russian-backed factions in congested territory. The prospect for clashes in areas taken away from ISIS is acute. If they spiral into chaos, ISIS may gain a new lease on life. (In Manbij, Syria, captured by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces last August, Arab residents are complaining about their so-called liberators—who have opened the doors for the Assad regime to return to take charge.)

According to the senior official, coordinating with the Russians to

ensure that these clashes either don’t happen or don’t escalate into great-power conflict is simply a recognition of reality.

But all that raises the question of who runs the towns after ISIS is forced out.

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The U.S. is not contemplating handing territory taken from ISIS over to Assad, according to the official. Nor will American forces police the areas or enforce cease-fires. In areas taken by the U.S.’ proxy forces, that will be the job of American allies like the Syrian Democratic Forces. But in Assad-controlled areas, some of that patrol work will fall to Russian military police, as happened in Aleppo. If that wasn’t complicated enough, the Turks are ready to dispatch their own forces now based inside Syria on territory seized from ISIS last year.

The building blocks for this plan have been set in place in recent months, with the U.S. and Russian militaries using a so-called deconfliction channel to avoid confrontation or escalation. The channel endured the friction of American guns shooting down Syrian warplanes last month. But in general, a workable battlefield method has emerged, with the pro-American and Russian-Syrian-Iranian factions close but separate. Shooting down the planes, according to the official, showed the Russians that the U.S. was willing to protect its allies, prompting the Russians to take deconfliction more seriously.

Enter Tillerson.

### In the Room With Putin

Before the secretary of state left for the G-20 summit on Wednesday, he cited the “deconfliction zones” as evidence that Russia and the U.S. might be prepared for “further progress.” Such progress, Tillerson said, might include “establishing with Russia joint mechanisms for ensuring stability, including no-fly zones, on the ground cease-fire observers, and coordinated delivery

of humanitarian assistance.” According to the senior official, Tillerson’s points merely build on the established U.S.-Russia deconfliction mechanisms.

Most significantly, Tillerson said that if Russia and America can “work together to establish stability on the ground, it will lay a foundation for progress on the settlement of Syria’s political future.”

In the past, Tillerson has floated foreign policy proposals—only to see the White House shoot them down. Trump ignored Tillerson’s desire to remain party to the Paris climate accord, gave a critical diplomatic portfolio for Mideast peace to son-in-law Kushner, and just last month backed the Saudi side in a blockade with Qatar right after Tillerson called for a ceasefire.

Not this time.

Expect Tillerson’s plan to be discussed at Trump’s meeting with Putin on Friday, when the secretary of state will be the only other American official in the room. After the confab, Tillerson will fly to Turkey, where the Syria plan is likely to be raised as well.

What Tillerson is describing, according to the senior official, is a tentative step—a confidence-boosting measure to explore whether the two longtime adversaries can work together to end the conflict. It is an idea with no shortage of critics. When President Obama’s secretary of state, John Kerry, proposed limited cooperation with Russia to enforce a 2016 cease-fire in Aleppo, the Pentagon and the GOP-led Congress loudly expressed displeasure.

That displeasure was largely motivated by long-standing distrust of Russia. But it also had to do with divergent U.S. and Russian goals for Syria. Russia intervened in the Syrian conflict in order to prop up its client, Assad, at a point he was rapidly losing territory to rebel forces. The U.S. position under Obama was that Assad’s brutality made his departure from Syria necessary.

According to the senior official, the administration is effectively punting on what to do with Assad, something it argues is another concession to an uncomfortable reality on the ground. Dealing with ISIS and seeing if Russia can be convinced to help enforce a fragile post-ISIS stability are immediate and burning questions. Whether the Trump administration ever says so out loud, for now, it is willing to live with Assad in power as it goes after ISIS.

“Of course that’s our policy [toward Assad],” one senior White House

official told *The Daily Beast* on Thursday. “I don’t see how you could follow what we’ve done and not come away with [that] conclusion.”

That may be what many observers expected, but Trump’s approach to Assad has been anything but decisive. After the election, Trump told *The Wall Street Journal* that he was skeptical of aiding Assad’s opposition. By late March, Tillerson and UN Ambassador Nikki Haley said the U.S. would no longer prioritize “getting Assad out,” in Haley’s phrase.

But days later, evidently seeing a green light from Washington, Assad launched a sarin attack on the northwestern town of Khan Sheikhoun. Trump unexpectedly launched a Tomahawk missile strike on a Syrian airbase used by Russian forces. Tillerson, hours before the strike, reversed himself on Assad utterly: “With the acts that he has taken, it would seem that there would be no role for him to govern the Syrian people.”

Shortly after the strike, Trump’s national security adviser, H.R. McMaster, emphasized the unacceptability of chemical weapons use, seemingly rowing the Trump administration back from seeking regime change. Last week, the White House threatened Assad with another missile strike after observing signs of a follow-on attack, something Tillerson discussed with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov. While Tillerson settled into a stance that privileged defeating ISIS over ousting Assad, Haley has not, telling the House Foreign Affairs Committee last week, “you can’t have Assad in power with a healthy Syria.”

### Splitting Russia From Iran

There is another aspect to the emerging Syria strategy, one that represents a big, long-term gamble: cleaving Russia from Iran.

No one in the administration believes they can split Assad’s two big backers in the short term. But the senior official notes that the U.S. position, in which their allies do not return ISIS-held territory to Assad, is closer to Russia’s position than Iran’s. Iran demands Assad rule all of Syria, while the Kremlin considers that unrealistic.

Cooperating with Russia in Syria is a proposal with a significant pedigree inside the Trump White House. McMaster’s predecessor as national security adviser, Mike Flynn, proposed expanding the deconfliction channel into a mechanism for outright military cooperation against ISIS. The



Pentagon didn't go in for it—not least because of congressionally imposed restrictions on any such joint action. And congressional sources think that's likely to be a problem with the latest Syria strategy.

The Senate's version of the annual defense bill isn't public yet. But a congressional source said the forthcoming version will emerge from the Armed Services Committee with the same ban on cooperation with the Russian military. The source anticipated that the latest Syria strategy, with its acquiescence to Assad's grip on power, would spark congressional opposition, including from Russia/Syria hawks like committee chairman John McCain. When Tillerson and Haley first floated acquiescing to Assad

remaining in power, McCain denounced a potential "Faustian bargain with Assad and Putin sealed with an empty promise of counterterrorism cooperation."

A spokesman for the National Security Council said: "We are prepared to explore numerous options to ensure stability in Syria. However, I don't want to get ahead of any talks with the Russians."

#### Accepting Moscow's Peace

Beyond congressional opposition, the optics of this approach to Syria place the U.S. as tacitly accepting a Russian-Iranian-Turkish peace process. Hashed out without American involvement in Astana, Kazakhstan, the three powers proposed creating four "de-

escalation zones" in Syria for demilitarization, the return of displaced people or refugees, the provision of humanitarian aid, and the restoration of vital services. The centrality of the regime's allies to the plan prompted the Syrian opposition to reject it as a way station to Assad reconsolidating control.

The senior administration official acknowledged the risks inherent to the strategy. Deconfliction has been a herculean effort and will likely continue to be. While the official attributed a recent drop in violence to the Astana process, the official was unprepared to consider Astana a success.

Additionally, the U.S. relies on the heavily Kurdish SDF, which is controlling territory on the border

with Turkey, which considers the Kurdish YPG within the SDF a terrorist group. Russia has a clearer policy—support Assad—than the U.S. does, and a track record of frustrating U.S. efforts in Syria, even the ones that U.S. officials thought aligned with Russian interests.

And with Assad responsible for the devastation of Syria, the biggest question of the new strategy is a long-term one, one that Trump's meeting with Putin can't answer: How will generations of Syrians view an America that tolerated Assad in the name of defeating ISIS?

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Satter : Trump Must Stand Strong Against Putin

David Satter

When President Trump meets Vladimir Putin in Hamburg on Friday, he needs to put aside any thought of another "reset" of U.S.-Russian relations. This is necessary not because of Russia's role in the 2016 U.S. election but because any compromise of the American deterrent posture toward Russia will make a dangerous international situation even worse.

U.S. and Russian officials have cited Ukraine and Syria as areas where agreement may be possible. Yet sanctions against Russians close to Mr. Putin, and against Russia's banking and energy industries, are necessary to prevent a new outbreak of war in Ukraine. After 10,000 deaths on all sides, including 3,000 civilians, Russia is building a new railway line along its border with Ukraine that would make it possible to transfer troops to the south. At the same time, Moscow is preparing to hold its largest military exercises since 1991, involving an estimated 400,000 to 500,000 troops, in September.

Whether or not Russia is preparing to attack, it has not achieved its objectives in Ukraine, including the overthrow of the existing government. The Ukrainian army has improved rapidly. At the same time, American and European sanctions have caused huge losses to Mr. Putin's cronies, who are believed to be nominal owners of major assets world-wide whose real beneficiary is Putin. That may be why Russia abandoned plans to carve a "New Russia" out of Ukrainian territory.

Last month, Syrian tanks breached the line of separation between the forces of the Russian-backed Assad regime and the U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. A Syrian fighter jet began dropping bombs near U.S.-backed forces, and the U.S. shot it down. The Russians then threatened to shoot down coalition aircraft. After several hours of high tension, the Russians agreed to ease the crisis—until next time.

Making a new "reset" even more inadvisable are signs of Russian involvement with terrorism in Ukraine, Western Europe and in Russia itself. On June 27, Maksim Shapoval, a colonel in Ukrainian military intelligence, was killed by a car bomb in central Kiev. Pavel Sheremet, a Kremlin critic who wrote for the site *Ukrainskaya Pravda*, was killed in an identical manner in Kiev on July 20, 2016. Russia said Ukraine "had failed to protect him."

On March 23, Denis Voronenkov, a former Russian legislator who fled to Ukraine, was shot dead outside the Premier Palace Hotel. There was also an attempt to kill Amina Okueva and her husband, Adam Osmayev, Chechens who fought for Ukraine in the Donbass. Artur Denisultanov-Kurmakyevev, a Chechen assassin posing as a French journalist, opened fire on them, but Mrs. Okuyeva shot the assassin four times. Both were wounded but survived.

Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakyevev earlier worked in Western Europe for the pro-Russian Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, and many

members of the Chechen diaspora are living in fear of Russian supported assassins.

There are also questions about terror in Russia. On April 3 a bomb exploded in the St. Petersburg metro, killing 14, many of them students. The bombing came a week after nationwide anticorruption protests in which young people played the main role. In the aftermath of the attack, Yuri Shvytkin, a Duma deputy, proposed a moratorium on public protests.

Opposition leaders in Russia noted that the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations reported two explosions, one near the Technical Institute station and the other on the red line. A second bomb was later found unexploded in a train on the red line, raising the question of how the authorities knew about the second bomb before it was discovered.

Mr. Trump must stick to a formal exchange of positions to avoid being drawn into a false logic. The Putin regime treats the interests of the state, which it identifies with itself, as more important than any objective reality. When Mr. Assad used chemical weapons, Mr. Putin said the charges against Syria were a "provocation."

After Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 was shot down over Eastern Ukraine in July 2014, killing 298, the Russians said it was destroyed by a Ukrainian missile and accused the Dutch investigators of bias. In fact, the missile came from a Russian supplied Buk anti-aircraft battery, and

its path from separatist-held territory was identified by satellite data.

More recently, when the U.S. announced plans to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile-defense system in South Korea, Sergey Ryabkov, Russia's deputy foreign minister, declared it was time to halt the "demonization of North Korea."

Faced with this type of mendacity, Mr. Trump needs to show that attempts at deception will not work and that while specific, narrow agreements may be possible, the U.S. is prepared to deter Russian aggression.

The protest movement has reappeared in Russia. Denis Volkov, a researcher with the Levada Center, has explained the popularity of protest leader Alexei Navalny among young Russians. "He focuses on simple but crucial issues: it is bad to lie, steal, and to be a hypocrite," Mr. Volkov writes. "Corruption and bribes are wrong." In the face of this kind of appeal, the U.S. cannot seek an unprincipled deal with Mr. Putin if it wishes to have some influence over Russia's fate in the years ahead.

*Mr. Satter is affiliated with the Hudson Institute and Johns Hopkins University. His book, "The Less You Know, the Better You Sleep: Russia's Road to Terror and Dictatorship under Yeltsin and Putin" (Yale), will be out in paperback this summer.*



### Lucas : Trump and Putin have a lot to discuss

Edward Lucas is a senior editor at The Economist, at which he was the Moscow bureau chief from 1998 to 2002. He also is senior vice president at the Center for European Policy Analysis, a Washington think tank. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own.

(CNN)We need to talk. On that, both the United States and Russia can agree. And the opportunity of the G20 summit in Hamburg this weekend is ideal. It allows anything from a full, formal sit-down meeting to a staged informal encounter in which both sides invest minimal political capital. But don't get your hopes up.

In a rational world, the two leaders' agenda would be packed with must-solve problems. American and Russian forces, and their local proxies,

are perilously close to clashes in Syria

. Terrifying near-misses have become

almost routine over the Baltic Sea

. A huge Russian military exercise,

Zapad-17

, looms in September, causing jitters in NATO's front-line states of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

The arms control regime bequeathed to the world at the end of the old Cold War

is in tatters

. The war in Ukraine grinds on, amid deadlocked diplomacy. Add sanctions, spy wars and disagreements over the Arctic, and you have enough material for a series of summits, not just one meeting.

Though Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and even Vladimir Putin himself, Donald Trump's ill-starred encounter with Lavrov in the Oval Office in May sparked controversy both for excessive secrecy (no American media were allowed to witness it) and excessive indiscretion (Trump spoke loosely

about secret intelligence provided by Israel

).

In a rational world, Russia would be the one making concessions. The Kremlin's bravado and decisiveness are misleading: Russia's economy -- in 2015 just over half the size of California's at \$1.36 trillion -- has only recently

started to recover from a recession

, bought on in part by sanctions from the West.

Low oil prices

have delayed Putin's ambitious military modernization plans. Diplomacy is big on show, weak on substance. Whereas China is rising, Russia is falling.

The main reason that Russia is in a position to bargain at all with Trump is that the United States has in six short months squandered its global prestige in a manner almost unparalleled in modern history. As the

latest Pew Research opinion poll shows

, more people around the world have confidence in Putin than Trump. When the American leader meets his G20 colleagues, they will treat him with wary pity, along with Britain's Theresa May, who represents another country that is hurling itself over a geopolitical cliff.

The fears are not of a decisively bad strategy. Few expect Trump to

pull off a "Grand Bargain" with the Russian leader

, trading European security for help against terrorism and for concessions on trade and investment. America's allies now reckon that the hallmark of the Trump presidency is paralysis and contradiction.

There is plenty of scope for bad decisions, but many of them will be ineffective.

Meanwhile, other countries and institutions are getting on with the job. Congress has taken the lead on

consolidating sanctions against Russia

. The Senate has approved sanctions and sent the bill to the House for a final vote. America's superpower energy industry is blunting the edge of the Kremlin's energy weapon in eastern Europe:

Trump will visit Poland

before the G20 summit starts, at Poland's President's invitation. The visit coincides with the recent arrival of the

first tanker bringing American liquefied natural gas

(LNG) to that corner of Europe.

And while the President is likely to hail liberalization of American oil and natural gas exports as a masterstroke, he is less likely to say that it reflects policies belatedly implemented by the last administration. His conservative-nationalist Polish hosts will cheer regardless. Nobody else will notice.

Meanwhile, Russia's attempts to play divide and rule in Europe have largely failed.

Alleged meddling in the French elections

backfired. Emmanuel Macron's government and presidency are hawkish on Russia in a way not seen in France for generations.

When Angela Merkel comes back to power in Germany in the fall, strengthened in her fourth term in office by what looks like an inevitable election win, the Kremlin will be a big target. She and Macron see eye-to-eye on Russia (and on much else besides). Russia's bridgeheads of influence -- Hungary, Greece, Bulgaria -- look puny when measured against this new Franco-German axis.

Russia's attempts to bully its neighbors have also backfired. Non-NATO states

Sweden

and Finland are boosting their defenses and rapidly increasing their

regional military cooperation

. NATO itself has

deployed forces to the front-line states:

not enough to resist a full-scale Russian attack, but certainly sufficient to deter any thoughts in the Kremlin of a speedy and painless land grab. The military picture in Europe is more unfavorable to Russia than at any time since 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed.

The lack of American leadership, in short, is lamentable, but not lethal. The rest of the West is learning to manage. Russia has, as usual, played a brilliant tactical game while marching into a strategic dead end.

Perhaps the sharpest example of this is the effect of Russia's meddling in the American presidential election last year. Leave aside whether it was decisive, and whether the real aim was to elect Trump (more likely, in my view, the plan was to damage Hillary Clinton and sow discord and rancor). The outcome has been to cast an unforgiving light on Trump's Russia policy.

If he tries to make concessions, he will come under furious attack. If he engages in even skimpy diplomatic negotiations, allies will cry betrayal. If he does nothing, he undermines his claim to be a deal maker. Most likely, he will enter the meeting grotesquely unprepared, with predictably shambolic results.

These torments of Trumpian foreign policy may be entertaining to watch, but in practice they are not much use for the Kremlin. American weakness has indeed created vacuums -- in the Middle East, in East Asia, in Latin America, and in Africa. But the story so far is that these are not opportunities that Russia can exploit.

The Trump-Putin meeting will be closely watched and will provide plenty of entertaining reportage (How will they

manage the handshake?

Will Trump live-tweet it?). But showbiz aside, both leaders are grappling with the constraining consequences of their own mistakes.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### White House Limits Pentagon on Afghan Troop Level

Dion Nissenbaum

WASHINGTON—

A few days after President Donald Trump gave his Pentagon chief the unilateral authority last month to send thousands of American troops to Afghanistan at his own discretion, the White House sent classified

guidance that effectively limits the number of forces.

The memo, sent by national security adviser Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster to a small group of administration officials, said that the president would let Defense Secretary Jim Mattis send no more than 3,900 troops to Afghanistan without

coming back to confer with the White House, according to people familiar with the document.

The conflicting messages reflect divisions that have surfaced in the Trump administration as it tries to develop a comprehensive new strategy for Afghanistan, amid concerns about diving deeper into a

16-year-old conflict that has claimed more than 2,400 American lives and cost the U.S. \$2.4 trillion.

Mr. Mattis said he hopes to present a plan to the White House by mid-July that will give the U.S.-led coalition the forces it needs to blunt Taliban momentum. The rise of Islamic State in Afghanistan and the

Afghan army's failure to keep Taliban forces from gaining momentum have created more urgency in Washington for a new strategy in a conflict U.S. officials say is at a dangerous stalemate.

But the strategic planning is tangled in disagreements between factions in the White House and across the administration. They differ on what the U.S. goals should be in Afghanistan, whether to jump-start peace talks with the Taliban and how much pressure to put on Pakistan, according to current and former U.S. officials.

Administration officials said Mr. Trump's move last month handing Mr. Mattis the authority to decide how many troops to send to Afghanistan was an outgrowth of the president's belief that the White House shouldn't micromanage wars—a criticism he leveled at President Barack Obama.

Mr. Mattis announced Mr. Trump's decision in a statement on June 14, saying it "will enable our military to have greater agility to conduct operations."

The subsequent memo limiting troop levels came as a surprise to some administration officials who said they were under the impression that the White House would impose no such restrictions. The White House's National Security Council declined to comment.

Dana White, the Pentagon's chief spokeswoman, said she couldn't discuss details of any classified memos, but suggested that the troop number isn't as important as the broader strategy.

"A number doesn't really tell you anything," she said. "It requires a greater context, and if you are sending sons and daughters to Afghanistan, you owe it to them to lay out what's the

way forward, not just a number."

The Pentagon has been weighing options to send between 2,000 and 5,000 U.S. troops to help the more than 8,400 American forces currently in Afghanistan, many of whom are focused on advising and training Afghan forces.

To help the Afghan security forces seize the advantage, the U.S. is expected to send American troops closer to the fighting and carry out more airstrikes, according to U.S. officials.

Defense officials said the White House memo wasn't likely to hamstring Pentagon planning, even though it puts constraints on military decision-making.

At this point in the strategy review, according to current and former U.S. officials, the administration has agreed to one key understanding on troop levels: U.S. troops will stay in Afghanistan for as long as they are needed. There will be no timelines for withdrawal—a key break with an Obama administration approach seen by some Trump administration officials as a strategic mistake.

Instead, the officials said, the U.S. is now likely to scale back its military presence only when Afghan forces are able to secure most of the country and the Taliban threat is contained.

Pentagon officials openly accept that the fight with the Taliban is at a stalemate. The Taliban have moved to govern territory under their control, putting millions of Afghans under Taliban rule. Growing Russian involvement with the Taliban has complicated matters.

Efforts on another U.S. priority in Afghanistan, to deny extremist groups sanctuary, have fallen short: The Pentagon estimates that Afghanistan and Pakistan now are

home to more than 20 extremist groups, the highest concentration in the world.

For months, the American commander of the U.S.-led military coalition in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson, has been asking the new administration to send more U.S. troops to help turn the tide.

That decision has been delayed as the strategy review continues. It has been slowed in part by staffing shortages that have left the State Department with few high-level specialists to craft plans for diplomatic, economic and political pillars of the strategy.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson recently scrapped of the post of special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The State Department's bureau of South and Central Asia affairs has been hobbled by the departure of key leaders. And Mr. Trump has yet to name new ambassadors for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

A senior State Department official said the agency places a premium on making sure it has the right people leading its policy on Afghanistan and has hundreds of people working in Afghanistan to help achieve U.S. goals.

The strategy review, which initially focused primarily on Afghanistan, has been expanded to explore the possibility of tougher steps against Pakistan. Many officials in Washington and Kabul view Islamabad as an unreliable partner and want to punish Pakistan for providing sanctuary for extremist leaders.

The idea is resonating in the White House, where Mr. Trump has told aides that he doesn't like the idea that Pakistan takes billions from the U.S., provides sanctuary for insurgent groups and may be

"laughing" at Washington, according to current and former officials.

This faction of the Trump administration wants the U.S. to gradually ratchet up pressure on Islamabad by slowing military deals, reducing economic support and imposing sanctions on the country's intelligence service, which has been accused by top U.S. officials of backing extremist fighters that have carried out deadly attacks on American forces in Afghanistan. Pakistan has denied that it supports or shelters insurgents.

But there is no agreement yet on how far to push Islamabad, and Mr. Trump and aides are wary of putting too much pressure on Pakistan and making things worse, officials said.

Administration officials also are at odds over how aggressively to push Afghanistan peace talks with the Taliban.

Mr. Mattis is among those who have indicated they see little value in that, when Taliban fighters have battlefield momentum.

The Pentagon chief and others have said they want to pump in more American troops to help the Afghan army push back Taliban advances to give the government more power at the bargaining table.

That could take years, and gains by similar campaigns in the past have been fleeting.

"This is not something that's going to happen overnight," said Ms. White, the Pentagon spokeswoman. "There's no silver bullet. It's going to take a comprehensive approach to move forward."

**The  
New York  
Times**

## U.S. Says Dispute Between Qatar and Neighbors at Impasse

Gardiner Harris

WASHINGTON

— The Trump administration warned on Thursday that a festering dispute between Qatar and its fellow Arab neighbors is at an impasse.

"We believe that this could potentially drag on for weeks. It could drag on for months. It could possibly even intensify," said Heather Nauert, a spokeswoman for the State Department. And in a joint statement, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain said Qatar "has worked to thwart the efforts and diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis."

The dispute among the mostly Sunni Muslim nations puts a host of top

United States priorities at risk, including the effort to defeat the Islamic State and rebuild portions of Iraq and Syria that have been devastated by three years of fighting.

Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Cairo and Manama last month announced an embargo against Qatar to punish Doha for what the four capitals called its support for terrorism. It was largely the work of the Saudi defense minister, Mohammed bin Salman, who was elevated several weeks later to become Saudi Arabia's new crown prince, and revealed fissures within the Trump administration.

Initially, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson largely sided with Qataris

but did not give specific recommendations for resolving the crisis. President Trump, by contrast, has sided with the Saudis, and accused Qatar of being a "funder of terrorism at a very high level."

At odds with his own president, Mr. Tillerson has largely washed his hands of the impasse, saying the nations should work out a resolution on their own.

As a former chief executive of Exxon Mobil, Mr. Tillerson has extensive contacts in the Middle East but has been unable to use his experience to resolve the dispute.

The four countries have since created a list of demands for Qatar to meet before the embargo is lifted,

including shuttering the news network Al Jazeera and abandoning ties with Islamist organizations. But few in the region believe Doha could accede to most of them.

The Saudis have shown few signs of relenting. But Senator Bob Corker, Republican from Tennessee and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has pledged to delay arms sales to several of the countries — including Saudi Arabia, which agreed in May to buy to \$110 billion in weapons — until the dispute is resolved.

In the meantime, Qatar's relations with Shiite-led Iran have prospered, with Tehran providing the tiny Persian Gulf nation with fresh produce.



On Thursday, Ms. Nauert praised a Kuwaiti effort to mediate the dispute and said that Mr. Tillerson "has made himself available to all sides of this matter."

"We believe that overall, the fight against terrorism is something that will bring all these countries together eventually, because we still have that shared fight. And I think all the

nations recognize that," Ms. Nauert said.

The State Department announced late Thursday night that Mr. Tillerson would travel next week to Kuwait,

where negotiations between Qatar and the four Arab nations are ongoing.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

# Ships Exporting Iranian Oil Go Dark, Raising Sanctions Red Flags (UNE)

Sarah McFarlane and Benoit Faucon

Ships transporting almost a fifth of Iran's oil exports in the second half of last year either turned off their radio-signal tracking systems or gave misleading information about the origin of their cargo, red flags for governments seeking evidence of evasion of international sanctions against Tehran.

Some 47 of 55 ships carrying Iranian oil products from Iran to the United Arab Emirates for two U.A.E.-registered companies failed to emit signals from the system that transmits their position and course, for part or all of their journey, according to an analysis of the two firms' shipments that was completed for The Wall Street Journal by ship-tracker Windward Ltd., an Israeli firm that uses satellite imaging to map shipping routes.

The shipments, made by two U.A.E.-registered traders, Silk Road Petroleum FZE and Petrochemix General Trading LLC, accounted for 17% of Iran's fuel-oil and gas-oil exports during the six-month period, according to records compiled by the oil-product traders.

The records, based on information from state-run National Iranian Oil Co. that shipping agents combine with their own information and provide to traders, listed the vessels' cargo as fuel oil or gas oil. Iranian authorities didn't return calls and emails seeking comment about the shipments.

While there is no penalty for not using the systems, shipping guidelines advise ships to use tracking systems to avoid collisions between vessels or locate them if they need to be rescued. Sometimes ships turn off their tracking systems to evade pirates, said Andrew Bardot, chief executive of IGP&I, an association of marine liability insurers.

But "this tactic can also be used to hide the genuine details of a voyage so as to enable the breach of sanctions," said Pottengal Mukundan, director of the

International Maritime Bureau, a London-based trade body set up to fight maritime crime and malpractice.

The U.S. government is analyzing ship movements in the Persian Gulf for any attempts to circumvent bans on funding Iran's weapons programs or clearing payments for Iranian oil through the U.S. financial system, a U.S. official said.

U.S. officials said they weren't familiar with the particular shipments identified by the Journal.

This scrutiny comes amid uncertainty in the U.S. about the future of the 2015 multinational agreement in which Iran pledged to scale back its nuclear program in return for the lifting of most international sanctions.

President Donald Trump has cast doubt on whether his administration will continue to support his predecessor's commitment to the deal. U.S. officials said the White House is reviewing its Iran policy and considering stiffer measures. Shortly after Mr. Trump took office, the administration imposed new sanctions related to Iran's defense and ballistic-missile programs.

While the nuclear agreement lifted many obstacles to doing business with Iran, the U.S. maintains sanctions that make it difficult to trade Iranian oil. A ban on clearing payments through the U.S. financial system hinders trade because oil is mostly bought and sold in dollars. The U.S. also prohibits doing business with blacklisted entities including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a military division that is dominant in Iran's economy.

A shipowner, the ship's master—the person responsible for the navigation of the vessel—or the trader who chartered the vessel could give an instruction to shut off the automatic identification system, or AIS. U.S. investigators would likely look into the trader's responsibility in such situations in addition to the shipper, said Richard Nephew, who served as deputy coordinator for sanctions policy at

the State Department from 2013 to 2015 and is now a senior research scholar at Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy.

"In most cases we assume it's not plausible that a trader would be ignorant of any attempts to avoid international monitoring of ship movements especially if it occurs on multiple shipping companies with the same trading company," he said.

Oil traders typically monitor the movements of their cargoes and would be in a position to know if the AIS isn't transmitting location, shipping and sanctions experts said.

Of Silk Road Petroleum's 46 shipments in the period, 40 emitted no tracking signals. The company didn't respond to requests to comment emailed to an address in the directory of the U.A.E.'s Hamriyah Free Zone Authority, where the company is registered. The email address was recently removed from the directory.

In the nine Petrochemix shipments in the second half of 2016, seven ships emitted no AIS radio signals at some point. A Petrochemix co-owner, when asked about the shipments, said the firm had no relations or business with Iranian companies, and that any AIS shut-off was a matter for vessel owners. Petrochemix chartered tankers owned by seven different shippers in the period.

The 47 shipments during which AIS was off were handled by 15 vessels. Many of the shipowners couldn't be reached, and one declined to comment. One shipper said many charterers tell ships to shut off the AIS because "most major banks don't want to deal with" such trade.

"The single biggest issue preventing wider trade between Iran and the rest of the world is the continuing reluctance of international banks to process payments to and from Iran," said Sue Millar, partner at law firm Stephenson Harwood LLP.

Blue Ocean Shipping Lines, an owner of one of the vessels chartered by both companies for a

total of nine shipments, said its ship's AIS was broken at the time. Another shipper said the AIS was never intentionally switched off, nor was any "AIS deficiency" reported.

Apart from tracking cargo, the AIS system is used to provide location information to insurance companies, banks and others. But it can be manipulated to indicate a ship is somewhere it isn't, by manually entering incorrect coordinates or ports. Radio signals issued by as many as 16 of the 47 ships indicated their Iranian cargo began the journey in a different country, though satellite imagery showed them to have been loaded in Iran, according to Windward. That suggests the signals may have been used to transmit false location information, Windward said.

"A misdeclaration of the ports of loading or discharge would be one of the indications that the voyage breached sanctions," Mr. Mukundan said. "In any case, such a misdeclaration would be improper and misleading."

Hiding a cargo's Iranian origin would allow an exporter to be paid more easily in dollars or conceal the involvement of blacklisted entities, according to London law firm W Legal Ltd, which specializes in sanctions law. "The U.S. administration is watching Iran-related business like a hawk," said Nigel Kushner, W Legal's chief executive.

A U.S. Treasury official declined to comment on the shipments identified by the Journal. "We take allegations of sanctionable conduct seriously but we do not comment on applicability of sanctions in individual circumstances," the official said.

This year, the U.S. government said a Taiwanese shipping company had violated Iran sanctions, and in its finding said the company left ship logs blank and switched off the vessel's AIS to conceal a ship-to-ship transfer of Iranian crude.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

# Editorial : Putin's Assist for North Korea

President Trump meets with

Vladimir Putin on Friday, and the Russian strongman sent his early

regards on Thursday by nixing a U.S. resolution at the U.N. Security

Council condemning North Korea's latest missile launch. The resolution



didn't stipulate any action, but our friends the Russians still objected.

The Kremlin excuse is that the draft U.S. statement referred to the rocket as an intercontinental ballistic missile. Never mind that North Korea claims the missile was the equivalent of an ICBM, and the U.S. and other analysis of the trajectory and altitude suggest the same.



## Opinions : On North Korea, nuke deterrence works

**David C. Kang**, *The New York Times*:

"Does anyone actually think that with another round of sanctions the country's leader, Kim Jong Un, will suddenly give up power and North Koreans will all become liberal democrats? ... Nuclear weapons are almost useless for coercion, but they are great for deterrence. ... The more pressure the U.S. puts on the North Koreans, the more likely they are to continue perfecting their missiles and nuclear weapons. In short, deterrence works, and neither North Korea nor the rest of the world is in danger of forgetting that."

**Jake Novak**, *CNBC*: "It's likely that the (Group of 20



Gordon Lubold in Washington and Peter Nicholas in Warsaw, Poland

The Trump administration said it would give diplomacy more time to resolve a gathering crisis over North Korea's efforts to build a nuclear weapon that can reach U.S. shores.

On Thursday, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said the U.S. wasn't closer to war, in his first remarks since North Korea launched this week what American officials concluded was the country's first intercontinental ballistic missile.

"The president has been very clear and the secretary of state has been very clear that we are leading with diplomatic and economic efforts," Mr. Mattis said during an impromptu press briefing at the Pentagon. He said the military "remains ready" based on its treaties with U.S. allies in Japan and South Korea.

His remarks came after President Donald Trump on Thursday said he was considering "some pretty severe things" in response to North Korea's latest efforts. At a joint news conference in Warsaw with his Polish counterpart, Andrzej Duda, Mr. Trump said that North Korean leaders were "behaving in a very, very dangerous manner and

"The rationale [for Russia's rejection] is that based on our (Ministry of Defense's) assessment we cannot confirm that the missile can be classified as an ICBM," Russia's U.N. mission said in an email to other Security Council members. "Therefore we are not in a position to agree to this classification on behalf of the whole council since there is no consensus on this issue."

summit) wanted to talk mostly about trade and possibly the environment (this weekend) in Hamburg. Funny what even a mildly successful ICBM test carried out by a rogue nuclear nation can do to upset even the best laid plans. ... President Trump has made it clear in recent months to anyone who didn't already know that Chinese economic pressure is the key to forcing North Korea to back off. But as long as the Chinese believe the U.S. will never launch a military strike that truly destabilizes (North Korea), Beijing sees sitting on its hands as a pretty good play."

**Adam Cathcart**, *CNN*: "The North Koreans had waited for precisely the moment at which something predictable would happen: Namely,

something will have to be done about it."

He didn't say what steps he might take or if he was contemplating military action. Later in the same forum, Mr. Trump said "That doesn't mean we're going to do them," adding, "I think we will just take a look at what happens over the coming weeks and months with respect to North Korea."

North Korea's successful launch Tuesday of what experts say was its first ballistic missile capable of reaching the continental U.S. escalated the diplomatic face-off. The actual threat is still unclear. Many experts doubt North Korean claims that it has the ability to mount a nuclear bomb on such a long-range missile.

Military reprisal by the U.S. carries substantial risks not only to U.S. forces, but to American allies in Asia, especially to North Korea's neighbors in South Korea and Japan.

The Trump administration has sought other avenues to choke off North Korea's nuclear program, above all trying to persuade China to use its sway as the country's largest trading partner to rein in Pyongyang.

The likelier explanation is that Mr. Putin wanted to send a message that he can make trouble if Mr. Trump resists a "reset" in U.S.-Russia ties. Russia has also joined with China in trying to coax the U.S. and South Korea to cease military exercises in Northeast Asia in return for North Korea freezing its nuclear program. But that would merely ratify Pyongyang's current stockpile and missile progress, assuming it

they waited for latent tensions in U.S.-China relations to make themselves apparent and then launched their missile. ... Only a few days ago, Trump had a long phone call with Chinese President Xi Jinping. According to Chinese state media, it was made clear to Trump that although some progress had been made on U.S.-China relations, there was still tension between the two superpowers, owing to 'negative factors.'

**Phar Kim Beng**, *South China Morning Post*: "Every successful launch is accompanied by carefully stage-managed images showing huge outbursts of joy, not only by a Kim grinning ear to ear, but by the top military brass, too. ... These

images of wild celebrations, of fists pumps and bear hugs, are beamed across the dour country, in an effort to get all citizens to partake in the joy of acquiring a potential nuclear deterrent. ... It is the only high that Kim can offer his people. ... Just like an addict, as the lows of his people get ever lower, so Kim finds he must respond with the only high he knows. Off goes another missile."

Russia and China are authoritarian powers seeking to dominate their regions, but the problem with tolerating such "spheres of influence" is that regional powers often collaborate to stir trouble beyond those spheres. As they are now abetting North Korea.

Both China and Russia have balked at new sanctions or military pressure against North Korea. Beijing is worried such actions could spark a humanitarian crisis on its doorstep.

On Thursday, U.S. efforts in the Security Council hit a hurdle when Moscow disputed conclusions that Pyongyang had fired an intercontinental ballistic missile.

## U.S. to Give Diplomacy More Time to Resolve North Korea Threat

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has pressed China and other countries that host North Korean guest workers and conduct business with Pyongyang to scale back those ties, a department spokeswoman said. Washington remains in a "diplomatic phase" to address Pyongyang's nuclear program and is considering fresh sanctions to against the country and others that do business with it, she said. Last week the Trump administration said it would cut China's Bank of Dandong off from the U.S. financial system.

"If you are doing business with North Korea that is \$2 million worth, for example, a lot of countries will say, 'Oh, it's not much money,'" said Heather Nauert, the spokeswoman. "This secretary and other folks in this administration have come back and they say, 'Cut that in half.'"

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said the Trump administration would introduce new sanctions against North Korea in the Security Council. She said the U.S. would be willing to use military force if punitive restrictions fail. Ms. Haley also said the U.S. would target countries that have trade partnerships with North Korea, pointing specifically to China.

Mr. Mattis said the lack of a consensus didn't suggest an absence of international concern. "I think everyone is trying, some have different ideas of approaches, that's the normal part of diplomacy to work this out," he said.

The U.S. defense chief called North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's launches a "very serious escalation, this provocation, this affront" to U.N. Security Council resolutions that forbid them.

But diplomacy, Mr. Mattis said, hasn't failed. Self-restraint, he said, has prevented war as the U.S. engages with allies and pushes toward a "whole of government" approach, along with allies.

He also issued a caveat: "Obviously, any kind of effort by North Korea to start a war would lead to severe consequences."

## Bandow : If Trump wants China to 'solve the North Korea problem,' he has to cater to Beijing's interests

Doug Bandow

Even when President Trump has a good idea, he doesn't stick with it long enough. Like pushing China on North Korea.

Of North Korea, said candidate Trump: "We should put pressure on China to solve the problem." As president, he initially placed the issue front and center in the U.S.-China relationship.

But a couple months later, Trump appears to have lost hope in Beijing. "While I greatly appreciate the efforts of President Xi & China to help with North Korea, it has not worked out. At least I know China tried," he tweeted recently.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman responded that his nation had "played an important and constructive role" in promoting peace on the Korean peninsula. Exactly how the People's Republic of China helped is not clear, however. It cut back on coal purchases, but other commerce with North Korea continues. The Trump administration asked the Xi government to act against ten firms and individuals who trade with the North, but is still waiting for action.

People look longingly to Beijing only because enlisting China's help appears to be the best of several bad options.

Most proponents of "the China card" imagine Beijing cutting off trade, especially energy and food. Having just returned from Pyongyang — the North Korean government invited me but the Cato

Institute paid my expenses — I found both energy and food to be in seeming good supply. Despite reports that gasoline prices have increased, there was no visual evidence of a shortage.

An undefined diplomatic duty won't prompt China to act. The Trump administration must therefore convince Xi's government that punishing North Korea benefits China. Which means Washington must take into account Beijing's interests.

First, Chinese officials have long blamed the U.S. for adopting a threatening policy, which spurred the North to build nuclear weapons. Thus, Washington should work with South Korea and Japan to develop a package of benefits — economic assistance, security assurances, peace treaty, diplomatic recognition, and more — to offer in return for denuclearization, and present it to Beijing, then to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Second, China fears a messy collapse if the DPRK refuses to disarm. Nightmares of millions of refugees crossing the Yalu River, factional conflict in Pyongyang, combat among competing military units spilling across the border, and loose nukes have created a strong Chinese preference for the status quo. The U.S. needs to emphasize that the present situation is also dangerous and discuss how the allies are prepared to assist with any ill consequences. A commitment to help care for refugees and accept Chinese intervention in the North,

for instance, might help assuage Beijing's concerns.

Third, Beijing does not want to facilitate Korean reunification, creating a larger and stronger state allied with the U.S. and leaving American troops on the Yalu, or even farther down the peninsula. Among the issues worth discussing: respect for Chinese economic interests in North Korea, withdrawal of U.S. forces after reunification, and military nonalignment of a unified Korea.

Fourth, the U.S. could offer additional positive incentives. Trade, Taiwan, and territorial issues all provide areas where Washington could offer specific concessions in return for Beijing's assistance. That obviously would increase the price of any agreement, but the U.S. has to decide how far it will go to promote denuclearization.

Of course, such an approach leaves much to be desired. Even if Kim Jong Un's government accepted benefits in exchange for disarmament, human rights abuses could still continue. Or Pyongyang might refuse and survive, leaving an even more dangerous and impoverished nuclear nation. In the event of government collapse, China might resurrect the DPRK, only with more pliable rulers.

However, there are no better options. Military strikes might not destroy the North's main nuclear assets and probably would trigger a second Korean War, which would result in horrific death and destruction even for the "victors."

Targeting Chinese firms would damage relations with Beijing without necessarily significantly weakening Pyongyang. People look longingly to Beijing only because enlisting China's help appears to be the best of several bad options.

If there ever were a time for the U.S. to negotiate for Chinese cooperation, it is now. Trump and Xi appear to have established a positive relationship. The tragic death of Otto Warmbier after his release by Pyongyang adds urgency to efforts to address North Korea. Moreover, in Pyongyang I saw no visible signs of the warm friendship that officially exists between North Korea and China. In fact, North Korean officials said they wanted to reduce their dependence on "any one nation."

Winning Chinese assistance remains a long shot, but Trump should put his self-proclaimed negotiating skills to work. There is no alternative, other than essentially accepting North Korea as a nuclear state, which the president presumably does not want as his foreign policy legacy.

*Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and a former special assistant to President Reagan. He is the author of "Tripwire: Korea and U.S. Foreign Policy in a Changed World" and coauthor of "The Korean Conundrum: America's Troubled Relations with North and South Korea."*

## The Global Web That Keeps North Korea Running

Jonathan Cheng in Seoul, Jeremy Page in Beijing and Alastair Gale in Tokyo

North Korea may be one of the world's most isolated countries, but the tightening sanctions regime it has lived under for the past two decades is anything but impermeable.

An examination of North Korea's global connections reveals that even as it becomes increasingly dependent on China, Pyongyang maintains economic and diplomatic ties with many nations. Those links—from commercial and banking relationships to scientific training, arms sales, monument-building and restaurants—have helped it amass

the money and technical know-how to develop nuclear weapons and missiles.

The nature and extent of North Korea's global ties comes from current and former officials, researchers, North Korean defectors, U.N. decisions, NGOs and an analysis of economic statistics.

In some cases, North Korea leans on old allies, particularly those like Cuba from the former Communist bloc, or those like Syria that are similarly hostile to the U.S. In others, notably in Africa, it has more transactional relationships to supply items such as cheap weaponry or military training. In the Middle East, it supplies laborers for construction

work and pockets almost all their earnings.

Sanctions against North Korea haven't been as broad as those applied to Iran over its nuclear program, nor as rigidly enforced.

David S. Cohen, undersecretary of the Treasury for terrorism and financial intelligence during the Obama administration, wrote in an op-ed in April that "North Korea has gotten off relatively easy, especially as compared with Iran."

Trying to crack down on North Korean business activities is like a game of Whac-A-Mole. North Korean defectors have detailed how the regime uses front companies to conceal its commercial activities in foreign countries, or adopts

business names that obscure their identity by avoiding using North Korea's full name, thereby benefiting from confusion over whether the entity is North or South Korean.

Pyongyang maintains diplomatic ties with 164 countries and has embassies in 47, according to the National Committee on North Korea, a Washington-based nongovernmental organization, and the Honolulu-based East-West Center.

Although it lags far behind China, India has been North Korea's second biggest trade partner in the past couple of years, buying commodities including silver and selling it chemicals among other goods. Russia has exported

petroleum products to North Korea and imported items such as garments and frozen fish. Last year, North Korea attempted to export military communications equipment to Eritrea via front companies in Malaysia, according to a recent U.N. report.

Most North Koreans abroad are involved in providing funds for the state, defectors say. One of the primary roles of North Korean diplomats is to help develop and maintain cash flows for the regime, according to former embassy officials. North Korea missions typically have to be self-financed to maximize revenue for the state, these people say.

In recent months, under pressure from the Trump administration, there are signs more countries have begun to clamp down on North Korea. In February, Bulgaria had Pyongyang send home two diplomats in its embassy in Sofia, in line with U.N. Security Council resolutions passed in September calling on countries to reduce the number of North Korean diplomats abroad.

Italy this year moved four North Koreans studying at the International Center for Theoretical Physics in Trieste to switch to less-sensitive majors in line with a Security Council resolution calling for member nations not to provide education that could aid Pyongyang's weapons program.

In March, Senegal said it suspended issuing visas for artisans from North Korea's Mansudae Art Studio, a state-run organization that has erected monumental sculptures across Africa.

More than 50,000 North Korean workers are employed abroad, according to the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, a Seoul-based think tank, many in construction or factory

jobs. For these workers, wages are paid directly to North Korean officials, raising hundreds of millions of dollars a year for the state, human-rights groups say.

These ties are under scrutiny as Pyongyang's success at launching a missile that could reach Alaska is escalating the crisis over its weapons program. This week's missile test took place on the back of a Chinese truck imported to North Korea for logging purposes, according to analysts.

U.N. sanctions are primarily intended to block North Korea's illegitimate trade and revenue streams that have a suspected link to its weapons programs. The U.N. doesn't target all of Pyongyang's business activities abroad, such as the chain of restaurants it operates in Asia and the Middle East, or its dispatch of laborers.

U.S. sanctions go further in trying to disrupt North Korea's trade and revenue, including a recent move to block access to the U.S. financial system for a bank in China on which Pyongyang relied. The U.S. has sanctioned North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, a move that would freeze any of his assets in America.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Tuesday called on the global community to stop doing business with Pyongyang.

This week, Sen. Cory Gardner (R., Colo.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's subpanel on East Asia, said he was drafting legislation that he says would create a "global embargo" on North Korea.

"We need to shut off North Korea's access to oil, to trade, to currency, to financial institutions," he said in an interview Thursday, calling for "Iran-style" sanctions. "They are far from being 'sanctioned out.' They

are certainly isolated, but they have to recognize they ain't seen nothing yet."

China has had close ties to North Korea since the 1950s when it sent troops to fight U.S.-led forces backing the South in the Korean War.

In 2001, China accounted for around 18% of North Korea's exports and 20% of its imports, ranking behind Japan on both measures, according to customs figures compiled by Harvard University's Atlas of Economic Complexity.

Since U.N. sanctions on North Korea were tightened in 2009, Japan and other countries have curtailed commercial ties with Pyongyang, leaving China as by far its biggest trade partner.

For the past five years, China has accounted for more than 80% of North Korea's imports and exports, providing an economic lifeline even as political relations between Beijing and Pyongyang have deteriorated.

During that period, China has imported mostly industrial raw materials from North Korea, especially coal, but also seafood and clothing such as men's suits and overcoats.

In recent days, President Donald Trump has expressed frustration with China for expanding trade with North Korea despite U.S. appeals to exert more pressure.

China says it enforces U.N. sanctions and since February it has banned imports of North Korean coal—one of Pyongyang's main sources of hard currency.

However, U.N. sanctions still allow trade that isn't deemed to benefit North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, and China's customs figures show that its exports to North Korea have increased this year.

Crucially, China continues to be North Korea's biggest source of crude oil, according to diplomats and experts on the region.

Much of North Korea's trade takes place over the 880-mile land border with China, which is porous and sparsely guarded. Small Chinese and North Korean companies quietly ferry coal, iron ore and other resources over the border, far from checkpoints.

U.N. sanctions introduced in March 2016 banned exports of North Korean iron ore unless they were exclusively for "livelihood purposes"—a loophole China continues to exploit.

While North Korea gained notoriety in the early 2000s for state-backed exports of illegal drugs and counterfeit U.S. dollars, Pyongyang has mostly shifted its strategy to allow private North Korean enterprises to take the lead, with the regime collecting bribes from these enterprises in a primitive system of taxation, says Justin Hastings, a lecturer at the University of Sydney who has researched North Korea's overseas smuggling networks.

The shift in strategy means that North Korea can outsource some of the risk involved in the trade while continuing to fill its coffers.

"North Korea is not infinitely adaptable, but it's far more adaptable than people have thought and its ability to adapt to sanctions has not been reached yet," Mr. Hastings said.

One informal Chinese trader that Mr. Hastings interviewed for a soon-to-be-published academic paper was importing truckloads and boatloads of North Korean iron ore and other minerals across the river into China for resale as recently as a year ago, when the interview took place.



## Stavridis : The Worst Option on North Korea: Striking First

James Stavridis

Think of the North Korean problem as a set of two dangerous streams of activity, moving rapidly toward each other. One is the increasing range of the Kim Jong Un regime's intercontinental ballistic missiles, which are now verifiably in the 3,000 to 4,000 mile range -- probably far enough to strike the continental U.S.

QuickTake North Korea's Nukes

The other stream consists of the North Koreans' efforts to produce reliable nuclear weapons small enough to affix to the warheads of those ballistic missiles. Both U.S. intelligence services and common

sense tell us that they are moving rapidly to accomplish this -- the technology is well known, and U.S.-led international sanctions are having little effect.

Just as in the movie "Ghostbusters," we really don't want the streams to cross.

The bad news is that they *will* cross, possibly in as little as 18 to 24 months. The regime will then present a clear and present danger to the U.S., especially when matched with the incendiary rhetoric of the dictator Kim Jong Un. This will present President Donald Trump with his most difficult decision, as he was warned about before taking

office by his predecessor, Barack Obama.

The first thing to acknowledge is that over the past two decades, most diplomatic approaches -- negotiations, sanctions and trying to persuade China, which keeps North Korea afloat economically, to rein in the Kim dynasty -- have been tried without significant results. So it's little wonder that the Trump administration has put military options on the table.

There are clear precedents in international law that would tempt a president to undertake a military first strike under the doctrine of pre-emptive attack. (Israel's 2007

"Operation Orchard" airstrike on a suspected Syrian nuclear site comes to mind.) But a president also has to consider the downsides of using force. These could include setting off chaos on the peninsula through attempts at regime change, or devastating second-order effects -- war that kills hundreds of thousands, including tens of thousands of Americans.

The good news is that, eventually, the U.S. and South Korea would prevail in a widespread military conflict. But the cost would be extremely high, given that virtually any assault would probably cause Kim to believe that the strategy included killing him and replacing



him with a more pliable substitute. Undoubtedly, he would unleash his conventional artillery and other capabilities against the world's largest human shield: the 25 million people in the greater Seoul area. And the temptation for him to use his nuclear arsenal at that point would be high, against South Korea and possibly Japan.

Even if the U.S. attempted a pre-emptive strike with a strategically telegraphed goal of convincing Kim it was "only" taking out his nuclear capability -- a very delicate message to say the least -- it wouldn't be easy. The U.S. military don't have a good fix on the precise location of all elements of his nuclear program, North Korea provides very difficult physical targets (mountains, deeply buried-command-and control facilities), and the regime has invested in keeping a great deal of their weaponry mobile to evade detection.

Any broader pre-emption would likely begin with a widespread strike against Pyongyang's offensive weapons systems (notably artillery batteries arrayed against Seoul,

surface-to-surface missiles, and military aircraft). Using cyberattacks to "blind" the North Koreans' communications networks, undermine their targeting and their access to the GPS, and above all to neutralize their nuclear capability, would be difficult.

All this would require perhaps three or four Navy carrier strike groups -- there are only four deployed around the globe right now -- significant long-range air support, coordinated missile strikes from South Korean territory, broader deployment of defensive missile technology such as the Thaad system that is (controversially) being deployed in the south now, and a high-end special forces campaign -- all of which would be very difficult to execute with tactical surprise. Pyongyang would almost undoubtedly see it coming, and have time to wreak enormous damage.

Soon enough, this would almost certainly lead to engagement on a level of World War II or the Korean War, with hundreds of thousands of casualties. Bad choice.

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

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So what are we left with? We still have a shrinking window of time in which to try (again) the diplomatic and economic approaches. The only way things would end differently is if we could get China to finally agree to exert real leverage on Kim's regime. The Chinese would want to extract a price for doing so -- which could include a combination of more of a free hand in the South China Sea, reduced U.S. engagement with South Korea, fewer military exercises in the region, weakening U.S. security guarantees to Taiwan, favorable trade relations, no secondary sanctions on Chinese businesses, and guarantees that the Korean peninsula would remain divided.

Any of this might be too high a price for the Trump administration. Yet even the president's secretary of defense, Jim Mattis, says that in comparison, a war would be "catastrophic." This from a man who has personally overseen some of

the worst fighting in the Middle East over the past decade.

The best outcome to the current crisis, then, may be simply living with North Korean nuclear weapons and relying on Kim understanding that using one of his weapons would be signing his own death warrant, to say nothing of the carnage of his loyal subjects. This would be betting that, much as was the case in the Cold War, mutual assured destruction can keep the peace.

Perhaps it doesn't have the satisfaction of cutting a clever deal with China or the shock and awe of a military strike; but at the moment it looks increasingly like the least-worst option on the table.

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

## The Washington Post

# The message behind the murder: North Korea's assassination sheds light on chemical weapons arsenal (UNE)

In a case with a thousand plot twists, there has been but one constant in the murder investigation of Kim Jong Nam: Nothing is ever what it seems.

The victim himself — the playboy half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un — was traveling under false papers when he died and had to be identified using DNA. The two women accused of killing him turned out to be hired dupes, paid a few dollars to perform what they thought was a reality-TV stunt.

Stranger still was the murder weapon, liquid VX, a toxin so powerful that a few drops rubbed onto the skin killed the victim in minutes, yet it failed to harm the two women who applied the poison with their bare hands. Even more mysterious: why North Korea would go to extravagant lengths to use a battlefield-grade chemical weapon on foreign soil, only to work equally hard to cover its tracks.

For the prosecutors preparing for the first court hearings later this month, some of the mysteries behind Kim Jong Nam's death inside a Malaysian airport terminal will likely never be resolved. But nearly five months after the killing, U.S. and Asian officials have a clearer view of the attack's significance. In carrying out history's first state-sponsored VX assassination in a country 3,000 miles from its borders,

North Korea has demonstrated a new willingness to use its formidable arsenal of deadly toxins and poisons to kill or intimidate enemies on foreign soil, analysts say.

Seen in the light of North Korea's recent flurry of provocative missiles tests, Kim Jong Nam's killing now looks to many experts like a proving exercise for a weapons system — in this case, a robust chemical-weapons stockpile that Pyongyang is thought to have built over decades and kept carefully under wraps.

The Malaysian government announced Feb. 23 that Kim Jong Nam was killed with a VX nerve agent. The banned chemical weapon can cause death within minutes if it is absorbed through the skin. What is the VX nerve agent? (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

"The choice of weapons was not accidental," said Sue Mi Terry, a former senior analyst on North Korea at the CIA and currently managing director for Korea at the Bower Group Asia. "Everything about this incident was intended to send a message."

U.S. and South Korean intelligence agencies have long believed that North Korea possesses significant stores of the nerve agents VX and

sarin — and probably biological weapons as well — but in the past, such arsenals were assumed to be intended as a deterrent against foreign attacks. But in the attack on Kim Jong Nam, North Korea revealed a strategy for using chemicals that looks a lot like - cyberwarfare: limited, highly secretive attacks that can damage an enemy without inviting massive retaliation.

*[Kim Jong Un's rockets are getting an important boost — from China]*

Whether Kim Jong Un would risk such an attack against a foreign government — even the United States — is unclear. But the February incident is a reminder that North Korea has options for striking targets abroad that do not hinge on the country's ability to build an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the U.S. mainland, current and former U.S. officials say.

"North Korea is bad enough when you're talking about their nuclear and missiles program," Rebecca Hersman, a former Defense Department deputy assistant secretary for countering weapons of mass destruction, said at a recent policy forum. "But I think we ignore their chemical and biological programs truly at our own peril."

Walking into a trap

Kim Jong Nam probably knew an attack was coming, though he might not have imagined where, or how.

The 45-year-old eldest son of dead North Korean leader Kim Jong Il had been living in exile in the Chinese province of Macau since 2003, and he had become a vocal critic of North Korea's repressive communist government. He became a probable candidate for assassination after his younger half brother took control of the country in late 2011, claiming the job that had once been promised to him. His fate was likely sealed in 2013 when the newly installed leader ordered the execution of Jang Song Thaek, a prominent North Korean defense official and Kim Jong Nam's uncle and longtime protector.

But when he strode into Kuala Lumpur's KLIA2 airport with his light jacket and backpack on Feb. 13, he walked unknowingly into an exquisitely laid trap.

Not one, but two teams of assassins had rehearsed for the moment. The only ones Kim Jong Nam would see were female: two attractive women in their 20s who had been recruited locally. One of them, identified by police as Indonesian native Siti Aisyah, worked in a Kuala Lumpur massage parlor; the other, Doan Thi Huong, had moved from Vietnam to Malaysia to work in what authorities



described vaguely as the “entertainment” industry.

Both would tell police that they were hired by a Korean man to perform “pranks,” such as smearing baby oil on strangers, for a hidden-camera video show. For their service, each was promised \$90 in cash and a shot at future TV stardom.

*[As North Korea's arsenal grows, experts see risk of 'miscalculation']*

But on Feb. 13, the surprise prepared for Kim Jong Nam was VX, not baby oil. In a sequence that would be captured on security-camera video and later broadcast around the world, Kim Jong Nam was accosted as he checked in for a flight in the airport's departure lounge. A woman in a white sweatshirt is seen grabbing the North Korean's face from behind. Although the images are unclear, police think the second woman helped smear the oily liquid over the victim's cheeks.

At least four men — later identified by Malaysian officials as North Korean agents — are seen watching the attack and shadowing the visibly agitated Kim Jong Nam as he seeks help from police and an airport first-aid station. Minutes later, as the dying Kim is wheeled into an ambulance, the men slip through the departures gate to board flights out of the country.

The only ones who didn't escape were the women and the victim himself. Aisyah and Huong mysteriously avoided serious injury — perhaps, weapons experts speculate, because each handled harmless precursor chemicals that became toxic only when mixed, or perhaps because both women quickly washed their hands after the attack.

Both are seen quickly entering airport lavatories after the attack, behavior that prosecutors have cited in accusing the two women of being knowingly complicit in Kim Jong Nam's murder. The two women face court appearances later this month on charges of first-degree murder, a capital crime in Malaysia.

Kim Jong Nam, who quickly sought medical help after the attack, lost consciousness in the airport medical station and died in the ambulance, less than 20 minutes after the episode began.

It would take two autopsies and nearly two weeks to determine the name of the rare toxin that took his life. Malaysian investigators would conclude that the VX was smuggled into the country by North Korea, most likely in a commercial jetliner. It's unclear whether the toxin arrived ready to use or in a form that required mixing two harmless

ingredients to create. In either case, the advantage for the assassins is that only a few drops are needed to kill, said a U.S. official with years of experience in chemical-weapons defense.

“Was it assembled in Malaysia? Not necessarily,” said the official, who insisted on anonymity in discussing U.S. intelligence assessments of the North Korean threat. “A single three-ounce container that would fit in your carry-on luggage would hold far more than you'd ever need.”

Pyongyang's stockpile

Until the Feb. 13 attack, hard evidence of Pyongyang's arsenal of toxins did not exist, at least in the public realm. But for at least two decades, U.S. intelligence assessments have concluded that North Korea possesses a sizable stockpile of chemical weapons, with VX being one of many varieties.

A State Department report in 2001 found that North Korea was “already self-sufficient” in making all the necessary precursors for sarin and VX, as well as older weapons such as mustard gas. Drawing from an array of sources — from North Korean defectors and spies to satellite photos and electronic eavesdropping — U.S. agencies calculated the size of the country's chemical stockpile at between 2,500 and 5,000 tons. That's far larger than Syria's arsenal at its peak, and larger than any known to exist in the world, except for those built by the Soviet and U.S. militaries during the Cold War.

A parallel but reportedly much smaller program produces biological weapons, current and former U.S. intelligence officials think. Published Defense Intelligence Agency documents have described efforts underway to weaponize at least four pathogens: anthrax, plague, cholera and biological toxins, such as botulinum.

Work on chemical and biological programs began years before Pyongyang tested its first nuclear bomb, and U.S. analysts suspect that both were intended at first as a deterrent against foreign attacks. But although North Korea regularly boasts of its achievements in atomic energy and missiles, its chemical and biological weapons have always been kept carefully hidden, according to a study released jointly last month by the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and the U.S. Korea Institute.

“North Korea has deliberately built its NBC [nuclear, biological, chemical] infrastructures in extreme secrecy; undertaken camouflage, concealment and deception operations ... and dispersed NBC

facilities around the country,” report author Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., a prominent expert on North Korean weapons systems, wrote in the report. “It is therefore probable that there are significant elements of the NBC programs and their infrastructures that are simply unknown outside the North Korean government.”

*[What does Kim Jong Un want? Talks, perhaps]*

U.S. and South Korean defense officials alike take the threat seriously, so much so that both governments inoculate their troops against exposure to anthrax bacteria and even the smallpox virus. Soldiers deployed along the border are issued gas masks and protective suits and put through occasional drills to prepare for the day when canisters of VX or sarin are fired across the border in North Korean rockets or artillery shells.

Any such attack would certainly prompt a massive retaliation. But Kim Jong Nam's assassination has forced U.S. officials to consider the possibility of a clandestine attack, one that might be more difficult to trace, or to defend against.

“With biological weapons, especially, there's an opportunity for covert attack with deniability, since attribution would be difficult,” said Andrew C. Weber, former assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons defense. Although U.S. officials are fixated on North Korea's nuclear advances, a nuclear attack “is not the most likely, or possibly even the most consequential,” he said.

As Kim Jong Nam's assassination demonstrated, the delivery of such weapons can be easy — especially for deadly pathogens, but also for toxic chemicals, he said. And any military response would be delayed for days or weeks while investigators attempted to find evidence that firmly pointed to a perpetrator.

“A chemical attack would be knowable, almost as soon as it happens,” Weber said. “But Kim Jong Un is a brutal guy, and he may have no qualms against doing it. Or he may just miscalculate.”

Sending a message

Kim Jong Un's plan to use VX to kill his half brother included extensive measures to ensure secrecy — so many, in fact, that some experts think the North Koreans wanted to keep their enemies ignorant about its use of the toxin, or at least unsure.

After Kim Jong Nam's death, Pyongyang requested the immediate return of his body,

without an autopsy being performed. Malaysia refused, and soon afterward, local news media reported an attempt by unknown individuals to break into the morgue where the body was kept. The attempt failed, but in the weeks since, North Korea has insisted that the leader's half brother died of a heart attack and that any reports of chemical toxins were lies spread by outsiders.

*[Chinese media: 'Selfish' Trump has crippled U.S. leadership]*

Some longtime North Korea analysts are convinced that the killing was intended mostly as a warning to other members of the Kim family who might be plotting Kim Jong Un's overthrow. The leader has a history of extreme brutality toward relatives whom he suspects of plotting against him. He may have seen Kim Jong Nam — a free-spoken man of leisure who enjoyed protected status in China and was widely reported to have intelligence contacts with several foreign governments — as a possible future choice by Beijing to replace him.

“It might have just been an expression of how much he hates traitors,” said Joshua Pollack, a former government consultant on North Korean weapons programs and now editor of the journal *Nonproliferation Review*. “There's no doubt that VX was an unusual choice for an assassination. But I think it was probably chosen because they thought no one would look for it.”

Other current and former U.S. officials say that North Korea would have calculated that the VX would be found eventually. According to these officials, Kim Jong Un's plan was to showcase his ability to strike with terrifying weapons, while also concealing the evidence to reduce the chances of retaliation.

“His message about VX was, ‘We have it,’” said Terry, the former CIA analyst. “He knew they would eventually find it.”

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Whatever the motivation, the tactic worked on nearly every level, North Korea experts say: A potential rival was eliminated. A capability to strike covertly, using one of the most fearsome chemical weapons ever designed, was amply demonstrated. And North Korea, while issuing denials that are widely seen as implausible, managed to get away with it, at least until now.

"They carry out an attack and make people afraid, but then ensure that there's no evidence that can lead to

real accountability," Pollack said. "For them, that's the sweet spot."

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Krauthammer : North Korea: The Rubicon is crossed

Across 25 years and five administrations,

we have kicked the North Korean can down the road. We are now out of road.

On July 4, North Korea tested an intercontinental ballistic missile apparently capable of hitting the United States. As yet, only Alaska. Soon, every American city.

Moreover, Pyongyang claims to have already fitted miniaturized nuclear warheads on intermediate-range missiles. Soon, on ICBMs.

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Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's initial reaction to this game changer was not encouraging. "Global action is required to stop a global threat," he declared.

This, in diplo-speak, is a cry for (multilateral) help. Alas, there will be none. Because, while this is indeed a global threat, there is no such thing as global interests. There are individual national interests and they diverge. In this case, radically.

Take Russia and China. If there were to be external pressure on North Korea, it would come from them. Will it? On Tuesday, they issued a joint statement proposing a deal: North Korea freezes nuclear and missile testing in return for

America abandoning large-scale joint exercises with South Korea.

This is a total non-starter. The exercises have been the backbone of the U.S.-South Korean alliance for half a century. Abandonment would signal the end of an enduring relationship that stabilizes the region and guarantees South Korean independence. In exchange for what?

A testing freeze? The offer doesn't even pretend to dismantle North Korea's nuclear program, which has to be our minimal objective. Moreover, we've negotiated multiple freezes over the years with Pyongyang. It has violated every one.

The fact that Russia and China would, amid a burning crisis, propose such a dead-on-arrival proposal demonstrates that their real interest is not denuclearization. Their real interest is cutting America down to size by breaking our South Korean alliance and weakening our influence in the Pacific Rim.

These are going to be our partners in solving the crisis?

And yet, relying on China's good graces appeared to be President Trump's first resort for solving North Korea. Until he declared two weeks ago (by tweet, of course) that China had failed. "At least I know China tried!" he added.

They did? Trump himself tweeted out on Wednesday that Chinese trade with North Korea increased by

almost 40 percent in the first quarter, forcing him to acknowledge that the Chinese haven't been helping.

Indeed not. The latest North Korean missile is menacing not just because of its 4,000-mile range, but because it is road-mobile. And the transporter comes from China.

In the calculus of nuclear deterrence, mobility guarantees inviolability. (The enemy cannot find, and therefore cannot preempt, a mobile missile.) It's a huge step forward for Pyongyang. Supplied by Beijing.

How many times must we be taught that Beijing does not share our view of denuclearizing North Korea? It prefers a divided peninsula, i.e., sustaining its client state as a guarantee against a unified Korea (possibly nuclear) allied with the West and sitting on its border.

Nukes assure regime survival. That's why the Kims have so single-mindedly pursued them. The lessons are clear. Saddam Hussein, no nukes: hanged. Moammar Gaddafi, gave up his nuclear program: killed by his own people. The Kim dynasty, possessing an arsenal of 10 to 16 bombs: untouched, soon untouchable.

What are our choices? Trump has threatened that if China doesn't help we'll have to go it alone. If so, the choice is binary: acquiescence or war.

War is almost unthinkable, given the proximity of the Demilitarized Zone

to the 10 million people of Seoul. A mere conventional war would be devastating. And could rapidly go nuclear.

Acquiescence is not unthinkable. After all, we did it when China went nuclear under Mao Zedong, whose regime promptly went insane under the Cultural Revolution.

The hope for a third alternative, getting China to do the dirty work, is mostly wishful thinking. There's talk of imposing sanctions on other Chinese banks. Will that really change China's strategic thinking? Bourgeois democracies believe that economics supersedes geostrategy. Maybe for us. But for dictatorships? Rarely.

If we want to decisively alter the strategic balance, we could return U.S. tactical nukes (withdrawn in 1991) to South Korea. Or we could encourage Japan to build a nuclear deterrent of its own. Nothing would get more quick attention from the Chinese. They would face a radically new strategic dilemma: Is preserving North Korea worth a nuclear Japan?

We do have powerful alternatives. But each is dangerous and highly unpredictable. Which is why the most likely ultimate outcome, by far, is acquiescence.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Lane : North Korea has one big advantage over its adversaries

By Charles Lane

As yet another crisis looms in Northeast Asia, don't bet against North Korea. In international affairs, as in life, clarity of purpose can be a huge advantage. And of all the parties to this seemingly endless struggle, only the regime in Pyongyang has it.

Kim Jong Un is heir to a family dynasty whose organizing principle — hold on to power, at all costs, and by any means necessary — has been constant ever since his grandfather, the "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung, founded it nearly seven decades ago.

To be sure, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has, or had, an ideology, Marxism-Leninism, modified per the great leader's doctrine, "juche." It declares broad

objectives, such as the reunification of North and South Korea on the former's terms.

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Any and all such concerns can and will be subordinated to the prime directive, however: regime survival. Out of power, Kim, his family and his inner circle would have a bleak future, if any. This pudgy tyrant manages to be both odious and ridiculous; but the ever-present prospect of a hanging concentrates his mind.

By contrast, the United States has multiple and, indeed, conflicting

interests. It wants to eliminate the threat of North Korean nuclear weapons and missile technology, obviously. Washington would like to see human rights and democracy prevail. But it is not willing to achieve these goals at the risk of war, whose most likely outcome would be Pyrrhic victory, with the Kim dynasty overthrown but many thousands of Americans dead and wealthy, democratic South Korea in ruins.

This would be true no matter who was president, which is why U.S. policy under Democratic and Republican administrations has been characterized by a cycle of threats and negotiations, all essentially futile, since North Korea's nuclear weapons program first became an issue a quarter-century ago.

The United States might be able to chart a clearer course if its ally South Korea's goals were as plain and simple as those of its evil twin north of the 38th parallel. Yet South Korea's ambivalence may exceed Washington's: Seoul has no appetite for fratricidal war and even frets that peaceful regime change would saddle it with huge costs of reunification.

Not surprisingly, South Korean leaders periodically succumb to magical thinking about the prospects for diplomatic engagement toward their long-lost brethren, which they call a "sunshine policy." The new president in Seoul, Moon Jae-in, is the latest case in point.

For its part, Japan fears North Korea as much as the United States does, if not more, since it is already well within missile range. Tokyo, though,

makes a problematic ally due to its history as a hated colonial power in Korea. Deep down, the Japanese aren't sure whether a united Korea, even a democratic, capitalist one, would be in their long-term interest, given the old rivalries.

Similar misgivings plague China, the *deus ex machina* of U.S. strategy, such as it is, under President Trump — though this is hardly a new hope, since Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, also wished for China to apply enough pressure on Pyongyang to get it to abandon nukes.

Dream on. For all its evident exasperation with the impetuous new kid in



## How (Not) to Kill Kim Jong Un

Adam Rawnsley

The two dozen commandos trained to kill North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung on a remote island off the coast of South Korea never made it to Pyongyang. The men of the 2325th Group's 209th Detachment had been recruited from the country's poor, desperate, and criminal and brought to Silmido Island to be trained to become assassins. To South Korea's own authoritarian leaders in 1968, this meant they had to be hardened. They were abused, neglected, and put through grueling exercises with guards shooting at their feet and beating them with bats when they didn't perform to expectations. Six of them were executed for disobedience; another drowned by accident.

Their mission was to infiltrate North Korea, sneak into one of Kim's palaces, and murder the Great Leader, paying North Korea back in kind for a failed 1968 special operations raid aimed at assassinating South Korean President Park Chung-hee. By 1971, Park had given up on the prospect of revenge. The men of Silmido Island, however, had not. That year, they rose up, killing 18 of their guards with their honed commando skills and stealing a boat across the Yellow Sea to the port of Incheon. There they hijacked two buses and set out to Seoul to kill the men who had ordered them to be turned into weapons.

Like many attempts to kill members of the Kim dynasty both before and after, this one ended in ruin, blazing out in a hail of gunfire and grenade explosions as the remaining recruits fought a doomed battle with police in the South Korean capital.

But even if they had been launched against the North, their fate would have been the same. Even their handlers believed their chances of

Pyongyang, China has long-standing ties to the Kim dynasty going back to the Korean War, during which the People's Liberation Army shed a sea of blood on its client's behalf.

Such commitments are not easily abandoned, especially when such a break could ultimately lead to a new, united Korea, democratic and allied with the United States, right on China's border.

Korea's final neighbor, Russia, triggered this crisis, in the sense that the Soviet Union's collapse deprived Pyongyang of military and economic support, obliging first Kim Il Sung and then his son Kim Jong Il (Kim

survival were slim — a fact they kept hidden from the commandos. The North had long proved inhospitable ground for infiltrators. South Korean intelligence had "made no serious effort" to carry out intelligence operations in the North in the late 1960s "because the expected losses of intelligence agents would be high and the benefits nil or virtually nil," according to a declassified CIA report.

Nearly a half-century later, the Kim dynasty is still in power in North Korea, and talk of decapitation is in the air once again. The pace of North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear weapons development has taken it from a national security sideshow to what Secretary of Defense James Mattis now calls the greatest threat to the United States. The options for halting the increasing reach of the North's nuclear missiles — a catastrophic war or a politically unpalatable nonproliferation agreement that the North might cheat on — aren't enviable, but the U.S. Defense Department has tried to develop military options, carrying out joint exercises with South Korea in 2016 for a new plan that would involve strikes on North Korean leadership.

South Korea, for its part, has put its authoritarian past and personal revenge plots behind it. But fearful of the North's growing nuclear and ballistic missile arsenal and irritated by its constant display, Seoul has begun to counter Pyongyang's aggressive messages with threats of its own to kill current leader Kim Jong Un at the outset of any war.

But long before Pyongyang began lighting off ballistic missiles and churning out nuclear warheads, the Kim dynasty has been facing down assassination threats, both real and imagined. From the days of Japanese colonialism in the 1930s through the turbulent end of

Jong Un's father), to improvise survival through nuclear blackmail.

However, the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin has no interest in a definitive solution. As long as the conflict does not erupt in actual war, Moscow is happy to have it drain and distract the United States. This is why Moscow does business with South Korea but also has more recently been strengthening its economic ties to North Korea.

Undoubtedly, North Korea could miscalculate and push the United States past the point where there is no alternative to ending the standoff through force. That's always a risk,

communist regimes in the 1990s, many have tried (and failed) to kill a Kim. But despite facing lethal challenges from within and without, the dynasty has always managed to dodge would-be assassins thanks to canny survival skills, some less than fully baked plots, and an elaborate network of bodyguards, secret police, and informants.

All the Kims' men

The Kim family's first brush with death came in the 1930s, when Kim Il Sung joined the Chinese 1st Route Army as an insurgent in the resistance against Japanese colonial rule in Manchuria and Korea. Once Kim had made a name for himself in the resistance against Japanese occupation, Japanese police set up a designated "special activities unit" to hunt him down, employing dozens of former guerrillas whom the Japanese lured from Kim's unit by promising amnesty. Together with a network of police informants, the men stalked their former comrade and leader — a lesson in betrayal that Kim would remember for the rest of his life.

Kim was protected during his guerrilla days by a band of bodyguards, which reportedly included his first wife, Kim Jong Suk, the mother of Kim Jong Il. North Korean histories of the period recount a battle in which Kim Jong Suk saved the future North Korean leader's life in northeastern China, shielding Kim Il Sung from enemy soldiers taking aim at him from a nearby field of reeds and dropping the would-be assassins with her Mauser rifle. The tale has long been a propaganda parable about the need for absolute devotion to the Kims' security, though there's little independent evidence to back it up.

The first confirmed attempt on Kim Il Sung's life in the postwar era — though not the last — came during a ceremony at the Pyongyang railway

especially under the mercurial Trump.

If the past 25 years have taught three generations of Kims anything, though, it is that its potential adversaries are incurably divided, both internally and among themselves, and will therefore tolerate threats and blackmail — even actual occasional conventional military attacks on South Korea — rather than forge the collective effort it would take to end the game once and for all.

station commemorating the Korean independence movement on March 1, 1946. Assassins reportedly sent by the South Korean government threw a homemade grenade at the podium as Kim spoke, and Yakov Novichenko, a Soviet Army lieutenant guarding the assembled dignitaries, sprang into action and grabbed the grenade, which exploded in his hand, blowing off his arm. The incident spawned a lifelong friendship between Kim and Novichenko, as well as a cheesy Soviet-North Korean biopic in the mid-1980s. (Leonid Vasin, an assistant section chief in the Soviet Army's special propaganda section who worked closely with Pyongyang later, would in time write a more skeptical account of the incident. Vasin claimed that the homemade grenade landed about 100 feet from Kim and to the right of the podium, posing little threat.)

The coterie of guards surrounding Kim in the mid-1940s would eventually evolve into one of the world's most repressive and pervasive police states, run for the personal benefit of the Kim family. Within that architecture of repression grew an elaborate praetorian guard for the North's supreme leaders, protecting them with multiple, overlapping rings of security.

At the innermost ring are five to six elite, handpicked bodyguards from the brigade-sized Office of Adjutants, also known as Office No. 6, who directly protect the Kims. (It's the loose equivalent of the U.S. Secret Service — except with 20 times as many people, in a country a fraction of the size of America.) The Kims' personal guards are senior officers who have proved their reliability and loyalty through years of service in North Korea's Guard Command, a 100,000-member unit devoted to the security of the Kim family and the upper

levels of North Korean officialdom. Other Guard Command soldiers, picked from families with no known ties to Pyongyang's communist elite, provide the next layers of protection around Kim Jong Un, surrounding him at events, official visits, and on personal travel, as well as protecting his various residences.

The capital itself is protected by the Pyongyang Defense Command and Pyongyang Air Defense Command, which would fight within the city and defend its airspace in the event of a major war or coup attempt. Outside of Pyongyang, the 3rd Corps of the Korean People's Army (KPA) comprises the final, most heavily armed ring, guarding the western approaches to Pyongyang from the port of Nampo north to the Chongchon River.

A handful of agencies also conduct surveillance within the North to act as an early tripwire for signs of disloyalty and coup plots in the making. The State Security Department runs an expansive network of eavesdropping and informants to spy on North Korean civilians while the more sensitive work of surveilling senior Workers' Party officials is carried out by the Organization and Guidance Department. Within the KPA, the Military Security Command acts as a kind of parallel secret police to keep tabs on those in uniform.

Together, the domestic intelligence and security agencies are aided by the cultivation of a Kim personality cult, which emphasizes the worship of the Kim family as essentially supernatural beings. Attempting to kill a Kim, for many North Koreans, would be more than treason — it would be blasphemy. Like Chinese emperors, the North Korean state, too, promises suffering not only to "traitors" but to their families, further deterring any attempt.

#### The not-so-glorious 1990s

The greatest test of the security apparatus protecting the Kims came in the 1990s as North Korea transitioned from the leadership of Kim Il Sung to his son Kim Jong Il. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union, communist states were crumbling, and many wondered if North Korea would be the next to go. In addition to the geopolitical shift, there were also whiffs of discontent about Kim Jong Il's position as his father's heir.

Rumors of coup plots and assassination attempts began to trickle out of the North and into Japanese and South Korean media. In the early '90s, news outlets began to report on a supposed assassination plot led by Col. Gen. An Chang Ho and 30-40 military officers who had all studied at the

Frunze Military Academy in the Soviet Union. The plotters purportedly planned to turn their tanks' guns on the two Kims during an April 1992 military parade commemorating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the KPA.

"There is a lot of sourcing — from media reports to defector interview data — that establishes that An was dismissed and arrested and that alumna of Russian and East European military universities were subject to investigations," says Michael Madden, a visiting scholar at Johns Hopkins University and an expert on North Korean leadership. "Whether An actually participated in an assassination attempt or violent power challenge is a different matter altogether."

Shortly after the death of Kim Il Sung, the KPA's 6th Corps, based in North Hamgyong province, supposedly went on the move in 1995 with the aim of mounting a coup. "The plot was uncovered by elements within the 6th Corps itself, so it wasn't as if it was found out by the security services," says Ken Gause, the director of the international affairs group at CNA, a nonprofit research and analysis organization, and an expert on North Korean security institutions. "It was mainly the head of the 6th Corps [Kim Yong Chun] going to the head of the State Security Department and basically ratting out his own corps."

What really happened in North Hamgyong — whether it was the beginning of a coup or a grab for resources, as Gause suspects — is still a matter of some debate and mystery. In any case, the incident represented a worrying breakdown in command for a system premised on absolute control.

There were repercussions for the 6th Corps.

"The most credible story is that they tied the senior military command of the 6th Corps in a barracks building and then set the building on fire," Madden says. Today, the 6th Corps has been blotted from the records.

#### Reviewing the options

Kim Jong Il rode out the rocky years of the 1990s and consolidated his power enough to ensure another hereditary transition of power to his son Kim Jong Un. But the prospect of a nuclear strike, made more likely by Pyongyang's progress in weapons development, has given new urgency to efforts to disrupt the North's chain of command in the event of war in a preemptive strike.

"This is not anything unusual. People are publicizing it, making a big deal out of it, but there are many

leadership targets in North Korea," says retired Army Col. David Maxwell, a former Special Forces officer who served with U.S. Special Operations Command Korea. "All of the command and control facilities, all of the relocation facilities from Pyongyang, the villas that Kim Jong Un might use during time of war — all of these are potential targets, at minimum, for surveillance and, *in extremis*, to target people that are at those leadership locations."

While knocking out enemy leadership in a war is hardly a new idea, the South Korean military has gotten more vocal about its decapitation capabilities in recent years. South Korea's Army Special Warfare Command announced in 2016 that it was standing up a special operations unit tasked with killing Kim Jong Un and other senior leaders in the event a preemptive strike became necessary. For its part, North Korea has accused its adversaries in Washington and Seoul of a bizarre plot to "commit state-sponsored terrorism against the supreme leadership of the DPRK by use of bio-chemical substance."

But any special operations team would face steep hurdles in getting close enough to Kim Jong Un to kill him.

First, South Korean special operators would have to hitch a ride with their American counterparts in the U.S. Air Force Special Operations or the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment to infiltrate the North. Once across the Northern Limit Line, a team would then have to make it past the KPA's 3rd Corps, which defends the approaches to the capital against invaders looking to land at Nampo and take the highway up or drop from the sky in an airborne assault.

"If the defense by the 3rd Corps and the 4th Corps has failed, the [soldiers of the Pyongyang Defense Command] plan to defend the city section by section, giving time for Kim Jong Un and the Guard Command to move the leadership out into the north-central part of the country," says Joseph Bermudez, an expert on the North Korean military.

American special operators have carried out multiple such raids in places like Pakistan, Somalia, and Libya since 9/11, swooping in with stealth and speed to capture or kill terrorist leaders on the run. Trying to replicate those feats against a heavily armed nation-state lengthens the odds considerably. "It looks good in the movies, but it's not something that is easily done," Maxwell says.

The most practical method might be a missile barrage by either the

United States or South Korea. The South's "Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation" plan, announced after the North's September 2016 nuclear test, calls for ballistic and cruise missiles to flatten sections of Pyongyang associated with Kim Jong Un and his commanders should a nuclear strike appear imminent. Four years before the plan's rollout, Seoul tipped its hand with the public test of a Hyunmoo-3 cruise missile, shown smashing into a target crafted in the shape of Pyongyang's Kumsusan Palace of the Sun.

But all the missiles and special operators are useless unless they have good intelligence to guide them to a leader's location. Getting that kind of sensitive information in a hard target like North Korea can be a quixotic quest, but that hasn't dimmed the appetite for the enterprise, says Jeffrey Lewis, the director of the East Asia nonproliferation program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. "Although it never really works, military and political leaders are always drawn to decapitation. It's catnip for idiots."

Lewis points to the 2003 invasion of Iraq as an example of the problems such missions are likely to hit. In that case, the United States sent stealth aircraft loaded with bunker-buster bombs and cruise missiles to strike a site where American spies believed Saddam Hussein was hiding. Saddam wasn't there, nor were any leadership bunkers, and the Iraqi dictator wouldn't be caught for another eight months.

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#### The day after

But even in a scenario where the United States or South Korea succeeds in a preemptive strike against Kim Jong Un, North Korea's conventional military capabilities ensure that it's still capable of inflicting catastrophic damage on the South, where the United States has thousands of troops deployed. Nor is it necessarily clear that the KPA would throw down its weapons in the wake of Kim's death. Secretary of Defense James Mattis has assured U.S. lawmakers that even though the United States would prevail in a war against the North, any conflict would be "more serious in terms of human suffering than anything we have seen since 1953."

The North's problems won't end after Kim Jong Un because the Kim family inheritance encompasses more than just the flesh-and-blood heirs to the throne of Pyongyang. The North's royal family planted deep roots in North Korean society in the form of decades of brutal misrule and penury inflicted upon its



subjects. That bodes poorly for the country's ability to quickly erect a better society from the ashes of a future conflict. In the end, North

Koreans will be tormented by the ghosts of their supreme leaders long after the last Kim is gone from power.

Removing the last Kim — as catastrophically bloody as it would be — might be relatively easy

compared with governing the chaotic kingdom left behind.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## **Pomfret : Forget Trump. This is the strongman to protest at the G-20.**

By John Pomfret

John Pomfret, a former Washington Post bureau chief in Beijing, is the author of "The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom: America and China, 1776 to the Present."

President Trump derided China as a currency manipulator, and said the country employs unfair trade practices, on the campaign trail. But then he developed a "friendship" with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Will the friendship last? As North Korea looms, Trump's relationship with China is strained (Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

President Trump derided China as a currency manipulator, and said the country employs unfair trade practices, on the campaign trail. But then he developed a "friendship" with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Will the friendship last? (Peter Stevenson/The Washington Post)

Europe is preparing to welcome President Trump with demonstrations during the Group of 20 meetings in Hamburg this week but few, if any, on that continent seem interested in protesting the visit of another strongman, Xi Jinping of China, and the treatment being meted out to Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo.

The Chinese announced on June 26 that Liu is suffering from late-stage liver cancer and that they had assembled a team of Chinese doctors to treat him. On Wednesday, Beijing said that authorities had invited Western cancer experts to come to China to treat him, but so far they have denied the request of Liu's family to let him and his wife, Liu Xia, leave China to seek help abroad.

Chinese state security agents arrested Liu in December 2008 after

he co-authored a document asking for more freedom. On Christmas Day 2009, he was sentenced to 11 years in prison for the crime of "inciting subversion of state power." This was his fourth stint in jail, all for political crimes, and in 2010 Liu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Norway. At the ceremony that year in Oslo, an empty chair was placed in a tribute to his courage.

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China began punishing Norway almost immediately. I remember listening in dismay at a private meeting with a senior Chinese government official in Washington in late 2010 who insisted that Liu was a "common criminal" and that Liu's prize was part of a Western scheme to "split China." He vowed that China would "discipline" the Norwegian government for what he called the "plots" of the Nobel Prize committee. China's government cancelled contracts with Norwegian firms and imports of Norwegian salmon to China were cut off.

China kept relations with Norway on ice until last Christmas, six years after it had sentenced Liu Xiaobo, and its pressure worked. Norway's government stopped speaking about China's human rights record, despite the fact that it's even worse now than it was when Liu was locked up. Since the announcement that Liu has cancer, the Norwegian government of Prime Minister Erna Solberg has been silent except to say it noted the news "with sadness."

In an editorial on July 4, the *Aftenposten*, Norway's biggest daily, seemed resigned to the necessity of

ignoring China's dismal treatment of its dissidents in exchange for a chance at China's growing market. "The problem," the editorial said, "is that nobody knows how long this policy will last. One year? Two years? 20 years?" Or as Harald Stanghelle, a Norwegian political commentator, noted, also in the *Aftenposten*: "Has it really come to a point that no one dares any longer to champion dissidents' causes, for fear of being excluded from China's party?"

Norway is not alone in its silence. In June, at a meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, Greece vetoed a move to criticize the marked deterioration of human rights under Xi's rule. The Greek Foreign Ministry in Athens had called the statement "unproductive." China's companies have invested tens of millions of dollars in port projects and other infrastructure in Greece. Clearly, China has bought love or at least resignation there, too. Britain, too, seems to be standing idly by as China ignores both the letter and the spirit of its agreement with Britain to preserve for 50 years Hong Kong's system of liberties following China's takeover of Hong Kong in 1997.

In Germany, the government of Angela Merkel, which will be hosting the meeting in Hamburg, appears less interested in criticizing China than in criticizing the Trump administration. As Merkel noted in remarks directed at the American president, "If you believe you can solve the problems of this world with isolationism and protectionism you are very wrong."

In fact, the Germans — and the Chinese — appear to see an opportunity to draw closer together and benefit from Trump's America first policy. "Relations between China and Germany are at their

historic best," announced Michael Clauss, Germany's ambassador to Beijing, in a briefing with reporters in the run-up to the summit. Noted Xi, in an op-ed published Tuesday in the German daily *Die Welt*, "the strategic character of Chinese-German relations is steadily gaining in importance."

I think there's more than Chinese cash and a cynical opportunity to take America down a notch that is driving Europe's silence on human rights. There's also a view, more widespread in Europe than in the United States, that excuses China's lack of freedom because the Chinese, being an Asiatic people, have no history of democracy. Obviously, this idea has some traction in America, too, often among the business set. But I've always been struck by how much more widespread it was among European experts on China.

I remember vividly during the Abu Ghraib torture and prison abuse scandal of 2003-2004 being lectured by a German newspaper correspondent in Beijing about how it was unconscionable of Americans — of all people — to commit such brutal acts. When the conversation turned to China, however, she was almost forgiving, telling me that people ultimately deserve the government they get.

The counter-argument is that Liu Xiaobo's struggle for freedom is the same one that inspired the great Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov and that China also has a long and storied tradition of liberal thought for anyone interested enough to look. The names may be more difficult to pronounce, but the issues have always been the same.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## **Ignatius : Trump has the most to win — or lose — from the G-20 summit**

President Trump has been moving inexorably toward Friday's high-stakes summit meeting since Election Day. He campaigned on a pledge to seek better relations with Russia's President Vladimir Putin. And since November, his aides have assumed that Trump's first real test would be a belligerent North Korea.

These two challenges — Russia and North Korea — will converge in the meetings that will take place in Hamburg on Friday and Saturday. The other major players at the Group of 20 summit pose subtle problems, too: China, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. For an inexperienced American president, it will be a steep learning curve.

Summits occasionally intersect with looming military crises, as is the case with Hamburg. Looking back over the record of famous top-level encounters, you can find some epic failures: Munich in 1938; Yalta in 1945; Vienna in 1961. Each is the story of a Western leader who blundered in thinking he could rationally accommodate a dictator.

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Henry Kissinger wrote in his memoir "White House Years" of Moscow's canny evaluation of U.S. diplomacy on the eve of a May 1972 summit between President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev: "They doubted whether America could sustain both the willingness to confront and the

readiness to cooperate at the same time.” The Russians and Chinese are doubtless asking the same question this week about the United States.

Trump’s erratic tweets and public statements make it hard to predict his diplomatic strategy in Hamburg. That’s partly by design; Trump thinks he gains leverage by making others uncertain. But the rhetorical zigzags also represent genuine uncertainty within this contentious White House. This president may be a dealmaker, but he’s not a strategist.

In its pre-summit planning, the White House has seemed to be preparing for two broad moves: a new joint effort with Russia to stabilize Syria, and a threat-backed campaign to pressure North Korea to suspend missile and nuclear tests. Both are worthy goals; but each will require a diplomatic finesse that Trump, in his first six months in office, has rarely shown.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Trump’s nationalist warning contrasts with European leaders’ optimism at G-20 (UNE)

HAMBURG — President Trump brought a starkly populist and nationalistic message to Europe on Thursday, characterizing Western civilization as under siege and putting the United States on a potential collision course with European and Asian powers that embrace a more cooperative approach to the world.

Speaking in Warsaw ahead of his arrival here in Germany for a contentious Group of 20 summit, Trump delivered an address that was both provocative and short on specifics — arguing that Western values are increasingly imperiled by “radical Islamic terrorism” and extremism and casting himself as a champion in a vaguely defined clash of cultures.

“The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive. Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost?” Trump said, speaking at a monument to a past struggle, the 1944 Polish resistance to Nazi occupation in World War II. “Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?”

Later in the day, Trump took to Twitter to proclaim that “THE WEST WILL NEVER BE BROKEN. Our values will PREVAIL.”

The fiery address to a friendly crowd stacked with supporters of Poland’s

This weekend’s summitry will be complicated by the interaction of so many big egos, all looking for a “win.” Trump is the most volatile personality, prone to respond impulsively when he feels cornered. Putin is the cold-blooded ex-spy with a chip on his shoulder, eager for validation after three years of sanctions and isolation. Chinese President Xi Jinping is the “princeling” autocrat who leads the world’s most dynamic economy. And offstage in Pyongyang is Kim Jong Un, the baby-faced dictator racing to build nuclear missiles.

Trump is the least experienced of the group. Given his unpopularity at home and with most traditional U.S. allies, he has the most to gain or lose. According to national security adviser H.R. McMaster, Trump has “no specific agenda” for the meetings with Putin. He may hope for a genial get-acquainted session as with Xi at Mar-a-Lago, but that’s not Putin’s style. Trump would be wiser to go armed with a short list of

populist ruling party did not define those Western values in any detail, however, and was devoid of the kind of explicit endorsement of democratic ideals common among past U.S. presidents. Unlike President Barack Obama last year, for example, Trump did not direct any criticism at his host, Polish President Andrzej Duda, for a crackdown on press freedoms and for other restrictive policies.

And on the eve of a planned 30-minute meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Trump again refused to say definitively whether Russia had interfered in the U.S. elections, as U.S. intelligence agencies strongly assert, though he did rebuke Moscow for its “destabilizing activities” in Ukraine and elsewhere.

*[Phone taps, power plays and sarcasm: What it’s like to negotiate with Vladimir Putin]*

Trump’s foreboding message in Warsaw stood in stark contrast to the more optimistic notes struck by Germany’s Angela Merkel and other European leaders at the start of the G-20 summit here in Hamburg. The day’s events included the formal announcement of a trade agreement between the European Union and Japan, a deal akin in size to the North American Free Trade Agreement and other multilateral pacts that Trump has vilified and sought to scrap or alter.

Besides trade, the two-day G-20 meeting highlights several other

ways the U.S.-Russia relationship can be improved — and Russian political meddling curbed.

In containing North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, Trump would be wise to emulate the too-much-maligned approach to Iran of former president Barack Obama. He should build a coalition of countries that share the United States’ view that the North Korean nuclear and missile testing must stop; he should offer direct negotiations if North Korea agrees to suspend testing while the talks continue; and he should build a high-tech offensive and defensive arsenal (remember Stuxnet?) in case the talks fail.

Summitry under military pressure is especially fraught. When British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain went to Munich in September 1938, war fears were so intense that Britain mobilized its fleet and began distributing gas masks. A frightened public accepted Chamberlain’s capitulation to Adolf Hitler.

fissures between Trump and European leaders, including on climate change and immigration.

As protesters clashed with police armed with pepper spray and water cannons outside the summit Thursday, Trump and Merkel met directly for about an hour, according to German officials, who characterized the meeting as friendly but contentious, particularly on trade.

“The question is whether the Americans are still convinced that world trade always needs to be assessed according to one question, namely whether the U.S. is the winner, or whether we’ll manage to convince the Americans that when everyone plays by the same fair rules, everyone will be better off,” German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel told German broadcaster ARD afterward.

A U.S. account of the meeting made no mention of the tensions.

The stop in Poland — which Trump called “the geographic heart of Europe” — was both a symbolic and strategic choice for the new American president. The Eastern European nation is a critical U.S. ally and perhaps the European capital most welcoming to Trump’s nationalist message.

Leaving little to chance at a tightly choreographed speech, Polish government officials arranged for buses to bring supporters into the city from the rural parts of the

At the Yalta summit in February 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, sensing victory ahead, unwisely agreed to Soviet demands that paved the way for the division of Europe. “If only I could dine with Stalin once a week, there would be no trouble at all. We get on like a house on fire,” enthused an overconfident Churchill, quoted in David Reynolds’s 2007 book, “Summits.”

President John F. Kennedy said privately after a nasty June 1961 summit in Vienna with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, “He just beat the hell out of me.”

Trump will probably say he won the Hamburg summit game, no matter what. The test will be whether this meeting helps dampen some of the fires burning dangerously around the world.

country, where the ruling party’s support is strongest.

*[‘Trump needs some nice pictures from Europe,’ and Poland is happy to oblige]*

Poland is one of the few NATO countries that has met an agreement to contribute at least 2 percent of its gross domestic product to defense spending, an issue that Trump has repeatedly raised since the campaign. It was one of many things Trump praised Poland for on Thursday.

But Trump also said military spending alone is not enough to preserve Western civilization.

“Our own fight for the West does not begin on the battlefield,” he said. “It begins with our minds, our wills and our souls. Today, the ties that unite our civilization are no less vital and demand no less defense than that bare shred of land on which the hope of Poland once totally rested.”

Speaking with nationalist overtones, Trump praised Poland as an example of a nation that had persevered despite grave challenges, saying it offered “the story of a people who have never lost hope, who have never been broken, and who have never forgotten who they are.”

Poland’s current right-leaning, populist government has proven a natural ally for Trump. The country’s Law and Justice Party has embraced some of the main pillars of Trump’s candidacy, including a

similar resistance to accepting Muslim refugees.

"While we will always welcome new citizens who share our values and love our people, our borders will always be closed to terrorism and extremism," Trump said Thursday. He also decried "the steady creep of government bureaucracy that drains the vitality and wealth of the people."

Trump's speech was also notable for its explicit commitment to Article 5, the collective security provision of the NATO treaty. "The United States has demonstrated not merely with words, but with its actions, that we stand firmly behind Article 5, the mutual defense commitment," Trump said.

Trump had notably left out a mention of Article 5 during a speech in late May at NATO's new headquarters in Brussels. Every U.S. president since Harry Truman in 1949 has pledged to honor the policy that an attack on an alliance nation is an attack on all of them.

*[Ahead of meeting with Putin, Trump still won't say Russia interfered in 2016 election]*

In a day of mixed messages toward Russia, Trump used his Warsaw speech to offer his firmest rebuke of Moscow.

"We urge Russia to cease its destabilizing activities in the Ukraine and elsewhere and its support for hostile regimes, including Syria and Iran, and instead join the community of responsible nations in our fight against common enemies and

defense of civilization itself," Trump said.

Earlier in the day, Trump struck a different tone. When asked during a joint news conference with Duda about Russian meddling in last year's U.S. election, Trump refused to say definitively that he believes Russia was responsible.

"I think it could very well have been Russia, but I think it could well have been other countries" Trump said. "Nobody really knows. Nobody really knows for sure."

Trump also used the appearance to continue his feud with CNN, saying the network has "been fake news for a long time." He called NBC "equally as bad, despite the fact that I made them a fortune with 'The Apprentice,'" a reference to the long-running reality show that starred Trump.

Shortly after arriving in Germany, Trump met with Merkel, with whom Trump has had a chilly relationship during his first months in office. Appearing briefly before the media, the pair appeared casual with each other and chatted freely. They shook hands while looking directly at each other — in contrast to their first meeting in Washington, when Trump declined a handshake in front of news cameras.

In a statement afterward, the White House said Trump and Merkel discussed a number of foreign policy and national security priorities, including the ongoing conflict between Qatar and Persian Gulf and Arab states, the North Korean crisis and the conflict in Ukraine.

*[Japan and Europe counter Trump with colossal trade deal]*

Gabriel, the German foreign minister, said discussion of climate and trade issues "are still clearly contentious." He and U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson were among those who attended the meeting.

Gabriel has often advocated for better relations between the West and Russia, and he said Germany was "very happy" about the Friday meeting scheduled between Trump and Putin.

"If relations between the United States and Russia continue to be as bad as they are now, this is bad for the whole world," he said.

Trump is also scheduled to meet Friday with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto. An earlier meeting between the two was canceled over Trump's insistence that Mexico pay for a vast new wall along the border between the two countries.

On trade, Trump is attempting to leverage the United States' economic power to negotiate deals in the country's favor, but foreign leaders appear increasingly ready to bypass the U.S. president.

On the eve of the G-20 summit, leaders from Japan and the E.U. announced their agreement on the broad strokes of a trade deal that will cover nearly 30 percent of the global economy, 10 percent of the world's population and 40 percent of global trade.

The announcement appeared to be a calculated rebuke of both the United States and Britain, which voted to leave the E.U. last year.

For Trump, another priority is shoring up support for his effort to contain North Korea after its defiant test of an intercontinental ballistic missile. Trump warned Thursday that North Korea could face "some pretty severe" consequences, but Washington also confronted firm opposition from Russia and China over any possible response.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Appearing briefly before the press before a dinner Thursday, Trump was asked by a reporter whether he had given up on Chinese President Xi Jinping to lean on North Korea to cease its activities.

"Never give up," Trump said.

"Are you disappointed?" the reporter persisted, referring to Trump's complaints in recent days that trade between China and North Korea has increased.

Trump didn't answer.

Wagner reported from Washington. Ana Swanson in Washington and Stephanie Kirchner in Berlin contributed to this report.

The  
Washington  
Post

## Editorial : Trump wants us to defend 'our values.' Which ones?

"DO WE have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost?" President Trump asked during his speech in Warsaw on Thursday. That's an important question, and so is this: Which values is he summoning us to defend?

There were encouraging elements in his address suggesting that he was referring to the universal values that America celebrated earlier this week, on the anniversary of its declaration of independence. Repeatedly, Mr. Trump invoked the parallel Polish and American devotion to freedom. He spoke of "America's commitment to your security and your place in a strong and democratic Europe." Unlike during his first trip to Europe as president, he embraced NATO's

Article 5, which binds the United States and its allies to treat an attack on one as an attack on all.

Mr. Trump warned against powers that use "propaganda, financial crimes and cyberwarfare" against the United States and its allies — and, in case that wasn't clear enough, explicitly warned Russia "to cease its destabilizing activities in Ukraine and elsewhere and its support for hostile regimes, including Syria and Iran." He assured his audience, "We treasure the rule of law and protect the right to free speech and free expression."

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Yet elements of his address left doubt as to whether Mr. Trump views such values as truly universal.

"The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive," he said. If by "the West" he means anyone embracing the values of human rights, freedom and the dignity of every individual, he may be right. But those are hardly the property of the United States and Europe. They are treasured by the ailing Liu Xiaobo in China, by bloggers fighting for freedom in Uganda and by legislators fighting off the Maduro regime's thugs in Venezuela. They belong to people of all colors, all sexual orientations and all — or no — religion. When Mr. Trump urges "us all to fight like the Poles, for family, for freedom, for country and for God," does "all" truly mean "all"?

Perhaps what gives the most doubt is that he celebrated "the right to free speech and free expression"

without mentioning that the government welcoming him has worked worryingly to narrow those freedoms, along with the independence of its judiciary — and without mentioning that, at home, Mr. Trump himself has been far from a tribune of the free press. "Above all," he said, "we value the dignity of every human life, protect the rights of every person and share the hope of every soul to live in freedom." Many people will cheer those words — and will watch to see how his administration lives up to them in its interactions with Saudi Arabia and China, Russia and Egypt, and at home.

The  
Washington  
Post

## Robinson : Trump's dangerous thirst for a clash of civilizations

"A little learning is a dangerous thing," wrote the poet Alexander Pope. Three centuries later, Pope's aphorism perfectly — and dangerously — describes President Trump's understanding of history as a zero-sum clash of civilizations in which "the West" can triumph by imposing its will.

The speech Trump delivered Thursday in Warsaw's Krasinski Square might have been appropriate when Britannia ruled the waves and Europe's great powers held dominion over "lesser" peoples around the globe. It had nothing useful to say about today's interconnected world in which goods, people and ideas have contempt for borders.

"The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive," the president said. "Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?"

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Trump added what he probably thought of as a

Churchillian flourish: "I declare today for the world to hear that the West will never, ever be broken. Our values will prevail. Our people will thrive. And our civilization will triumph."

Triumph over whom? Trump mentioned "radical Islamic terrorism" as one of the enemies posing "dire threats to our security and to our way of life," but he didn't stop there. He went on to add Russia and — weirdly — "the steady creep of government bureaucracy" to the list. It is appalling that the president would describe patriotic public servants as a kind of fifth column that "drains the vitality and wealth of the people," and I guess some precious bodily fluids as well.

But what does Trump mean when he speaks of "the West" and its civilization? "Americans, Poles and the nations of Europe value individual freedom and sovereignty," he said. "We must work together to confront forces, whether they come from inside or out, from the South or the East, that threaten over time to undermine these values and to erase the bonds of culture, faith and tradition that make us who we are. . . . We write symphonies. We pursue innovation. We celebrate our ancient heroes, embrace our timeless traditions and customs, and

always seek to explore and discover brand-new frontiers."

That's what I mean about a little learning. If the president read a few history books, he'd know that for most of the past 2,000 years, China and India were the world's leading economic powers and Europe was a relatively primitive backwater. He'd know that Europe rose to dominance not by erecting walls but by opening itself to the rest of the world — its resources, products and people.

There is nothing pure about Western civilization. Its ability to absorb and incorporate outside influences has proved a great strength, not a weakness. Imagine Italy without tomato sauce, a gift from the New World — or the United States without the high-tech companies founded by immigrants, gifts from the Old.

Of course Trump is right to call for a united front against terrorism. But the solution, in a globalized world, cannot be to hunker behind walls, however big and beautiful those walls might be. Industrial supply chains cross borders and span oceans. Words and images flash around the globe at the speed of light. Global issues, such as nuclear proliferation and climate change,

demand global solutions. Like it or not, we are all in this together.

The correct response to the terrorism threat, which is real, is to isolate it as an abomination that is as much a grievous insult to Islam as to any other faith — and that has taken the lives of far more Muslims than non-Muslims. The wrong response is to posit that "the West" is besieged by, and therefore at war with, a hostile civilization. That's a fight in which everyone loses.

Trump did finally make clear that the United States remains fully committed to Article 5 of the NATO treaty, which states that an attack on one member of the alliance is tantamount to an attack on all. He was tougher on Russia than in the past, and he cited "propaganda, financial crimes and cyberwarfare" as "new forms of aggression" that must be countered.

But viewing the fight against terrorism as some kind of civilizational Armageddon is wrong. Trump seems to view himself as the West's defender against 1.6 billion Muslims, almost all of whom want only to live in peace. We need a capable president, not a crusader in chief.

erase the bonds of culture, faith and tradition that make us who we are." He warned about a "lack of pride and confidence in our values."

Mr. Trump is taking a clear stand against the kind of gauzy globalism and vague multiculturalism represented by the worldview of, say, Barack Obama and most contemporary Western intellectuals, who are willing, even eager, to concede the argument to critics of the West's traditions.

This is the speech Mr. Trump should have given to introduce himself to the world at his Inauguration. In place of that speech's resentments, his Warsaw talk offered a better form of nationalism. It is a nationalism rooted in values and beliefs—the rule of law, freedom of expression, religious faith and freedom from oppressive government—that let Europe and then America rise to prominence. This, Mr. Trump is saying, is worth whatever it takes to preserve and protect.

It was an important and, we hope, a defining speech—for the Trump Presidency and for Donald Trump himself.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Editorial : Trump's Defining Speech

The White House description of Donald Trump's speech Thursday in Warsaw was simply, "Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland." In truth, Mr. Trump's remarks were directed at the people of the world. Six months into his first term of office, Mr. Trump finally offered the core of what could become a governing philosophy. It is a determined and affirmative defense of the Western tradition.

To be sure, Mr. Trump's speech also contained several pointed and welcome foreign-policy statements. He assured Poland it would not be held hostage to a single supplier of energy, meaning Russia. He exhorted Russia to stop destabilizing Ukraine "and elsewhere," to stop supporting Syria and Iran and "instead join the community of responsible nations." He explicitly committed to NATO's Article 5 on mutual defense.

But—and this shocked Washington—the speech aimed higher. Like the best presidential speeches, it contained affirmations of ideas and principles and related them to the current political moment. "Americans, Poles and the nations of Europe value individual freedom and sovereignty," he said. This was

more than a speech, though. It was an argument. One might even call it an apologia for the West.

Mr. Trump built his argument out of Poland's place in the history of the West, both as a source of its culture—Copernicus, Chopin—and as a physical and spiritual battlefield, especially during World War II. The word Mr. Trump came back to repeatedly to define this experience was "threat."

During and after the war, Poland survived threats to its existence from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Mr. Trump believes that the West today confronts threats of a different sort, threats both physical and cultural. "This continent," said Mr. Trump, "no longer confronts the specter of communism. But today we're in the West, and we have to say there are dire threats to our security and to our way of life."

He identified the most immediate security threat as an "oppressive ideology." He was talking about radical Islam, but it is worth noting that he never mentioned radical Islam or Islamic State. Instead, he described the recent commitment by Saudi Arabia and other Muslim nations to combat an ideological menace that threatens the world

with terrorism. He compared this idea of mutual defense to the alliance of free nations that defeated Nazism and communism.

But the speech's most provocative argument was about our way of life. It came when he described how a million Poles stood with Pope John Paul II in Victory Square in 1979 to resist Soviet rule by chanting, "We want God!"

"With that powerful declaration of who you are," Mr. Trump said, "you came to understand what to do and how to live."

This is a warning to the West and a call to action. By remembering the Poles' invocation of God, Mr. Trump is clearly aligning himself with the same warning issued to Europe some years ago by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict.

Cardinal Ratzinger's argument was that Europe needed to recognize that its turn toward aggressive secularism posed a real threat to its survival. In Mr. Trump's formulation of that threat, we are obliged to "confront forces, whether they come from inside or out, from the South or the East, that threaten over time to undermine these values and to



Davis

WARSAW — President Trump said on Thursday that Western civilization was at risk of decline, bringing a message about “radical Islamic terrorism” and “the creep of government bureaucracy” to a European capital he views as hospitable to his nationalist message.

Mr. Trump, who broke with tradition by attacking American leaders and his country’s intelligence services while abroad, delivered his message in a speech to a friendly Polish crowd before a two-day summit meeting of Group of 20 leaders in Hamburg, Germany.

Hours later, he flew from Warsaw to Hamburg, where he held a low-key private meeting with the German chancellor, Angela Merkel. She perhaps best symbolizes the deep skepticism shared by Western leaders toward Mr. Trump’s persona and his policies, ranging from addressing climate change to confronting Russia.

In what may be a foretaste of the scene during the gathering, 12,000 protesters vowing to disrupt the G-20 summit meeting converged for a demonstration in Hamburg on Thursday night called “Welcome to Hell.” There were reports that dozens of police officers had sustained minor injuries as a small group of protesters attacked them with bottles, poles and iron bars in clashes that lasted until midnight. Up to 100,000 protesters were expected in the coming days.

Mr. Trump roused his Polish hosts by recounting the country’s history of resistance to invaders, including Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. But he said nothing about the right-wing government’s crackdown on judges and journalists and its refusal to accept more migrants, policies that have upset European Union leaders. He instead praised Poland as a defender of liberty in the face of existential threats.

“The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive,” he said. “Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?”

Pressed at a news conference earlier in the day about Russian interference in the American election, he said that “nobody really

## Trump, in Poland, Asks if West Has the ‘Will to Survive’ (UNE)

Glenn Thrush and  
Julie Hirschfeld

knows” if other countries were involved. He blamed President Barack Obama for not responding publicly after learning about reports of possible election meddling last summer.

Mr. Trump — who is under pressure to confront President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia during their first face-to-face meeting in Hamburg on Friday over Mr. Putin’s attempts to sway the election — delivered a mixed message on Russia.

The president made his sharpest criticism of Moscow since taking office, urging Russia to “cease its destabilizing activities in Ukraine and elsewhere and its support for hostile regimes, including Syria and Iran,” and asserting that it must “instead join the community of responsible nations in our fight against common enemies and in defense of civilization itself.”

And Mr. Trump moved to reassure Poland and other allies fretful about Russia’s aggression, making a full-throated endorsement of the collective defense principle that undergirds NATO, something he was unwilling to do during his first trip to Europe as president in May.

“The United States has demonstrated not merely with words but with its actions that we stand firmly behind Article 5, the mutual defense commitment,” Mr. Trump said.

But he also said he was not entirely convinced that Russia was solely responsible for interference in the 2016 election, breaking with American intelligence agencies, which have agreed that the efforts emanated from Moscow and were directed by Mr. Putin.

“I think it was Russia, and it could have been other people in other countries,” Mr. Trump said when asked for a yes-or-no answer to the question about Russian meddling. “Nobody really knows for sure.”

To back up his message about uncertainty, he recalled the intelligence failures that preceded President George W. Bush’s decision to invade Iraq in 2003. “Everybody was 100 percent sure that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction,” Mr. Trump said. “They were wrong, and it led to a mess.”

He also had harsh words for North Korea after its recent test of a new long-range missile, but he refused to say what steps he would take to punish it.

“We’ll see what happens — I don’t like to talk about what we have planned — but I have some pretty

severe things that we’re thinking about,” Mr. Trump said at the news conference, standing next to his Polish counterpart, Andrzej Duda. “They are behaving in a very, very serious manner, and something will have to be done about it.”

After meeting with Ms. Merkel in Hamburg on Thursday evening, Mr. Trump dined with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan and President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, discussing a response to the latest threats from North Korea.

Asked by a reporter whether he had given up on President Xi Jinping of China, whom he has repeatedly criticized for failing to apply enough pressure on North Korea to de-escalate, the president said, “Never give up.” He and Mr. Xi will meet separately in Hamburg on Friday or Saturday.

The trip to Warsaw gave Mr. Trump an opportunity to showcase his willingness to defend Poland against aggression in the face of threats from Russia, and his commitment to helping American workers. He praised Mr. Duda for moving forward with the purchase of the Patriot missile defense system from the United States, which he called “the best anywhere in the world.”

Mr. Trump emerged from a Marriott hotel in Warsaw on Thursday a little after 9:15 a.m., and his sprawling motorcade rode along the Vistula River to a back entrance to the presidential palace. He was greeted by Mr. Duda and disappeared for closed-door meetings after a session with photographers, emerging only for the news conference.

Unlike in Hamburg, there were no major protests in Warsaw, although there were signs of dissent.

Michael Schudrich, Poland’s chief rabbi, and other Jewish leaders criticized Mr. Trump’s decision not to visit a monument to the 1943 ghetto uprising.

Every American president and vice president who has visited Warsaw since the fall of Communism in 1989 has visited the monument. “We deeply regret that President Donald Trump, though speaking in public barely a mile away from the monument, chose to break with that laudable tradition, alongside so many other ones,” the statement read. “We trust that this slight does not reflect the attitudes and feelings of the American people.”

Hours after the Jewish leaders issued their rebuke, the White House sent word that Ivanka Trump,

the president’s daughter and senior adviser, who is an observant Jew, had visited the ghetto site and laid a wreath at the monument there, visiting the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

In a statement distributed to reporters, Ms. Trump said her visit was “a deeply moving experience.”

“It was a privilege to pay my respects and remember, with gratitude, those who tenaciously fought against all odds,” Ms. Trump said in a statement that did not mention Jews or the Holocaust. “The monument, erected on the rubble of the Warsaw Ghetto, symbolizes the fight for freedom. I am profoundly grateful for those who fought and all those who continue to fight today.”

Mr. Trump’s speech in Krasinski Square, which memorializes the Polish people’s resistance to tyranny, was well received, as was his message likening the fight against the Islamic State to Poland’s resistance of German invasion and occupation during World War II.

“We must stand united against these shared enemies to strip them of their territory, their funding, their networks and any form of ideological support,” Mr. Trump said. “While we will always welcome new citizens who share our values and love our people, our borders will always be closed to terrorism and extremism.”

The pro-Duda crowd at Krasinski Square, where many waved American and Polish flags, serenaded reporters from both countries with periodic chants of “fake news.”

That came about an hour after Mr. Trump tag-teamed with Mr. Duda in a transnational denunciation of journalists who write negative stories about them.

The American president criticized CNN and defended what he suggested was a lighthearted tweet of a video depicting him body-slammng a figure whose head had been replaced by the CNN logo.

What made Mr. Trump’s sermon against the mainstream news media different this time was that Mr. Duda’s center-right party, Law and Justice, proposed restricting the news media’s access to Parliament last year. The government backed down after street protests.

“They have been fake news for a long time,” Mr. Trump said of CNN when asked about the tweet, adding that the network had been covering him in “a dishonest way.”

"We don't want fake news," he continued, as Mr. Duda nodded vigorously in agreement.

Mr. Duda, responding to an American reporter's question about his own actions toward the news media, accused Polish journalists of

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL.**

Troianovski

WARSAW—In a bid to broaden the nationalist vision he has long embraced, President Donald Trump on Thursday described the West as locked in a struggle it could lose unless it can "summon the courage" to see it through.

Mr. Trump chose Poland as the backdrop for a defining foreign policy speech of his early presidency, calling the country's perseverance in World War II and afterward a model for Western nations that face sinister threats of their own today.

"The story of Poland is the story of a people who have never lost hope, who have never been broken, and who have never, ever forgotten who they are," Mr. Trump said at Krasinski Square, site of a memorial to a 1944 Polish uprising against the Nazis. His speech came a day before he was to meet for the first time with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

He exhorted the West to recognize the existential peril embodied by terrorists who have struck repeatedly at centers of Western arts and culture, including Paris, London and New York.

"We are confronted by another oppressive ideology—one that seeks to export terrorism and extremism all around the globe," Mr. Trump said. "America and Europe have suffered one terror attack after another. We're going to get it to stop."

With Thursday's address, the U.S. president sought to provide an intellectual grounding for some of the controversial policies he has pushed since taking office: the travel ban, building a border wall, and aggressive actions against illegal immigrants.

All these initiatives have faced setbacks. Courts have delayed and constrained Mr. Trump's efforts to restrict travel from six Muslim-majority countries he says pose an

intentionally distorting his record and failing to include his positions in articles critical of his government.

After chastising CNN — a go-to move on both sides of the Atlantic — Mr. Trump went after NBC, his former employer. "NBC is nearly as

elevated risk of terrorism. It isn't clear whether he will win congressional support or funding for the wall along the U.S.-Mexican border, a linchpin of his effort to stop illegal migrants.

Detractors have said Mr. Trump's moves reflect an anti-Muslim, nativist bias evident from the earliest days of his campaign. But in Mr. Trump's telling, his steps are needed to fortify a Western culture at risk of being washed away.

"The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive," Mr. Trump said, amid chants of "Donald Trump! Donald Trump!"

"Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?" he asked.

A main architect of the speech was Stephen Miller, a senior adviser and part of a populist-nationalist wing at the White House led by strategist Steve Bannon, White House aides said.

At times Mr. Bannon's clout has seemed in doubt. He has clashed with the president's son-in-law, senior adviser Jared Kushner, and at times Mr. Trump has seemed to lose patience with him. But the Bannon-Miller faction doesn't appear to be in retreat, and White House aides indicated they were pleased with Mr. Miller's work. As Mr. Trump flew from Poland to Germany for a summit meeting, reporters on the plane could overhear aides congratulating Mr. Miller on the speech.

The president told The Wall Street Journal in the spring that Mr. Bannon was merely "a guy who works for me."

In tone and substance, the speech departed from the typical pattern of Mr. Trump, who relishes the instant impact that Twitter provides in 140-character bursts. A senior adviser

bad, despite the fact that I made them a lot of money on 'The Apprentice,'" he said.

Krasinski Square is considerably smaller than Zamkowy Square, outside the Royal Palace, where Mr. Obama spoke in 2014. Worried that

who briefed reporters on the speech shortly before its delivery said the aim was to portray Mr. Trump's positions with more philosophical sweep.

Thursday's address had a loftier ring than his address in Saudi Arabia in May, when Mr. Trump said America's global role should be guided by what he called "principled realism." That approach, as he described it, emphasizes transactions on economic and security agreements over other concerns, such as human-rights abuses.

"We will make decisions based on real-world outcomes—not inflexible ideology," he said then in remarks before Muslim leaders.

The senior adviser said of Thursday's address: "The core theme of this speech is a defense of Western civilization."

The message isn't necessarily an easy one for Mr. Trump to pull off. While he celebrated traditions of "free speech" and "free expression" in his speech, he has faced mounting criticism over his broadsides against news outlets reporting on election interference and a federal investigation into Trump associates' possible collusion in attempts by Russia to damage Hillary Clinton's presidential bid.

On his trip abroad, he kept up that criticism of U.S. news outlets. At a news conference in Warsaw, Mr. Trump was asked about his dust-up with the CNN after he recently tweeted a video portraying him wrestling a logo of the network to the ground. "What we want to see in the United States is honest, beautiful, free press," he said. "We don't want fake news."

On Friday, Mr. Trump is scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with Mr. Putin, a figure he praised during his presidential campaign, at a summit of leaders from the Group of 20 leading nations. U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded Russia meddled in the election with a goal to elect Mr. Trump.

crowds would not show up on Thursday — Mr. Trump is less popular in Poland's liberal capital than in the conservative countryside — the authorities chose a smaller, though still symbolically rich, site.

It was unclear whether Mr. Trump would bring up the matter or caution Mr. Putin not to try interfering again. At his news conference on Thursday, Mr. Trump said "no one really knows for sure" who was behind the interference.

Far from guaranteeing Western civilizational norms, Mr. Trump could be coaxed into abandoning them if he isn't careful in his dealings with Mr. Putin, said U.S. Sen. Chris Coons, a Delaware Democrat who serves on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "There's a significant risk that Putin will play to Trump's ego and will attempt to pressure him to abandon what are our core American traditions," Mr. Coons said.

In Thursday's speech, Mr. Trump criticized Moscow for its interference in Ukraine and its support for governments in Iran and Syria.

"We urge Russia to cease its destabilizing activities in Ukraine and elsewhere, and its support for hostile regimes—including Syria and Iran," Mr. Trump said.

But some European officials wondered if Mr. Trump would carry those criticisms into Friday's meeting.

"There's no doubt that President Trump's position regarding Russia is, on many occasions, different than what he presented today in Warsaw," said European Council President Donald Tusk, a former center-right Polish prime minister. "I understand this, the audience one's addressing often dictates the tone."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who met Mr. Trump on Thursday in Hamburg, said the U.S. leader's trip to Poland—which some Western European politicians had feared could deepen rifts on the continent—didn't worry her "at all."

"We have our agenda here, but there are different conceptions of globalization," Ms. Merkel said, previewing the G-20 summit. "There don't always have to be losers where there are winners."

## POLITICO Rand and Donald's wild health care ride

Burgess Everett

After a bitter rivalry during the 2016 presidential campaign, Sen. Rand Paul and President Donald Trump just can't quit each other. And they are teaming up to confound everyone in Washington on the GOP's attempts to repeal Obamacare.

After Paul dubbed candidate Trump an "orange-faced windbag" and Trump questioned whether candidate Paul had a "properly functioning brain," the two have begun to build a strong relationship. Trump has expended major energy courting Paul and they've developed what Paul calls a "good rapport." They've played golf and chat regularly on the phone.

Story Continued Below

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has long since given up on his Kentucky colleague. White House officials also don't think Paul can be convinced to vote for the party's Obamacare repeal.

Yet Trump wants Paul to be part of the party's negotiations on health care. The day before McConnell pulled the Senate's repeal bill last week, Trump invited Paul to a personal meeting at the White House on the issue. The rest of the Senate GOP had their face time with Trump as a group.

With all that attention from the president, Paul has refused to rule out voting for an Obamacare repeal bill — even though every whip count on and off the Hill has him as a hard "no."

Trump seems to view getting Paul's vote as a challenge: When the senator initially came out against the House's plan in March, Trump immediately targeted him as someone who will "come along." And that was before the Senate even began considering the matter.

"He is very persuasive," Paul said of Trump.

The persuasiveness goes both ways. Trump listens to Paul, who has offered a variety of political, procedural and policy solutions to the GOP's health care quagmire over the past six months.

Paul and Trump both seem to change their mind on a whim when it comes to Obamacare, and lately they seem more intent on tearing the law down than building a new one, undercutting McConnell's efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act simultaneously.

Paul Teller, who works for Trump's legislative affairs office, has recently indicated to conservative groups that Trump would sign a repeal-only bill, a major departure from the official White House line backing the ongoing repeal-and-replace effort, according to two sources familiar with the talks. But it lines up with Paul's recent call to repeal Obamacare and deal with a replacement later.

Paul also has Trump's ear. And it's driving Senate Republicans crazy.

"It's very hard to come up with a consensus Senate Republican health care bill when Sen. Paul's positions seem to change almost daily," said a Republican aide familiar with internal deliberations.

Trump administration aides do not think it is worth Trump's time to call Paul, and McConnell has made clear to the White House that Paul is a "lost cause," according to a person familiar with the conversations. Aides also have told Trump that Paul is not going to join forces with him. Trump has sometimes questioned them, citing his relationship with Paul.

The president has spent far less time personally courting Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Dean Heller of Nevada, perhaps the two hardest "no" votes other than Paul. A Trump-linked group even threatened to attack Heller for his opposition to the Senate bill. Trump traveled to Kentucky for events earlier this year, but has only gently ribbed Paul for his stubbornness.

"The president and Rand Paul have a great relationship. They have both been very public in their supporting of gutting Obamacare, repealing Obamacare," said Brian Darling, a former counsel and spokesman for Paul who is still close to the senator. Trump "would be happy if the bill could pass and move a little more to Rand Paul's views."

And the two men's burgeoning friendship has left an unmistakable imprint on the GOP's halting efforts to gut President Barack Obama's signature achievement — and not always for the better, according to fellow Republicans.

In December, House and Senate GOP leaders were fully prepared to approve a 2015 repeal bill as soon as the new Congress was sworn in so that Trump could sign it soon after being inaugurated. The replacement would come later, they figured, once Democrats felt the pressure to cooperate after Obamacare was swept away.

Paul swiftly rejected that approach and caught Trump's eye while railing against the GOP on television for not having a replacement. The president-elect called him up and endorsed Paul's plan to repeal and replace Obamacare simultaneously. GOP leaders were shocked, and went back to the drawing board.

Paul then voted against a budget resolution that would set up repeal of the law via the party-line reconciliation maneuver. Every other Senate Republican supported it.

"He's trying to blow it up and has been since January," said a second Republican source familiar with the party's internal deliberations.

As the House overhaul flagged in March, Paul and House Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), another Trump ally, floated repealing the law and then figuring out a new system later. But the bill passed and the idea was dropped as Trump pressed for Senate action. But now that the bill is flagging in the chamber, both Trump and Paul are searching for an exit strategy.

"Let's repeal some of the really bad crap in Obamacare that Democrats will never repeal," Paul said last week. "Let's do our repeal that we can do in a partisan way, and let's put [replacement] in the" committees.

A day later, Trump caught right up to him.

"If Republican Senators are unable to pass what they are working on

now, they should immediately REPEAL, and then REPLACE at a later date!" Trump tweeted. Paul retweeted Trump and said he's spoken to the president and McConnell about it.

Hours later McConnell rejected the idea, but over the weekend White House legislative affairs director Marc Short noted that 50 of the GOP senators had voted for a repeal-only bill in the past two years. It's the same messaging that Paul has been using — more evidence that the billionaire mogul-turned-president and the eye doctor from Kentucky-turned-senator are rubbing off on each other.

"Sen. Paul considers President Trump a friend and is always open to providing constructive feedback," said Sergio Gor, a spokesman for Paul.

But the late-game shift from Paul and Trump has exasperated staffers working on the bill, Republicans said, and has given conservative GOP senators like Ben Sasse of Nebraska and Mike Lee of Utah a way to agree with the president and simultaneously cast doubt on the ongoing repeal bill. That will make it harder for McConnell to garner sufficient support, especially after Paul has convinced Trump that there might be another way out, even if it was the original plan that McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan were pressing for seven months ago.

"This is not to be derogatory, but it's just true: He doesn't like to vote yes," said one person familiar with McConnell's thinking of Paul.

Paul's colleagues said they understand where he is coming from, even if he hasn't made things any easier for his party.

"Rand really believes the things he stands for. He's very principled about it," said Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.). Asked whether Paul has been constructive despite his multitude of positions, he replied: "Absolutely."

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## Forbes : Private sector has health care cures

Steve Forbes

Who knows what — if anything — Senate Republicans will do about health care reform.

But there is a fundamental truth that is being overlooked in all the hyperbolic rhetoric over Medicaid, mandates, subsidies, accessibility and taxes: Free markets would turn

our ailing healthcare system into a dynamic, innovative cornucopia of better and ever more affordable care for all of us. We'll see if Washington can rise to the

challenge of starting to remove the formidable obstacles to such a market where patients would be in charge rather than the third party

payers of government, big insurers and big employers.

There are a number of impressive examples of what the private sector is capable of providing us if government barriers were removed.

Take one particular product from Stryker, one of the world's largest medical device companies. Its innovative SurgiCount scanners address the problem of "retained" surgical sponges. Despite being considered a "never event," surgical sponges are left inside patients an estimated dozen times a day in the US. A single such incident costs about \$600,000 in corrective surgery, indemnity payments and legal settlements. SurgiCount avoids all that by electronically tracking the sponges used in an operation, rather than leaving that to chance in a manual count by harried operating room surgeons and nurses.

Innovation can be seen at the retail level as drug store chains Walgreens, CVS and Rite-Aid push further into health care delivery. The authoritative journal *Hospitals & Health Networks* reported that this push will continue "to put pressure on traditional providers to 'up their game' on access — or partner." What *Hospitals & Health Networks* didn't say is that it would at the same time enhance consumer access and choice.

In similar fashion, the University of Southern California Center for Body Computing's Virtual Care Clinic, along with eight partners, helps deliver wireless, on-demand health care to anyone with a smartphone. The Virtual Care Clinic system uses mobile apps, wearable sensors, data collection, "virtual" health care providers and more to connect users with USC medical expertise.

USC is calling it an "anytime, anywhere" disruptive health care

model to deliver "borderless health care." That would pair nicely with an idea some Republicans have long advocated, to permit sales of health insurance across state lines.

#### **POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media**

These are but a few examples among many and there would be countless more if we achieved a genuine free market system. But the truth is that both parties over the years share responsibility for shockingly higher health care costs and an all-too-inflexible system.

The GOP must share some of the blame for the cost spiral Obamacare has wrought for the past seven years. When Republicans controlled both Congress and the White House in 2003 to 2007, they could have passed many of the health care reforms they now advocate — most notably permitting nationwide

shopping for health insurance and greatly expanding the eligibility for tax-free health savings accounts.

Had President George W. Bush and the GOP Congress done so, it's highly improbable that Obamacare would have seen the light of day. The same nationwide free-market competition that holds down car and auto insurance premiums would have a similar effect on health insurance premiums.

More patient consumerism and choice are what's needed, not Medicaid for all.

*Steve Forbes, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1996 and 2000, is the chairman and editor-in-chief of Forbes Media. Follow him on Twitter: @SteveForbesCEO*

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## **McConnell says GOP must shore up ACA insurance markets if Senate bill dies (UNE)**

The Republicans' time-crunched effort to pass a health-care bill is hitting a lot of resistance in the Senate. The Post's Paige Cunningham explains five key reasons the party is struggling to move their plan forward. The Post's Paige W. Cunningham explains the key reasons why the party struggles to move a health-care plan forward. (Video: Jenny Starrs/Photo: Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said Thursday that if his party fails to muster 50 votes for its plan to rewrite the Affordable Care Act, it will have no choice but to draft a more modest bill with Democrats to support the law's existing insurance markets.

The remarks, made at a Rotary Club lunch in Glasgow, Ky., represent a significant shift for the veteran legislator. While he had raised the idea last week that Republicans may have to turn to Democrats if they cannot pass their own bill, his words mark the first time he has explicitly raised the prospect of shoring up the ACA.

"If my side is unable to agree on an adequate replacement, then some kind of action with regard to the private health insurance market must occur," McConnell said. "No action is not an alternative. We've got the insurance markets imploding all over the country, including in this state."

McConnell, who pledged in 2014 to eradicate the law also known as Obamacare "root and branch," initially raised the prospect of having to work with Democrats last week after he pulled a measure he had crafted behind closed doors. That bill would jettison the ACA's requirement that most individuals prove they have health coverage, would repeal or delay billions in taxes imposed under the current law and would make deep, long-term cuts to the nation's Medicaid program.

But while he previously declared that Republicans "need to come up with a solution" if they wanted to make real changes to the nation's health-care system, McConnell on Thursday acknowledged how difficult it is proving to craft an alternative that can satisfy the GOP's conservative and centrist camps.

How Trump is rolling back Obama's legacy

His suggestion that he and his colleagues might instead try to bolster the insurance exchanges created under the ACA is at odds with Republican talking points that they are beyond repair. The marketplaces were built for people who do not have access to affordable coverage through a job, and at last count slightly more than 10 million Americans had health plans purchased through the exchanges. More than 8 in 10 customers bought their plans with federal subsidies the law provides.

Until now, both congressional Republicans and the Trump administration have contended that the "collapse" of the ACA marketplaces is a main reason to erase much of the 2010 law.

*[A town hall in Kansas shows Republican struggles with health-care bill]*

McConnell said Thursday in Glasgow that he continues to "twist the dial" to build support for his legislation. But with no Democrats willing to back it, he can lose no more than two of his 52 caucus members. Vice President Pence would then cast the tiebreaking vote.

A spokesman said Thursday evening that there was "literally" no difference between McConnell's remarks this week and last week, when he said that "either Republicans will agree and change the status quo, or the markets will continue to collapse and we'll have to sit down" with Democrats.

"Both times he was talking about passing something," Don Stewart said. "His point was: The only way Democrats would work with us is [to] prop up Obamacare, not fix it."

Yet the Fourth of July recess has not bolstered the political prospects for McConnell's legislation; GOP senators have been peppered with questions by constituents anxious about the potential impact on their coverage. In the past several days, some senators have implied that considerable work would still be

required before the Better Care Reconciliation Act could pass the Senate.

Sen. Patrick J. Toomey (R-Pa.), a conservative who has played a key role in the chamber's health-care negotiations this year, said Wednesday during an appearance before a live audience at WHTM-TV in Harrisburg, "We're still several weeks away from a vote, I think."

On Thursday Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.), who opposed McConnell's original draft bill, also voiced skepticism about the chances of reaching a consensus. "If we cannot bring the conference together and agree on repeal legislation, then I think President Trump's absolutely right that we should pass a clean repeal," Cruz told reporters, adding such a repeal should be delayed "either a year or two years" to allow time for a replacement.

Earlier in the day, Cruz said in an interview with KTSA radio in San Antonio that though he was feeling hopeful, "I don't know if we get it done or not." The situation, he said, "is precarious."

Meanwhile, Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) told a town hall meeting in rural Palco that "there are people who tell me they are better off" with the ACA, "and I believe them." Moran, who said last week he did not support the GOP measure in its current form, called for "a national debate that includes legislative hearings. . . . It needs to be less politics and more policy."



President Trump has repeatedly pronounced the ACA “dead.” And in contrast with their predecessors in the Obama administration, who talked up the law’s marketplaces, Health and Human Services officials have been issuing maps, detailing in red the number of U.S. counties in danger of being without marketplace offerings for 2018. The most recent map, released Wednesday, showed 40 “bare” counties in Ohio, Indiana and Nevada.

*[Cruz calls for ‘clean repeal’ of ACA if Senate talks fall apart — aligning him with Trump, not McConnell]*

This naysaying is at odds with official forecasts of the marketplaces’ likely future. In estimating the effects of McConnell’s bill, the Congressional Budget Office said that, if the ACA were left intact, its exchanges would remain “stable in most areas.”

The forecast noted that “a small number of people” live in parts of

the country in which few insurers have been interested in selling individual policies. Some of the companies now may withdraw, in part because of the changes that Republicans have been considering. Those include eliminating the ACA’s requirement that most Americans carry health insurance and abolishing \$7 billion in cost-sharing subsidies that have helped lower-income consumers afford their health plans’ deductibles and copays.

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) on Thursday called McConnell’s statement “encouraging” and said his caucus is “eager to work with Republicans to stabilize the markets and improve the law. At the top of the list should be ensuring cost-sharing payments are permanent, which will protect health care for millions.”

But there has been no outreach yet from GOP Senate leaders to their Democratic counterparts, and the two parties remain far apart in terms

of which policy solutions each prefers when it comes to revamping the ACA. Still, more than half a dozen rank-and-file members from both parties huddled privately in May to discuss finding common ground.

Among those were some of the most outspoken GOP critics of McConnell’s bill, such as Shelley Moore Capito (W.Va.), Susan Collins (Maine) and Bill Cassidy (La.), as well as Democrats such as Joe Donnelly (Ind.), Heidi Heitkamp (N.D.) and Joe Manchin III (W.Va.).

#### Local Politics Alerts

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

Before the recess, Heitkamp said in an interview that she would be telling constituents that she remained open to bipartisan

negotiations — if certain conditions are met.

“The real thing here is making sure people understand that there are choices,” she said. “That we can fix what’s wrong with the Affordable Care Act without taking away Medicaid for disabled kids. That we can fix what’s wrong with the Affordable Care Act without giving billions of dollars of tax breaks to the wealthiest among us. That we have an opportunity to work together here if we can figure out how to collaborate. And that the way to do it is not in some backroom; the way to do it is in a markup in a hearing with regular order.”

Ed O’Keefe and Sean Sullivan contributed to this report.

## The Washington Post

### A town hall in Kansas shows Republican struggles with health-care bill

PALCO, Kan. — At his first town hall meeting since coming out against the Senate Republicans’ health-care bill, Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) wanted to make himself clear.

He didn’t want legislation jammed through on a party-line vote, but he would “not necessarily” vote against it. He’d met people who “tell me they are better off” because the Affordable Care Act was passed, but he knew plenty of people were hurting, too.

“It’s worthy of a national debate that includes legislative hearings,” Moran said after the 90-minute event that brought 150 people to a town of 277. “It needs to be less politics and more policy.”

Moran, the only Republican senator holding unscreened town halls on health care this week, revealed just how much his party is struggling to pass a bill — and even how to talk about it. The people who crowded in and around Palco’s community center aimed to prove that there was no demand for a repeal of the ACA, even in the reddest parts of a deep red state.

That had taken some planning. Moran announced the Palco event with a full week’s notice, and Kansas’s pro-ACA groups mobilized to fill it. Planned Parenthood transported at least 20 people from the Kansas City suburbs, 4½ hours to the east; the city’s chapters of Indivisible did the same. The American Association for Retired People and Alliance for a Healthy

Kansas made more calls, driving loyal voters to Palco. The result was a polite but heated round of questions that Moran occasionally chose not to answer.

When a 59-year old veteran named Jeff Zamrzla asked if it was time for “Medicare for all,” Moran waited for applause to die down, then moved on to the topic of Medicaid funding. With a smile and a shrug, he told women in bright pink Planned Parenthood shirts that he wouldn’t have an answer they liked.

“That was a win for Planned Parenthood patients,” said Elise Higgins, 29, the regional director of organizing for Planned Parenthood Great Plains. “He didn’t just talk about defunding.”

Moran did the opposite, largely allowing skeptics of the Republican bill to frame the whole conversation. For all 90 minutes, a woman named Yaneth Poarch, 46, stood behind the senator holding a sign with caricatures of Republican leaders, and the warning “When you lose your health care, remember who took it away.”

Neither security guards nor staff did anything to move her.

The setting made the dissent, and Moran’s careful positioning, verge on surreal. Palco was in Kansas’s rural Republican heartland, miles from Moran’s home town of Plainville. The visitors from eastern Kansas, and the local Democrats from nearby Hays, found themselves next to Moran’s old roommate, some high school

friends, and a physician. All of it took place in Rooks County, which gave the president a 73-point landslide over Hillary Clinton last year; Moran beat a token Democratic opponent by 79 points.

Until this year, the voters who cast those ballots had confidently favored repealing the ACA. Like Trump, Moran ran on “full repeal,” claiming to be the first Republican member of Congress to do so.

“Obamacare was rammed through Congress on a purely partisan basis in the face of significant public opposition,” Moran said in 2015 after the new Republican majority in the Senate passed a test vote on repeal. Moran had chaired the party’s 2014 Senate campaign effort, making that majority possible.

On Thursday, Moran took another tone. He did not describe the task facing Republicans as repeal; it was “repair, replace, whatever language people are using.”

Pressed by activists and voters, Moran said that he did not want to cut back Medicaid. “I have concern about people with disabilities, the frail and elderly,” Moran said. “I also know that if we want health care in rural places and across Kansas, Medicare and Medicaid need to compensate for the services they provide.”

After the town hall meeting, Moran told reporters the version of the GOP’s bill that he opposed put too much of Medicaid at risk.

“Medicaid, except for the extension part of Medicaid, is not really a part of fixing the Affordable Care Act,” he said. “So we’ve coupled two things, both of which are very difficult. Kansas is a place that’s treated Medicaid payments very conservative. If there are people receiving those payments who don’t deserve them, deal with that issue.”

In Washington, and at the height of the tea party’s activism in Kansas, it had been easy to find conservatives who could sell Medicaid cuts. None of that came out in Palco. Instead, Moran was stopped several times by disability rights advocates who worried that the GOP’s bill would destroy their lifestyles.

“I am very worried about waived services,” said Mike Oxford, a 58-year old activist with the disability group ADAPT.

“Well, my concern with Medicaid is in significant part related to people with waived services — and you’re right,” said Moran.

Oxford, who carried a sign reading “I am Medicaid,” said he was comforted by the answer. “Here in Kansas, that would be the only place they could find money,” he said. “The senator’s right — we’ve been skinned down to zero.”

But despite the thanks from people who wanted him to kill the Senate bill, Moran never ruled out a yes vote. Despite the Kansas Hospital Association’s opposition to the bill,

Moran said he had not found any hospitals that benefited from the ACA. Asked after the town hall whether he could vote for a repeal-and-delay plan — favored, in some interviews, by President Trump — Moran didn't rule it out.

"There'd be skepticism by many Americans because of how long it's taken," he said. "Can we come up with something in another year? Maybe, if that happened, there would be a desire on the part of all members of the United States Senate to find a replacement."

The desire wasn't there quite yet, he said. "There are senators with genuine concerns about this legislation. More senators then are having town hall meetings," said Moran, who has two more town halls in western Kansas in coming days.

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## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

# Trump Says Russia Interfered in Election, But May Not Have Acted Alone

Peter Nicholas and Anton Troianovski in Warsaw and Paul Sonne in Washington

WARSAW—President Donald Trump took his criticism of the U.S. intelligence community abroad on Thursday, calling its acumen into question before an international audience in Poland.

While the president conceded that Russia meddled in the 2016 U.S. election, he said other countries could have interfered as well. U.S. intelligence and security agencies pinned the blame exclusively on Russia.

Mr. Trump's critique of the U.S. intelligence community came the day before his high-profile meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G-20 summit in Germany. Mr. Putin has denied interference in the campaign but has said patriotic Russian hackers could have acted on their own without state direction.

Mr. Trump's chastisement of his country's own intelligence capabilities in front of a foreign audience marked a rare action for a U.S. president heading into a high-profile international summit. It is the latest point of tension between Mr. Trump and the U.S. intelligence community, whose behavior he likened to that of the Nazis in a tweet ahead of his inauguration.

"The president's comments today, again casting doubt on whether Russia was behind the blatant interference in our election and suggesting—his own intelligence agencies to the contrary—that nobody really knows, continue to directly undermine U.S. interests," said Rep. Adam Schiff (D., Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee. "This is not putting America first, but continuing to propagate his own personal fiction at the country's expense."

Mieke Eoyang, vice president for the national security program at the Third Way think tank, and a former Democratic staffer on the House Intelligence Committee, said Mr. Trump has carried to the presidency a hostility toward the intelligence

community he showed on the campaign trail.

"I don't think he realizes that now that he's president, it's his intelligence community," Ms. Eoyang said. "Continuing to denigrate them and throw doubt on the assessments that they are making also undermines his own foreign policy when he's doing things based on their assessments."

The White House didn't respond to requests for comment.

The president's comments came at a news conference here Thursday morning, when he was asked if he accepts the U.S. intelligence community's verdict that Russia interfered in the U.S. election in a bid to help his candidacy and defeat Democratic rival Hillary Clinton.

"I think it was Russia, and I think it could have been other people and other countries," Mr. Trump responded. "A lot of people interfered. I think it's been happening for a long time."

The meeting with Mr. Putin will take place against a backdrop of intensifying federal investigations into Russian meddling. Special Counsel Robert Mueller is probing whether Trump campaign aides colluded with Russian operatives to boost Mr. Trump's prospects and damage Mrs. Clinton. Mr. Trump has denied that his campaign colluded with Russia.

Mr. Trump also said the U.S. intelligence community has made mistakes in the past and that its judgment is open to question. He mentioned the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, when intelligence assessments saying Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction turned out to be inaccurate.

"I remember listening about Iraq," Mr. Trump said.

He added, speaking of Russian election interference: "Nobody really knows. Nobody really knows for sure."

Mr. Trump's public questioning of the U.S. intelligence community's accuracy could come back to haunt

him when he needs to make a case for a policy shift or military action on the basis of such intelligence, said Gary J. Schmitt, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a former Senate Intelligence Committee staff director.

For example, Mr. Trump said Thursday he was considering "severe things" in response to North Korea's test launch this week of an intercontinental ballistic missile. Mr. Schmitt said any such actions, from military intervention to new sanctions, would likely be based on U.S. intelligence assessments. The president also may need to persuade allies to contribute to foreign policy initiatives on the basis of U.S. intelligence assessments, Mr. Schmitt said.

"He's going down a road that's not going to be helpful to him as president in the future," Mr. Schmitt said.

Members of Congress from both parties have called on Mr. Trump to confront Mr. Putin about what intelligence officials say is conclusive proof that Russia hacked Democratic computer systems and leaked emails from them in a bid to influence the election.

The White House hasn't said whether Mr. Trump will raise the issue.

—Rebecca Ballhaus and Byron Tau contributed to this article.

The president didn't raise the matter in his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at the White House in May, according to Mr. Lavrov.

At Thursday's news conference, Mr. Trump also took a swipe at his predecessor, Barack Obama. Mr. Trump said the former president took no action on Russia's activity in the election because of the mistaken belief that Mrs. Clinton would win anyway.

In October 2016, U.S. intelligence agencies issued a joint statement directly accusing the Russian government of trying to interfere in the election by leaking emails

hacked from the Democratic National Committee and other entities. The Obama White House at the time vowed to hit Russia with a "proportional" response.

Former Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said in testimony before a House panel last month that the administration initially sought to avoid making announcements about Russian meddling efforts so not to give the appearance it was taking sides in the election.

When the administration did publicly address the efforts in October, Mr. Johnson said the news was pushed "below the fold" by another story that day: the release of "Access Hollywood" tapes that revealed Mr. Trump making lewd comments in 2005.

Despite his comments at the news conference, in his speech later Thursday at a Warsaw square Mr. Trump urged Russia to change course on its foreign policy.

"We urge Russia to cease its destabilizing activities in Ukraine and elsewhere, and its support for hostile regimes, including Syria and Iran, and to instead join the community of responsible nations in our fight against common enemies and defense of civilization itself," Mr. Trump said.

Mr. Trump praised Poland for spending 2% of its gross domestic product on defense and again urged other European allies to spend more. Unlike Mr. Trump's speech in Brussels in May, however, he also stated his commitment to the mutual defense clause of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

"To those who criticize our tough stance, I would point that the United States has demonstrated not merely with words but with its actions that we stand firmly behind Article 5, the mutual defense commitment," Mr. Trump said. But, he added, "Europe must do more."

## **Krugman : Attack of the Republican Decepticons**

Paul Krugman

Does anyone remember the "reformicons"? A couple of years back there was much talk about a new generation of Republicans who would, it was claimed, move their party off its cruel and mindless agenda of tax cuts for the rich and pain for the poor, bringing back the intellectual seriousness that supposedly used to characterize the conservative movement.

But the rise of the reformicons never happened. What we got instead was the (further) rise of the decepticons — not the evil robots from the movies, but conservatives who keep scaling new heights of dishonesty in their attempt to sell their reverse-Robin Hood agenda.

Consider, in particular, Republican leaders' strategy on health care. At this point, everything they say involves either demonstrably dishonest claims about Obamacare or wild misrepresentations of their proposed replacement, which would — surprise — cut taxes for the rich while inflicting harsh punishment on the poor and working class, including millions of Trump supporters. In fact, there's so much deception that I can't cover it all. But here are a few low points.

Despite encountering some significant problems, the Affordable Care Act has, as promised, extended health insurance to millions of Americans who wouldn't have had it

otherwise, at a fairly modest cost. In states that have implemented the act as it was intended, expanding Medicaid, the percentage of nonelderly residents without insurance has fallen by more than half since 2010.

And these numbers translate into dramatic positive impacts on real lives. A few days ago the Indiana G.O.P. asked residents to share their "Obamacare horror stories"; what it got instead were thousands of testimonials from people whom the A.C.A. has saved from financial ruin or even death.

How do Republicans argue against this success? You can get a good overview by looking at the Twitter feed of Tom Price, President Trump's secretary of health and human services — a feed that is, in its own way, almost as horrifying as that of the tweeter in chief. Price points repeatedly to two misleading numbers.

First, he points to the fact that fewer people than expected have signed up on the exchanges — Obamacare's insurance marketplaces — and portrays this as a sign of dire failure. But a lot of this shortfall is the result of good news: Fewer employers than predicted chose to drop coverage and shift their workers onto exchange plans. So exchange enrollment has come in below forecast, but it mostly consists of people who wouldn't otherwise have

been insured — and as I said, there have been large gains in overall coverage.

Second, he points to the 28 million U.S. residents who remain uninsured as if this were some huge, unanticipated failure. But nobody expected Obamacare to cover everyone; indeed, the Congressional Budget Office always projected that more than 20 million people would, for various reasons, be left out. And you have to wonder how Price can look himself in the mirror after condemning the A.C.A. for missing some people when his own party's plans would vastly increase the number of uninsured.

Which brings us to Republicans' efforts to obscure the nature of their own plans.

The main story here is very simple: In order to free up money for tax cuts, G.O.P. plans would drastically cut Medicaid spending relative to current law, and they would also cut insurance subsidies, making private insurance unaffordable for many people not eligible for Medicaid.

Republicans could try to make a case for this policy shift; they could try to explain why tax cuts for a wealthy few are more important than health care for tens of millions. Instead, however, they're engaging in shameless denial.

On one side, they claim that a cut is not a cut, because dollar spending on Medicaid would still rise over

time. What about the need to spend more to keep up with the needs of an aging population? (Most Medicaid spending goes to the elderly or disabled.) La, la, la, we can't hear you.

On the other side — even I was shocked by this one — senior Republicans like Paul Ryan dismiss declines in the number of people with coverage as no big deal, because they would represent voluntary choices not to buy insurance.

How is this supposed to apply to the 15 million people the C.B.O. predicts would lose Medicaid? Wouldn't many people drop coverage, not as an exercise in personal freedom, but in response to what the Kaiser Family Foundation estimates would be an average 74 percent increase in after-tax premiums? Never mind.

O.K., so the selling of Trumpcare is deeply dishonest. But isn't that what politics is always like? No. Political spin used to have its limits: Politicians who wanted to be taken seriously wouldn't go around claiming that up is down and black is white.

Yet today's Republicans hardly ever do anything else. It's not just Donald Trump: The whole G.O.P. has become a post-truth party. And I see no sign that it will ever improve.

## **Editorial : Surprise Us, Mr. Trump: Name an Ethics Watchdog with Teeth**

Walter Shaub Jr. announced his resignation as director of the Office of Government Ethics on Thursday, plunging the federal government's top ethics watchdog agency into limbo. President Trump now has the chance to appoint an accommodating loyalist who'd give him far less trouble than Mr. Shaub has. Or he could surprise us, and name another independent director committed to the ethical rules of public service. The president's past behavior doesn't offer much hope, but it would be in his long-term interest to choose a director with integrity.

The 70-person O.G.E. works with some 4,500 executive branch ethics officials whose goal is preventing conflicts of interest among 2.5 million civilian federal employees. The energy, commitment and character of the person at the top is crucial to the office's success, not least because it has no real

enforcement power. Its influence derives from a mix of financial disclosure rules, public pressure and, ideally, White House support for its mission of ensuring that civil servants act on the behalf of Americans, not themselves.

The office has had no such backing in its grinding battles with the Trump administration, whose appointees, some of the wealthiest nominees in history, resisted demands that they sell off businesses and assets that presented potential conflicts of interest. After a long confrontation, Mr. Shaub won one battle, forcing the administration to disclose the names of officials in Mr. Trump's inner circle who had been granted waivers from the White House's pledge to avoid conflicts of interest. It was a hollow victory, since all those officials were allowed to go about their business as usual.

Mr. Shaub, who tangled as well with nominees in the George W. Bush

and Barack Obama administrations, is a person of great determination and deep legal knowledge, and it's unfortunate that he is leaving before his term expires in early January, instead of fighting to the end. He says his new job, for the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center, offers him greater freedom to press for tighter ethics laws.

Mr. Shaub and his team tried and failed to persuade Mr. Trump to sell off his businesses, a move required for his cabinet but not for the chief executive. Mr. Trump's determination to leverage his presidency for personal profit sets him apart from his modern predecessors. Lawsuits over foreign government payments to the Trump International Hotel in Washington, and near-constant criticism of his and his family's ethical shortcomings, are a direct result of their failure to separate public service and personal gain. Tighter

rules requiring such separation are something that a new and independent ethics director could champion.

Alas, Mr. Trump has shown a preference for friendly partisans in oversight jobs, most recently his choice of Henry Kerner to lead the Office of Special Counsel, a small agency charged with protecting federal government whistle-blowers and enforcing the Hatch Act, which prohibits executive branch employees from engaging in political activity. Mr. Kerner, a former Republican staff member on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, is assistant vice president for investigations at an anti-regulatory group called Cause of Action.

The group gained some notoriety recently when it filed a lawsuit asking the Environmental Protection Agency for encrypted messages from career employees who,

according to news reports cited by Mr. Kerner, may have communicated among themselves about ways to prevent Mr. Trump's appointees from undermining the agency's mission.

Mr. Kerner drew bipartisan praise for defending whistle-blowers in a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing last week. But his E.P.A. inquiries have raised questions about whether he is genuinely committed to free speech and to

enforcing the Hatch Act against top White House officials.

It seems a long shot that Mr. Trump will name an experienced, nonpartisan replacement for Mr. Shaub. But such an appointment would help protect Mr. Trump's

team from legal jeopardy and, not incidentally, help bolster public trust in an administration that so far has earned little.