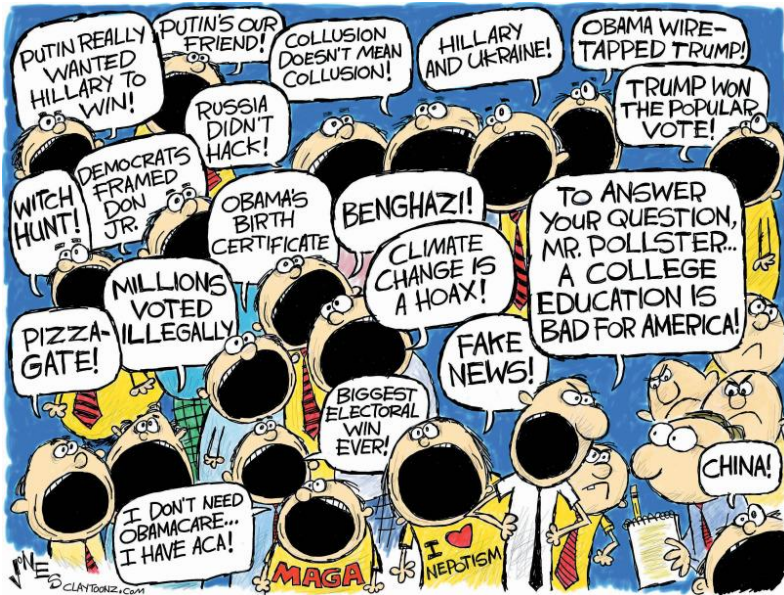


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FRANCE - EUROPE

The
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Macron hosts Netanyahu, condemns anti-Zionism as anti-Semitism

By James
McAuley

French President Emmanuel Macron attended the commemoration ceremony for the victims of the Holocaust with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu where the two leaders laid wreaths and listened to a speeches by survivors and witnesses. French President Emmanuel Macron attended the commemoration ceremony for the victims of the Holocaust with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu where the two leaders laid wreaths and listened to a speeches by survivors and witnesses. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

PARIS — Two days after treating President Trump to a Bastille Day parade, Emmanuel Macron welcomed yet another world leader to Paris for a symbolic summit.

As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose hard-line politics have earned him few friends across the French ideological spectrum, arrived for talks on Sunday, the French president condemned anti-Zionism as the new form of anti-Semitism.

The backdrop for their meeting was the 75th anniversary of an infamous Holocaust roundup in Paris, and Macron used the occasion to reiterate his declaration that the French state bore the responsibility for the arrest and deportation of about 13,000 Jews in 1942.

"We will never surrender to the messages of hate," Macron said, standing on the site where French police, on the night of July 16, 1942, detained thousands of French and foreign-born Jews before facilitating their forced relocation to Nazi concentration

camps across Eastern Europe. "We will not surrender to anti-Zionism, because it is a reinvention of anti-Semitism."

After devastating terrorist attacks in recent years, thousands of French Jews left France for Israel, encouraged in 2015 by Netanyahu himself. But as Macron vowed Sunday to fight anti-Semitism in all its forms, the Israeli leader changed his tone and spoke of solidarity with France.

"Your struggle is our struggle," Netanyahu said, referring to Friday's attack in Jerusalem, in which Arab Israeli gunmen shot and killed two Israeli police officers. "The zealots of militant Islam, who seek to destroy you, seek to destroy us as well."

The wartime roundup — known in France as the Vel d'Hiv raid, for the now-demolished indoor stadium where Jews were temporarily held — featured prominently in France's recent presidential election, in which historical revisionism and denial were constant themes.

In one of the campaign's most controversial moments, Marine Le Pen, Macron's far-right opponent and the daughter of the convicted Holocaust denier Jean-Marie Le Pen, insisted that the French state had not been responsible. Along the same lines, a French journalist reported that Le Pen's principal deputy denied the use of the poison gas Zyklon B in the Nazi gas chambers.

In repudiating these assertions, Macron joined ranks with several of his recent predecessors.

After decades of government silence, Jacques Chirac, in 1995, became the first sitting French president to acknowledge the country's complicity and

collaboration in the Holocaust, during which 76,000 Jews were deported from France.

In his own remarks at the site of the Vel d'Hiv, Chirac, in 1995, put it this way: "France, on that day, committed the irreparable. Breaking its word, it handed those who were under its protection over to their executioners."

Macron echoed those remarks Sunday. "I say it again here," he said. "It was indeed France that organized the roundup, the deportation, and thus, for almost all, death."

Macron's remarks come after a years-long wave of anti-Semitism — and a subsequent surge in the number of French Jews who have moved to Israel.

In 2012, a terrorist attacked a Jewish day school in Toulouse, killing four — including three children. In 2014, the Franco-Cameroonian comedian Dieudonné M'bala M'bala likened Jews to "slave drivers" and promoted a version of the Nazi salute. In January 2015, an attack on a kosher supermarket on the outskirts of Paris left four Jewish customers dead.

Sunday was Netanyahu's first visit to France since his appearance in January 2015 at Paris's Grand Synagogue, immediately following the attack on the supermarket, when he delivered a controversial speech urging Jews to consider leaving France.

About 8,000 French Jews left for Israel in 2015, out of an estimated Jewish population of about 600,000. The number has since fallen.

In 2016, 5,000 Jews left France, according to statistics released by the Jewish Agency of Israel to

Agence France-Presse, and analysts expect a similar number in 2017. In general, critics also caution that the figures do not necessarily represent an "exodus," as each individual case cannot easily be attributed to anti-Semitism. Some French Jews have also since returned to France.

The day's most important stories.

In any case, the perception of France as an inhospitable place for Jews has persisted, and it was this that Macron appeared to address in his remarks. Netanyahu pointedly did not repeat his previous remark encouraging immigration.

Some French Jewish leaders vehemently opposed the presence of the Israeli leader at an event they said should otherwise have remained apolitical. In the words of Elie Barnavi, France's former ambassador to Israel, the Vel d'Hiv roundup had "nothing to do with Israel." But others welcomed Macron's remarks about the realities of contemporary anti-Semitism.

"He understands what it is today, not just what it was in the past," Yonatan Arfi, the vice president of the Representative Council of French Jewish Organizations (CRIF), France's largest Jewish advocacy organization, said in an interview.

"It's at once from the extreme right, but also present on the extreme left and among radical Islamists," he said. "Anti-Zionism has definitely become part of anti-Semitism today, and it's a real satisfaction to find someone before us who speaks the same language."

The
Washington
Post

'Thank you, dear Donald': Why Macron invited Trump to France

By James
McAuley

PARIS — This could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

If the potential for a productive relationship between President Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron initially seemed a scant possibility, Trump's whirlwind Bastille Day visit to France suggested that the two may be en route to establishing a partnership of

the kind the U.S. president currently shares with few other world leaders, especially in Western Europe.

Despite Trump's staggering unpopularity in France — not to mention the outrage over Macron's decision to invite his American counterpart to this country's signature national holiday — the newly minted French president appeared to make a daring gamble. With the United States increasingly

isolated on the global stage, Macron sought to position himself as Trump's principal interlocutor in a region that has shown the White House little but disdain.

At least for the moment, that role is Macron's for the taking — and he may succeed in securing it.

In a rare news conference Thursday — in which each president took two questions — Trump made no secret of his delight at Macron's invitation.

U.S. President Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron discussed Russia, China, the Paris climate agreement and terrorism at a joint news conference on July 13. U.S. President Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron discuss Russia, China, the Paris climate agreement and terrorism at a joint news conference (Reuters)

(Reuters)

"France is America's first and oldest ally. A lot of people don't know that," he said. "It was a long time ago, but we are together. And I think together, perhaps, more so than ever. The relationship is very good."

Despite the historic "special relationship" between the United States and Britain, Trump has shown little interest in British affairs since his inauguration, further delaying a traditional visit to the country until 2018. And although German Chancellor Angela Merkel recently tried to patch things up with Trump at the Group of 20 summit in Hamburg, she has done little to hide her distaste.

[Trump and Macron, once cast as adversaries, show they have much in common]

Enter Macron, an outspoken advocate of globalization and an "ever closer" European Union who initially seemed an anti-Trump figure on the world stage — and even a temporary antagonist of the U.S. president.

After Trump essentially supported Macron's rival, the far-right Marine Le Pen, in this year's French presidential election, Macron then strong-armed Trump in a six-second handshake when the two men met for the first time in Brussels in May.

The next week, Trump withdrew from the Paris

climate agreement, carefully enunciating that he was "elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris." Macron responded — in English — in a speech in which he urged people the world over to "Make our planet great again," a clear play on Trump's campaign slogan.

The Paris visit, however, seemed to establish the inklings of a working relationship between these two seemingly incompatible figures.

Although Trump has been known to change his mind abruptly, his initial reaction to the Paris visit was markedly positive.

First, there was yet another dramatic handshake, this one suggesting comity rather than animosity. At the end of the Bastille Day military parade, as he was preparing to leave for the airport, Trump forcefully shook Macron's hand, then patted their clasped hands while shaking that of Macron's wife, Brigitte, as well.

Then came the tweets.

In a series of posts after his departure, Trump wished Macron "congratulations" on Bastille Day, offered his condolences for the victims of the Nice terrorist attack last year and thanked his host for what he characterized as a worthwhile meeting.

"Great conversations with President Emmanuel Macron and his representatives on trade, military and security," Trump tweeted.

[Trump revels in French military pomp far from White House turmoil]

In France, the jury was out as to Macron's precise motives in inviting — and embracing — Trump.

For some, even those in Macron's inner circle, the principal motivation was a version of the ancient proverb: Keep your friends close but keep your enemies closer.

"Emmanuel Macron wants to try to prevent the president of the United States being isolated," Christophe Castaner, a spokesman for Macron, told French reporters this month. "He sometimes makes decisions that we disagree with, on climate change, for example."

To that end, Macron made no secret of those differences in his joint appearance with Trump on Thursday.

"I very much respect the decision taken by President Trump," Macron said at the news conference. "He will work on implementing his campaign promises, and as far as I'm concerned, I remain attached to the Paris accord and will make sure that step by step we can do everything which is in the accord."

But as Castaner put it: "We can do two things. Either you can say, 'We're not speaking, because you haven't been nice,' or we can reach out to him to keep him in the circle."

To others, inviting Trump was a means for Macron to bolster the international image of France — notably before his presidency is put to its first major domestic test this fall, when the French president will attempt to shove a controversial labor reform effort through Parliament.

The intersection of culture and politics.

In late May, Macron hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom he confronted in a bilateral news conference about the activities of state-owned Russian media.

With this visit, analysts say, he sought to do the same.

"It makes Macron the man who invites the powerful people of the world," said François Heisbourg, a French national security expert who advised the Macron campaign on terrorism. "It instantaneously reset the image of France as a player."

"The signal was that France is back again — now, whether that's lasting, only time will tell."



Macron decries France's Nazi past during Netanyahu visit

By angela charlton, associated press

French President Emmanuel Macron denounced France's collaboration in the Holocaust, lashing out Sunday at those who negate or minimize the country's role in sending tens of thousands of Jews to their deaths.

After he and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended a Holocaust commemoration, Macron also appealed for renewed Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Worried that Netanyahu is backing away from commitment to a two-state solution, Macron assailed Jewish settlement construction as a threat to international hopes for peace.

Commemorating 75 years since a mass roundup of Jews during the darkest chapter of modern French history, Macron insisted that "it was indeed France that organized this."

"Not a single German" was directly involved, he said, but French police collaborating with the Nazis.

Holocaust survivors recounted wrenching stories at the ceremony at the site of Vel d'Hiv stadium outside Paris, where police herded some 13,000 people on July 16-17, 1942 before they were deported to camps. More than 4,000 were children. Fewer than 100 survived.

They were among some 76,000 Jews deported from France to Nazi camps.

It was a half century later when then-President Jacques Chirac became the first French leader to acknowledge the state's role in the Holocaust's horrors.

Macron dismissed arguments by French far right leaders and others that the collaborationist Vichy regime didn't represent France.

"It is convenient to see the Vichy regime as born of nothingness, returned to nothingness. Yes, it's convenient, but it is false. We cannot build pride upon a lie."

French Jewish leaders hailed Macron's speech Sunday — even as critics railed at him online, where

renewed anti-Semitism has flourished. Macron pledged to fight such racism, and called for thorough investigation into the recent killing of a Parisian woman believed linked to anti-Jewish sentiment.

Netanyahu said that "recently we have witnessed a rise of extremist forces that seek to destroy not only the Jews, but of course the Jewish state as well, but well beyond that. ... The zealots of militant Islam, who seek to destroy you, seek to destroy us as well. We must stand against them together."

Pro-Palestinian and other activists protested Netanyahu's appearance in Paris, criticizing Jewish settlement policy and the blockade of Gaza.

Macron condemned an attack last week that killed two Israeli police officers at a Jerusalem shrine revered by Jews and Muslims, and said he is committed to Israel's security — but warned that continued Jewish settlement construction threatens peace efforts.

"I call for a resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians in the framework of the search for a solution of two states, Israel and Palestine, living in recognized, secure borders with Jerusalem as the capital," Macron told reporters.

At his side, Netanyahu said, "We share the same desire for a peaceful Middle East," but didn't elaborate on eventual peace talks.

While Macron has been flexing his diplomatic skills with outreach to President Donald Trump and others, he didn't indicate any eagerness for France to spearhead such negotiations, after a lackluster French Mideast diplomatic effort under his predecessor early this year.

Macron and Netanyahu also discussed fighting extremism in Syria and elsewhere, and improving economic cooperation.



Gobry : Macron Caves to the Military

Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry

French President Emmanuel Macron had steamrolled every adversary in his path -- until he tried to take on the military.

Macron has embarked on a spell of budgetary austerity, a move that will hurt growth but is being pursued out of a misplaced desire to meet the European Union's arbitrary 3 percent deficit target. As part of that effort, the previous government had announced cuts to the defense budget of \$968 million for this year, which Macron pledged to uphold.

General Pierre de Villiers, the highly respected chief of the general staff, fought the plans. French media reported that in a closed-door hearing with the defense committee of the French National Assembly, de Villiers said, of the president and the planned budget cuts, "I'm not going to let him f--- me."

It's worth noting how extraordinary this is in France, where the military adheres to a tradition of total public subservience to civilian authorities, so much so that it's often referred to as "la grande muette," or the great mute. There were other reports that

de Villiers threatened to resign if the cuts went ahead.

Last week, Macron finally caved. After welcoming Donald Trump to Paris for the traditional July 14 military parade, he promised a significant increase to the defense budget for next year. In a speech announcing the boost, Macron lobbed passive-aggressive attacks at de Villiers. It was "unworthy" to "start some debates in public," the president said in front of military officers. "I am your leader," he added, "I need no pressure, no comment."

Implausibly, Macron also said that the boost was "in no way" due to "certain comments that were made." He obfuscated on the question of whether this year's cuts were to go ahead, but the speech clearly represented a substantial climb-down for the new president -- and a concession to economic and military reality.

Virtually all observers of military matters agree that this is the worst possible time for budget cuts. The French military is active in many theaters in the fight against radical Islamic terrorism, especially in Africa

and the Middle East, and involved in Operation Sentinelle, whereby armed troops go on domestic anti-terrorism patrols. Yet its budget hasn't kept pace with increases in the funding of welfare programs. Worse, the proposed cuts, which would've postponed the purchase of much-needed equipment, looked penny wise and pound foolish: Repairing old equipment is more expensive over the long run than replacing it with more modern kit. The French military is also woefully short on helicopters and drones, which are vital in policing an area like the Sahel, which is the size of India.

The move was particularly odd for a president who has struck a hawkish tone since taking power. Macron has clearly relished the trappings of his role as commander in chief, and plainly thinks that France's contribution to the fight against terrorism is in the interests of the country and of the West.

It's also odd because there's no economic rationale for deficit reduction at the moment. Macron was privileging arbitrary budget rules from Brussels over economic logic. So his concession to the

military, however grudging, was a welcome one.

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

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If any part of the French government needs to be cut, it's the bloated civil service, and a welfare sector that has grown and grown at the expense of basic government services, such as law and order. But that would be a tall order for a man who came up through the very bureaucracy that needs trimming, and who consistently defends the interests of its ruling class. Macron should fully fund the military, promote growth rather than austerity, and reduce the power of the *énarques*.

This would be consistent with his mandate for pro-growth change and for a renewal of France's rusty system of governance. Unfortunately, he seems to want to go in the opposite direction.

Forbes : Conca : Macron's Nuclear Dilemma

James Conca

French President Emmanuel Macron may have to pull out of the promise to decrease nuclear power in his country faster than he could pull out of Trump's handshake.

French environment and energy minister, Nicolas Hulot, announced in June that the country would keep the previous President's promise to reduce the amount of nuclear energy from 75% to 50% of the country's electricity generation, and replace it with wind and solar energy as part of a plan to fight global warming.

But earlier in May, candidate Macron said he would delay this nuclear phaseout. The plan to phase out nuclear plants actually predates Macron, stemming from a political pact made by former French President, François Hollande, during the 2012 election that cemented his alliance with the anti-nuclear Green party.

So in this same vein, many see Macron's appointment of Hulot, a dedicated left anti-nuclear politician, as a move to appease the Green party, particularly to serve as a foil for Macron's appointment of Edouard Philippe as Prime Minister. Philippe is from the right-wing party Les Républicains, and worked for the French nuclear company Areva.

Macron has assembled an amazingly diverse government with an unprecedented mix of politicians from the left, right and center, but it may take some fancy French footwork to make them get along. Of 19 ministers and 4 junior ministers, including the Prime Minister, 3 are from the right, 3 from the center, 7 from the left and 11 are unaffiliated.

But energy and environmental experts, including the leading climate scientists in the world, were quick to point out that Hulot's plan is not well-thought out. Phasing out nuclear power at all would actually increase carbon emissions, hurt the French economy and undermine the country's plan to address climate change.

'This doesn't hold any water,' says Dr. Jeff Terry, a professor of nuclear physics at the Illinois Institute of Technology. 'They're replacing [baseload, reliable] low carbon energy with low carbon energy that requires back-up 65% to 85% of the time. Everywhere that nuclear is closed it gets replaced by natural gas. That means France will probably get dirtier,' Terry said.

And France might also become more beholden to Russian and Middle Eastern natural gas, something it has been spared exactly because of its large nuclear fleet.

At almost 75%, France has the largest share of nuclear power in its electricity mix of any major country. The country's 12% hydro is nothing to sneeze at, either, with only about 6% non-hydro renewables. With only 7% fossil fuel, France has achieved more in its fight against global warming than any other country in the world -- but only because of its nuclear fleet.

Bringing up more renewables to replace the remaining gas and coal would do more towards addressing climate change than trying to cut nuclear, since natural gas has been the preferred fuel for replacing nuclear everywhere that nuclear plants have closed.

Because of their largely low-carbon energy mix, France is able to help the rest of Europe meet their individual carbon goals by exporting 71 TWhs to neighboring countries (see figure).

To cut France from 75% nuclear to 50% means closing about 18 of their 58 reactors. Replacing that much energy with wind would require quadrupling all non-hydro renewables, the equivalent of building 40,000 MW of wind turbines.

Since it's taken France 10 years to install 10,000 MW of wind turbines, it's unlikely in the extreme that they could replace so much nuclear in the next 10 years or so with wind

and solar. If they really want to phase out nuclear and build in renewables, just install the wind turbines and solar panels as the nuclear plants run out their full lives. That would be in the correct time frame, would save money, and there wouldn't be any need to install gas or import more energy.

Nor would they give up their global leadership in low-carbon generation.

But France has been a global leader in nuclear and it doesn't make any sense to reduce nuclear at all. Nuclear energy has given France one of the lowest costs of electricity in Europe, at 16¢/kWh, compared to the other large countries with much less nuclear, such as Germany (29¢/kWh), Spain (23¢/kWh), and the United Kingdom (21¢/kWh).

And France has done a fairly good job of handling the nuclear waste from its 58 reactors. The country has a policy of reprocessing used fuel for new nuclear fuel, followed by disposal of the resulting intermediate level waste in a deep geologic repository. The disposal is governed by the 2006 Nuclear Materials and Waste Management Program Act and funded by a 0.14¢/kWh tax on nuclear plants.

In 2012, France approved plans to construct an underground disposal repository, called the *Centre Industriel de Stockage Géologique* (Cigéo), in a natural layer of clay

near Bure, to the east of Paris in the Meuse/Haute Marne area. Clay is second only to massive salt as the best rock type for nuclear waste disposal. The repository is expected to become operational in 2025, with

two further repositories planned in the future.

Hopefully, the new President will make the correct choice for France's future and maintain his country's

world leadership in addressing global warming.

Dr. James Conca is an expert on energy, nuclear and dirty bombs, a planetary geologist, and a

professional speaker. Follow him on Twitter @jimconca and see his book at Amazon.com



Ischinger : Why Europeans Oppose the Russia Sanctions Bill

Wolfgang Ischinger

The U.S. Senate was almost unanimous—98-2—when it passed a bill updating and expanding the sanctions regime against Russia. Congress has every right to make a strong statement on Russia's alleged interference in last year's presidential election. But this bill, which is awaiting a vote in the House, will not achieve its objectives and will instead cause new problems. Unless it undergoes significant revision, it would compromise European energy security and damage U.S. relations with Europe. The beneficiary of such an outcome would be Russia.

At risk is the joint stance the U.S. and Europe have maintained against Russia since it annexed Crimea in 2014. Every sanctions measure was assessed by American and European partners before enactment. Europe and the U.S. moved hand in hand to ensure that neither would exploit markets or business opportunities previously held by the other. This trans-Atlantic approach is now jeopardized by the Senate's desire to impose additional sanctions unilaterally, without consultation and against the explicit will of the European Commission and key U.S. allies including Germany, France and Italy.

Even worse, the bill's language suggests that it aims to advance U.S. commercial interests at Europe's expense. Section 257 prioritizes "the export of United States energy resources to create American jobs"—which sounds to

Europeans like an unfriendly political attempt to promote U.S. exports of liquefied natural gas to Europe.

One target of the bill is the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, involving both Russian and European companies. There are good arguments why Europe should diversify its gas supply, but the dependency fears around NS2 are exaggerated. Europe has taken decisive measures to boost supply security: constructing additional interconnectors and LNG terminals, employing reverse flow capabilities, and eliminating restrictive clauses on ultimate destinations. These measures make it difficult for Russia even to consider using energy as a weapon against Europe.

There is a vibrant debate in Europe about NS2 and the best way forward. Strong arguments, both pro and con, are being exchanged. The Polish and Ukrainian governments are concerned that the pipeline will compete against Russian gas flowing through pipelines in their territories. Some, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, propose to welcome all additional sources and supply routes of energy to Europe, including American LNG. Ideally, the market would decide the best course.

This is not a question that should be decided in Washington. It is a European issue, to be decided by Europeans based on European law and regulation. How would the U.S. react if Europe were to pass legislation on the merits of the Keystone XL pipeline, especially if it

was perceived to benefit European business?

Even if one opposes NS2, the Senate-passed bill would harm Eurasian energy security in other important ways. Perhaps most egregiously, the bill would extend sanctions to countries outside Russia where U.S. persons provide goods, services and technology for certain projects "in which a Russian energy firm is involved." The presence of Lukoil, a private Russian company, in Azerbaijan could potentially trigger sanctions on the Shah Deniz gas field and deter Caspian gas shipments to Europe via the emerging Southern Corridor. Under such a threat, banks could renege on financing. Rather than promote security, the bill would jeopardize one of Europe's new gas pipeline alternatives to Russia, a \$45 billion undertaking that is well under way. This provision would force American companies out of joint ventures in which Russian companies participate around the world.

The bill would expose to sanctions goods, services, technology and information that would "significantly facilitate" even the maintenance of pipelines carrying Russian oil and gas or passing through Russia. That could stall two-thirds of Kazakhstan's oil exports shipped through the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, which is led by Chevron but has a 31% Russian government share. It could hinder operations and safety for pipelines, such as those passing through Ukraine, that deliver some 32% of Europe's oil

and a similar share of its gas consumption. For Europe, terminating such large oil or gas imports from Russia is not feasible: alternatives for such large volumes are unavailable.

Our joint U.S.-European experience with sanctions affirms two longstanding lessons. First, sanctions work best when they are multilateral. Second, sanctions alone rarely achieve a national-security outcome. Ideally, they create leverage. They almost always presume a negotiation, where adjusting the sanctions can be part of a strategy for achieving a desired goal.

Leverage goes hand-in-hand with flexibility—and the Senate bill would curtail flexibility. Its unilateral approach could tip the scales in favor of those who want to end Europe's participation in the existing trans-Atlantic policy approach on Russia, including the sanctions regime.

If the bill becomes law in its current form, it would alienate America's important European allies, complicating our alliance at a critical moment. A better approach would be to revise the bill in line with realities and recommit to a joint trans-Atlantic approach.

Mr. Ischinger was Germany's ambassador to the U.S., 2001-06, and has been chairman of the Munich Security Conference since 2008.

INTERNATIONAL



Making Peace With Assad's State of Barbarism

By Kim Ghattas

President Donald

Trump's trip to Britain went from a state visit, to a quick stopover landing under the cover of night, to being postponed till next year. But he got the royal treatment in Paris instead, a guest of France's new president Emmanuel Macron for the Bastille Day celebrations.

Undoubtedly on the agenda, after the holiday's annual military parade, is Syria — once under French mandate and a country that Paris continues to see as an entry point for its influence in the Middle East.

But endless unanswered questions have been raised since Macron's inauguration about what will drive his Middle East policy: values or realpolitik? The same, of course,

might be said about Trump. The U.S. president bombed President Bashar al-Assad's forces in April because Assad was killing "beautiful babies," but his secretary of state has also indicated that the Trump administration was ready to let Russia decide Assad's fate — a way of saying Assad could stay in power.

Macron, for his part, warned that Syria's use of chemical weapons

would be a red line for France. But he also recently told *Le Figaro* that Assad was an enemy of the Syrian people, not of France — appearing to imply that he was unconcerned about the devastation wrought on the country by Assad, only about the repercussions of the conflict in France.

How France and the United States envision the resolution of the conflict

in Syria today will help determine how sustainable the peace will be or whether it will contain within the seeds of further devastation. Tragedies, personal or national, tend to announce themselves long before they arrive.

Twenty-five years ago, French sociologist Michel Seurat penned a series of essays that brought to light what he described as “*l’Etat de barbarie*,” the state of barbarism, inherent in the Assads’ rule. He detailed their savagery in repressing the Islamist uprising of the early 1980s, with summary executions of dozens of villagers, hundreds of prisoners shot to death in their cells, and indiscriminate shelling of whole towns.

“The crumbling of the political legitimacy of the regime translates on the ground to a reactivation of forms of legitimacy that precede political structures,” he wrote. In other words, the solidarity of ethnic and sectarian groups, rather than sociopolitical organizations, held sway. President Hafez al-Assad’s political vision had devolved to consisting solely of “tying the destiny of the Alawite community to his own destiny.”

Seurat would pay the ultimate price for his work. He was kidnapped in Beirut in 1985, at the height of the civil war, by the Islamic Jihad, a group with ties to Syria and Iran. He was executed in captivity, his body only found and repatriated to France in 2005. As both Trump and Macron broach the possibility of reconciling themselves to Assad’s reign in Damascus, his writings remain a cautionary tale about the costs of that approach.

Bashar al-Assad himself was once the guest of a French president for Bastille Day.

Bashar al-Assad himself was once the guest of a French president for Bastille Day. Nicolas Sarkozy, eager to do the opposite of everything his predecessor had done, rolled out the red carpet in 2008 for the Syrian leader, who had been transformed into an international pariah by Jacques Chirac and George W. Bush.

But Sarkozy’s solicitousness marked a reversion to an earlier pattern. If the Holy Grail for international diplomats is the achievement of regional peace in the Middle East, peace between Syria and Israel has long been identified as a first step toward it. As Henry Kissinger once said, “You can’t make war in the Middle East without Egypt, and you can’t make peace without Syria.” That one sentence sent endless diplomats and officials on the road to Damascus in a vain quest to persuade Bashar’s father, President

Hafez al-Assad, to sign on the dotted line of various peace accords. The signature never came.

At first, there was more hope in Bashar, a British-educated ophthalmologist with a pretty wife, who kept making the right noises about peace and promising domestic reforms — promises that sounded good enough that everyone kept coming back, hoping the next visit would seal the deal.

Assad’s isolation began when his regime was accused of ordering the assassination of Lebanon’s former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in a massive truck bomb on Beirut’s seaside corniche on Feb. 14, 2005. Huge protests ensued in Lebanon, calling for an end to the 30-year Syrian occupation of that country. With Bush and Chirac, a close friend of Hariri, leading the charge, the international community ostracized Assad and forced his 15,000 troops into a humiliating retreat out of the country that the Assad family considered a part of Syria.

Sarkozy’s 2008 invitation to the “well behaved autocrat,” as *Le Monde* described him then, ended five years of painful isolation for Assad. It was a period during which his political obituary was being drafted and people close to the regime in Damascus would joke to you in hushed tones about who should turn off the lights on the way out of the country.

What motivated Sarkozy was the belief that unlike his predecessor, he could forge a different relationship with Assad, and that his persona and cunning could persuade the ruler of Damascus to change his ways. (The same self-confidence might be said to have motivated Secretary of State John Kerry, who was one of the last to withdraw his faith in Assad after his forces started shooting protesters in 2011.)

One can speculate about an alternative course of events if Sarkozy had not rehabilitated Assad in 2008, one where perhaps the pressure had not let up and Assad would have had to deliver on his vague promises to reform. Or possibly popular dissent would have swelled up sooner than it did in 2011, but would not have earned the same ruthless response from a leader already cowed into submission. In these scenarios Syria could have remained a country intact. We will never know.

But today it’s worth pondering the trajectory on which Macron’s approach is placing Syria and the region. What France wants from Syria is no longer peace with Israel, or even a rejection of its alliance with Iran. Assad, in any case, can deliver neither of those things.

Macron’s focus is understandably on counterterrorism and stemming the flow of jihadis from Syria into Europe.

In his much-scrutinized and wide-ranging interview with *Le Figaro*, Macron made two key points on Syria. The first one was the statement about Assad not being the enemy of France. The other was a clarification of his position on Assad’s future. Having once said that there was no solution to the conflict in Syria with Assad in power, he clarified, “I never said that the destitution of Bashar al-Assad was a prerequisite for everything, because no one has introduced to me his legitimate successor.”

But as France well knows, there’s also a price for keeping Assad in power.

But as France well knows, there’s also a price for keeping Assad in power. In 1981, agents suspected of working for the Syrian secret service assassinated Louis Delamare, the French ambassador in Lebanon, in broad daylight in Beirut. In 1983, the two attacks against the U.S. Marines and French paratroopers in Beirut were blamed on the Islamic Jihad (an early version of Hezbollah), which was tied to Iran and Syria. In the mid-1980s, Paris suffered a string of terrorist attacks that killed dozens and were linked directly or indirectly to groups with ties to Syria.

This may seem like ancient history, but the Assad regime has also made veiled threats against the West far more recently. Assad’s cousin, businessman Rami Makhlof, warned in a *New York Times* interview: “Nobody can guarantee what will happen after, God forbid anything happens to this regime. ... They should know when we suffer, we will not suffer alone.”

It was another version of a favorite Syrian threat: We can help bring peace to the region, but ignore us at your own peril because we can cause havoc.

At the beginning of the uprising, Syria’s Grand Mufti threatened to send suicide bombers to Europe if Syria came under attack. There is nothing to indicate that the Syrian regime has any connection whatsoever to any of the attacks that recently occurred in Europe, but what dozens of French, Syrian, and Lebanese intellectuals point out in an open letter to Macron is that Assad helps create the environment in which radical groups and jihadis can thrive. Rehabilitating Assad only once again delays a sustainable solution to a problem that has now reached the shores of Europe.

Just as troublesome is Macron’s second statement about legitimacy

and Assad’s future. Despite past statements from world leaders, including François Hollande and Barack Obama, that there is no place for Assad in Syria’s future, none of the communiqués that emerged from peace talks in Syria ever stated that Assad’s departure was a precondition to a solution. So while Macron’s words alarmed many in the opposition, it does not necessarily contradict the current approach in Syrian peace talks.

The first Geneva communiqué in 2012 did mention that a new government should be formed by “mutual consent,” which indirectly excludes the possibility that Assad could participate because the opposition would reject it. But today, six years into the war, few truly believe that Assad will simply depart. Whatever the outcome, it will include a transition in which Assad is probably involved.

One does have to wonder about this legitimacy that Macron speaks of. Does Assad still have it, after unleashing every type of violence against his own people? Is he still legitimately a president who can be relied upon to cooperate on counterterrorism, when he is barely in control of his own country and is wholly dependent on the fighting power of Iran and Russia?

As for Macron’s question — Where is Assad’s natural successor? — ask any Syrian opposed to Assad’s rule and he or she will have the answer for you: Assad has killed, jailed, or exiled anyone who could rise as a potential replacement. It’s a ruthlessly efficient *modus operandi* that the Assads have used before, including in Lebanon, where they stand accused of having steadily assassinated over decades every progressive politician and intellectual figure.

Within rebel-held areas in Syria, there are probably possible future leaders, the product of years of civil resistance, who are little known today to the outside world but could surface once the guns fall silent. If the West wants a ready-made, English-speaking successor who could lead a transition government, a few names have already been making the rounds. There’s Abdullah Dardari, a former Syrian finance minister who has been leading the planning for Syrian reconstruction at the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, though he could be seen as too close to Assad for some in the opposition. Another name is Ayman Asfari, a Syrian-born British oil businessman and outspoken critic of Assad who is the founder of the Asfari Foundation, which provides humanitarian aid and promotes civil society. A third name is Riad Hijab,

a former prime minister who defected in 2012 and is the current head of the opposition's High Negotiations Committee.

If a compromise is to be found for a transition with Assad, it may well have to involve such figures. The key is to make sure a transition is truly inclusive, even with a

technocratic leader. After more than 40 years of Assad rule in Syria, it may be hard to imagine anyone else presiding over the country. But imagination is precisely what is required in this situation — that and building up military leverage on the ground that the West can use at the negotiating table.

Change the dates and some names and Seurat's essays and descriptions could be about today's events in Syria. And yet unlike Saddam Hussein or Muammar al-Qaddafi, the Assads have always managed to come out on top. France, the United States, and others always seem to revert to courting the Assads, and hoping that

this time their promises of cooperation are not a double-edged sword. Perhaps Macron should read Seurat's writings to understand the kind of adversary he faces.

So, values or realpolitik? Sometimes, realpolitik without values is simply the denial of reality.

**The
Washington
Post**

Battle against ISIS: Families return to Mosul to collect bodies

By Louisa Loveluck

MOSUL, Iraq — The streets of Mosul's Old City are littered with bodies, tangled between shattered stones and remnants of the lives they left behind.

In the baking summer heat, exhausted rescue crews are now sifting through the debris of the toughest battle against the Islamic State in what became its final redoubt in the city.

As Iraqi ground troops, U.S.-led coalition jets and Islamic State militants pulverized the Old City's winding maze of streets, thousands of civilians were caught in the crossfire.

But the area is now deserted, its inhabitants evacuated to houses, camps or prison cells across the province in recent months.

A week after Iraqi officials declared victory in Mosul, all that remains in the Old City is rubble and unknown hundreds of bodies.

Aid groups say that thousands of civilians were killed in the nine-month offensive. A final death toll is unlikely to ever be known, robbing families of answers and a grave for their grief.

Across western Mosul, hundreds of families are still waiting for news. Others know exactly where their loved ones were killed but are unable to reach them.

On Friday, Sumaya Sarhan, 48, waited in the rescue workers' sun-parched yard for her brother's remains, three months after the airstrike that killed him.

"We lived opposite and tried so many times to get him out. But it was too dangerous, there was too much fighting. Today, I finally saw him pulled from the rubble."

Staring resolutely forward, for a moment Sarhan looked lost amid the bustle of the workers around her. Then she started to cry.

"He's just bones. Just bones," she said.

[It could take more than a decade to clear Mosul of explosives]

The task of cutting bodies from their homes in this, the most devastated swath of the city, has fallen to a 25-man civil defense unit with one bulldozer, a forklift truck and a single vehicle to carry the corpses.

They have found hundreds of people suffocated under the ruins of their homes. Then, there are those the Islamic State shot as they tried to flee, their bodies left to rot in the sunshine as a message to anyone else who might attempt to escape.

"It was slow going today. Mainly women and children," said one of the rescue workers, Daoud Salem Mahmoud, stooping over a green canvas bag he had pulled from the rubble.

It was bulging, apparently packed by its owner while waiting for rescue. And as Mahmoud laid out its contents one by one, the shape of a life emerged.

In the back of an Iraqi passport, a black-and-white image showed a dark-haired young woman smiling at the camera. A green purse was empty aside from the business card of a Mosul wedding photographer.

And then came her jewelry: gold bangles, small rings, a single heart-shaped earring.

Sitting quietly on the step of a hut nearby, 21-year-old Ahmed Salem said the woman was a relative, killed when an airstrike hit their home. He was waiting to collect her body, alongside those of seven cousins, most of them already stacked in body bags on the back of a rescue truck.

The team's vehicles were parked on one side of the yard, all of them battered from months of overuse.

In another corner of the civil defense base, four men gathered around a teenager as he unzipped one of the body bags.

It was hard to distinguish its charred contents as the remnants of a person.

"How do you know it's him? Are you sure?" asked one man.

"I recognize his blanket. It has to be," the teenager said. He closed the bag.

Mosul's Old City had more than 5,000 buildings, many of them high-ceilinged houses built around traditional courtyards.

Almost a third were damaged or destroyed during the final three weeks of fighting, according to the United Nations.

Across the entire city, which had a population of almost 2 million before the Islamic State arrived, satellite imagery shows battle scars or total destruction across more than 10,000 buildings. Although life has returned to the relatively less damaged eastern districts, which were retaken

by Iraqi forces months earlier, the infrastructure in the west has been devastated.

The streets have become a theater for quiet scenes of grief as the rubble is cleared. In dozens of interviews, Washington Post reporters did not meet a single person in the area who had not lost a friend or relative in the fighting.

Rescue work has been slowed by a lack of funding. Lt. Col. Rabia Ibrahim Hassan, who leads west Mosul's civil defense team, said he had asked authorities for more equipment but hadn't received an answer.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

"Our men are doing this work with practically nothing. Just a bulldozer, a forklift truck and small equipment. The work continues, but we are exhausted," he said.

Much of the team remained in Mosul under Islamic State rule. "Of course we worked under them. You didn't have a choice," said Sgt. Mohammed Shaaban Hodour, insisting that during their three years of control, the militants did not interfere with the team's work.

"In a time of war, you cannot do without us. We'll stay here until our work is done."

Mustafa Salim contributed to this report.

**The
New York
Times**

Qatar Opens Its Doors to All, to the Dismay of Some (UNE)

Declan Walsh

DOHA, Qatar — Take a drive in Doha, leaving behind the mirrored skyscrapers and palm-fringed avenues of this gas-rich city, and the protagonists of myriad conflicts are in easy reach.

In one western district, near the campuses hosting branches of American universities, Taliban

officials and their families can be found window-shopping in the cavernous malls or ordering takeout meals from a popular Afghan eatery.

A few miles away at a vast United States military base with 9,000 American personnel, warplanes take off on missions to bomb the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria — and sometimes the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Officials from Hamas, a Palestinian militant group, work from a luxury villa near the British Embassy, and recently held a news conference in a ballroom at the pyramid-shaped Sheraton hotel.

And an elderly Egyptian cleric, a fugitive from Cairo, is a popular fixture on the city's swank social scene, and was recently spotted at a wedding by an American diplomat

who was attending the same celebration.

This is the atmosphere of intrigue and opulence for which the capital of Qatar, a dust-blown backwater until a few decades ago, has become famous as the great freewheeling hub of the Middle East.

Against a backdrop of purring limousines and dhows moored in the

bay, Doha has become home to an exotic array of fighters, financiers and ideologues, a neutral city with echoes of Vienna in the Cold War, or a Persian Gulf version of the fictional pirate bar in the "Star Wars" movies.

Yet that welcome-all attitude is precisely what has recently angered Qatar's much larger neighbors and plunged the Middle East into one of its most dramatic diplomatic showdowns. For more than a month, four Arab countries have imposed a sweeping air, sea and land blockade against Qatar that, in a nutshell, boils down to a demand that Doha abandon its adventurist foreign policy, and that it stop giving shelter to such a broad range of agents in its capital.

So far, the blockade is not working, and the crisis looks set to worsen. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson flew back to Washington on Thursday after days of apparently fruitless shuttle diplomacy in the region. The foreign ministers of Germany, France and Britain have also intervened, without success.

The blockading nations — Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain — insist that Qatar is using an open-door policy to destabilize its neighbors. They say that Doha, rather than the benign meeting ground described by Qataris, is a city where terrorism is bankrolled, not battled against.

Qatar's self-identity as a center of refuge dates to the 19th century, when its desolate and semilawless territory offered sanctuary to outlaws, pirates and people fleeing persecution across the Arabian Peninsula.

"It's always been this place where waifs and strays and unwanted people ended up," said David Robert, the author of "Qatar: Securing the Global Ambitions of a City-State" and an assistant professor at King's College in London. "There was no overarching power on the peninsula, so if you were wanted by a sheikh, you could escape to Qatar and nobody would bother you."

In the 19th century, Qatar's founding leader, Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani, called it the "Kaaba of the dispossessed" — a reference to the revered black

cube at the Great Mosque in Mecca, Islam's holiest site, and a figurative way of describing Qatar as a lodestar for those seeking refuge.

That national trait turned into a policy for Al Thani's descendants, who since the mid-1990s have thrown open Qatar's doors to dissidents and exiles of every stripe. Doha has welcomed Saddam Hussein's family, one of Osama bin Laden's sons, the iconoclastic Indian painter M. F. Husain and the Chechen warlord Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, who was assassinated in the city by Russian secret agents in 2004. (The agents were caught and later extradited to Russia.)

Qatar can afford to be generous. It shares the world's third-largest gas field with Iran, yet has just 300,000 citizens, making it the richest country per capita. In recent decades, Doha has transformed into a gleaming metropolis of global ambition where luxury cars crowd the streets and world-renowned architects have traced its futuristic skyline. An army of imported laborers is building stadiums and subway lines for the 2022 World Cup.

But among fellow Arab states, Qatar's image has been shaped by its contentious policy of come one, come all.

In Doha, wealthy Qataris and Western expatriates mingle with Syrian exiles, Sudanese commanders and Libyan Islamists, many of them funded by the Qatari state. The Qataris sometimes play peacemaker: Their diplomats brokered a peace deal in Lebanon in 2008 and negotiated the release of numerous hostages, including Peter Theo Curtis, an American journalist being held in Syria, in 2014.

But critics say that, often as not, rather than acting as a neutral peacemaker, Qatar takes sides in conflicts — helping oust Muammar el-Qaddafi in Libya in 2011, or turning a blind eye to wealthy citizens who funnel cash to extremist Islamist groups in Syria.

And what infuriates the Saudis, Emiratis, Egyptians and Bahrainis most of all is that Doha has also provided shelter to Islamist dissidents from their own countries — and given them a voice on the

Qatar-owned television station, Al Jazeera.

The Egyptian cleric seen at a wedding recently, Sheik Yusuf al-Qaradawi, is a prominent booster for the Muslim Brotherhood and once had an influential show on Al Jazeera, where he dispensed teachings on matters from suicide bombings to personal sexuality.

"We have the 'children bomb,' and these human bombs must continue until liberation," he told his audience in 2002.

Even though Mr. Qaradawi is now 91 and stopped his TV show four years ago, his presence in Qatar is an irritant for Egypt, and his name is featured prominently on a list of 59 people that the blockading countries want deported from Qatar. They have also demanded the closing of Al Jazeera.

This and many of the demands from the blockading countries are seen as impossibly broad, leading to widespread pessimism that the standoff will end anytime soon.

"The Emiratis and the Saudis seem to have miscalculated their position," said Mehran Kamrava, the author of "Qatar: Small State, Big Politics" and a professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. "They thought that if they went all-out with a blockade, the Qataris would balk. But they haven't."

Doha's Taliban residents do not figure on the list of demands from the blockaders, but their presence does embody the wider debate around the merits of Qatar's open-door approach.

Peace talks between the militants and Afghan officials, initiated by the United States in 2013, quickly collapsed. Yet a Taliban contingent stayed on, and Doha is now is home to about 100 Taliban officials and their relatives, who live comfortably at Qatari state expense, one Afghan official said.

There were further, unofficial talks in 2015 and 2016. But as the fight in Afghanistan grinds on, some experts question whether the supposed Taliban peace advocates might be quietly facilitating more war.

Michael Semple, a Taliban scholar at Queens University in Belfast,

Northern Ireland, said that until the blockade, Taliban leaders in Qatar were known to frequently travel by road from Qatar, through Saudi Arabia, to the United Arab Emirates, where they have investments, and to fund-raise there among the Afghan communities in the cities of Sharjah and Dubai.

"Clearly they are using their foothold in the gulf to try and fund-raise and legitimize," he said. "If they haven't broached the substantive issues around peace, and the other gains are modest, then you could argue that that Qatar initiative makes things worse."

In recent years, Doha has been home to Khaled Mishal, who stepped down this year as leader of Hamas, and the country provided the group a site for talks with the former British prime minister and Mideast peace envoy Tony Blair, in 2015.

Although former Secretary of State John F. Kerry publicly criticized the Hamas presence, American officials privately say they would prefer Hamas was based in Doha rather than in a hostile capital like Tehran.

In keeping with its open-door approach, Doha was home to an Israeli trade office from 1996 to 2008. Although relations have soured, Qatar promises that Israel will be allowed to participate in the 2022 World Cup.

In the current crisis, Qatar is leveraging the wide range of ties its foreign policy has fostered. Food supplies and a few dozen soldiers from Turkey arrived in Doha after the embargo started on June 5. Turkish news reports say the military contingent could swell to 1,000 troops, and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is expected to visit Doha in the coming days.

Late one night last weekend, revelers were spilling from a trendy hotel nightclub in Doha as two athletic Turkish men checked in. Entering the elevator with their bags, they declared themselves glad to be in Doha, and described themselves as working in the "defense sector," then with a smile declined to say any more.

its implementation. The officials said it remains unclear whether the UAE carried out the hacks itself or contracted to have them done. The false reports said that the emir, among other things, had called Iran



UAE orchestrated hacking of Qatari government sites, sparking regional upheaval, according to U.S. intelligence officials (UNE)

The United Arab Emirates orchestrated the hacking of Qatari government news and social media sites in order to post incendiary false quotes attributed to Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin

Hamad al-Thani, in late May that sparked the ongoing upheaval between Qatar and its neighbors, according to U.S. intelligence officials.

Officials became aware last week that newly analyzed information gathered by U.S. intelligence agencies confirmed that on May 23, senior members of the UAE government discussed the plan and

an “Islamic power” and praised Hamas.

The hacks and posting took place on May 24, shortly after President Trump completed a lengthy counterterrorism meeting with Persian Gulf leaders in neighboring Saudi Arabia and declared them unified.

Citing the emir’s reported comments, the Saudis, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt immediately banned all Qatari media. They then broke relations with Qatar and declared a trade and diplomatic boycott, sending the region into a political and diplomatic tailspin that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has warned could undermine U.S. counterterrorism efforts against the Islamic State.

[Tillerson heads home from Qatar with no resolution of regional dispute]

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain said they would cut air, sea and land links with Qatar. Four Arab nations lead diplomatic break with Qatar (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

In a statement released in Washington by its ambassador, Yousef al-Otaiba, the UAE said the Post article was “false.”

“The UAE had no role whatsoever in the alleged hacking described in the article,” the statement said. “What is true is Qatar’s behavior. Funding, supporting, and enabling extremists from the Taliban to Hamas and Qadafi. Inciting violence, encouraging radicalization, and undermining the stability of its neighbors.”

The revelations come as emails purportedly hacked from Otaiba’s private account have circulated to journalists over the past several months. That hack has been claimed by an apparently pro-Qatari organization calling itself GlobalLeaks. Many of the emails highlight the UAE’s determination over the years to rally Washington thinkers and policymakers to its side on the issues at the center of its dispute with Qatar.

All of the Persian Gulf nations are members of the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State. More than 10,000 U.S. troops are based at Qatar’s al-Udeid Air Base, the U.S. Central Command’s regional headquarters, and Bahrain is the home of the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet. All are purchasers of U.S. defense equipment and tied to U.S. foreign policy priorities in numerous ways.

The conflict has also exposed sharp differences between Trump — who

has clearly taken the Saudi and UAE side in a series of tweets and statements — and Tillerson, who has urged compromise and spent most of last week in shuttle diplomacy among the regional capitals that has been unsuccessful so far.

“We don’t expect any near-term resolution,” Tillerson aide R.C. Hammond said Saturday. He said the secretary had left behind proposals with the “Saudi bloc” and with Qatar including “a common set of principles that all countries can agree to so that we start from . . . a common place.”

Qatar has repeatedly charged that its sites were hacked, but it has not released the results of its investigation. Intelligence officials said their working theory since the Qatar hacks has been that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt or some combination of those countries were involved. It remains unclear whether the others also participated in the plan.

U.S. intelligence and other officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined to comment, as did the CIA. The FBI, which Qatar has said was helping in its investigation, also declined to comment.

A spokesman for the Qatari Embassy in Washington responded by drawing attention to a statement by that government’s attorney general, Ali Bin Fetais al-Marri, who said late last month that “Qatar has evidence that certain iPhones originating from countries laying siege to Qatar were used in the hack.”

Hammond said he did not know of the newly analyzed U.S. intelligence on the UAE or whether Tillerson was aware of it.

The hacking incident reopened a bitter feud among the gulf monarchies that has simmered for years. It last erupted in 2013, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain accused Qatar of providing safe haven for their political dissidents and supporting the pan-Arab Muslim Brotherhood; funding terrorists, including U.S.-designated terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah; and using its state-funded media outlets to destabilize its neighbors.

[Key senator threatens arms sales over gulf dispute]

Qatar — an energy-rich country ruled by its own unelected monarchy — saw the Saudi-led accusations as an attempt by neighboring autocrats to stifle its more liberal tendencies.

Separately, the United States warned Qatar to keep a tighter rein on wealthy individuals there who surreptitiously funded Islamist terror groups — a charge that Washington has also made in the past against the Saudis and other gulf countries. While Qatar promised some steps in response to the charges in a 2014 agreement with the others, it took little action.

During his two-day visit to Riyadh, Trump met with the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council — Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar — and held individual closed-door meetings with several GCC leaders, including the Qatar emir. The day before his departure on the morning of May 22, Trump delivered a speech, focused on the need for religious tolerance and unity against terrorism, to more than 50 Muslim leaders gathered from around the world for the occasion.

But he devoted most of his attention to Saudi King Salman, praising as a wise leader the man who controls his country’s vast oil reserves. In what the administration hailed as a high point of the visit, the Saudis agreed to purchase \$110 billion in U.S. arms and signed letters of intent to invest hundreds of billions in deals with U.S. companies.

He had told the Saudis in advance, Trump said in an interview Wednesday with the Christian Broadcasting Network, that the agreements and purchases were a prerequisite for his presence. “I said, you have to do that, otherwise I’m not going,” Trump recounted.

The statements attributed to the emir first appeared on the Qatar News Agency’s website early on the morning of May 24, in a report on his appearance at a military ceremony, as Trump was wrapping up the next stop on his nine-day overseas trip, in Israel. According to the Qatari government, alerts were sent out within 45 minutes saying the information was false.

Later that morning, the same false information appeared on a ticker at the bottom of a video of the emir’s appearance that was posted on Qatar News Agency’s YouTube channel. Similar material appeared on government Twitter feeds.

The reports were repeatedly broadcast on Saudi Arabian government outlets, continuing even after the Qatari alert said it was false. The UAE shut down all broadcasts of Qatari media inside its borders, including the Qatari-funded Al Jazeera satellite network, the most watched in the Arab world.

[Why Saudi Arabia hates Al Jazeera so much]

The first week in June, the Saudi-led countries severed relations, ordered all Qatari nationals inside their countries to leave, and closed their borders to all land, air and sea traffic with Qatar, a peninsular nation in the Persian Gulf whose only land connection is with Saudi Arabia.

In addition to charges of supporting terrorism and promoting instability inside their countries, they accused Qatar of being too close to Iran, Saudi Arabia’s main rival for regional power and, according to the United States, the world’s foremost supporter of global terrorism. Iran conducts robust trade with most of the gulf, including the UAE, and shares the world’s largest natural gas field with Qatar.

The day after the boycott was announced, Trump indirectly took credit for it. “So good to see the Saudi Arabia visit with King and 50 countries already paying off,” he tweeted. “They said they would take a hard line on funding extremism, and all reference was pointing to Qatar.”

At the same time, Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis called for negotiations and a quick resolution of the dispute. When the Saudi-led group released a list of 13 “non-negotiable” demands for Qatar — including shutting down Al Jazeera and expelling a number of people deemed terrorists — the State Department suggested that they were unreasonable and that the terrorism funding issue was a smokescreen for long-standing regional grievances that should be resolved through mediation and negotiation.

Qatar rejected the demands. Tillerson appeared to agree that they were draconian. But when he called for the boycott to be eased, saying it was causing both security and humanitarian hardship, Trump said the measure was harsh “but necessary.”

The one concrete result of Tillerson’s stops in the region last week was a new bilateral agreement signed with Qatar on stopping terrorism financing, the only one of the gulf countries that had responded to an invitation to do so, Hammond said.

Speaking to reporters on his plane flying back to Washington on Friday, Tillerson said the trip was useful “first to listen and get a sense of how serious the situation is, how emotional some of these issues are.” He said that he had left proposals with both sides that suggested “some ways that we might move this forward.”

All of the countries involved, Tillerson said, are “really important

to us from a national security standpoint. . . . We need this part of the world to be stable, and this particular conflict between these parties is obviously not helpful.”

Asked about Trump’s tweets and other comments, he noted that being secretary of state “is a lot different than being CEO of Exxon,” his previous job, “because I was the ultimate decision-maker.” He knew what to expect from long-standing

colleagues, he said, and decision-making was disciplined and “highly structured.”

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

“Those are not the characteristics of the United States government. And I don’t say that as a criticism, it’s just

an observation of fact,” Tillerson said. While neither he nor the president came from the political world, he said, his old job put him in contact with the rest of the world and “that engagement . . . is actually very easy for me.”

For his part, Trump agreed in the Christian Broadcasting Network interview that he and Tillerson “had a little bit of a difference, only in terms of tone” over the gulf conflict.

Qatar, Trump said, “is now a little bit on the outs, but I think they’re being brought back in.” Asked about the U.S. military base in Qatar, Trump said he was not concerned.

“We’ll be all right,” he said. “Look, if we ever have to leave” the base, “we would have 10 countries willing to build us another one, believe me. And they’ll pay for it.”

The Washington Post

Israel implements controversial security measures at sensitive holy site

By Ruth Eglash

JERUSALEM —

Israel began implementing new security measures, including checkpoints and metal detectors, at entrances to one of Jerusalem’s most sensitive holy sites on Sunday, two days after three gunmen killed two police officers there.

The perpetrators, Palestinian Muslims with Israeli citizenship, were caught on Israeli police cameras exiting the sacred al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a site that is also revered by Jews, shooting the two officers before darting back inside the esplanade.

The assailants, all from the Arab-Israeli town of Umm al-Fahm, were shot dead at the site by security forces.

Immediately after the incident on Friday morning, Israeli police closed the mosque and prevented worshipers from entering the compound and Old City for the first time since 1967.

The move was condemned by many in the Muslim world, who view the ramped-up security as an attempt by Israel to change the precious status quo at the site, which is often a flash point of violence between the sides. Jews refer to the site as the Temple Mount.

Israeli police said the measures were necessary to secure the site and ensure there were no other weapons present. Several members of the Wakf, the Islamic trust that administers the site, were detained by police, suspected of aiding the three attackers or

for inciting violence against Israel, local media reported.

In an interview on Israel Army Radio on Sunday, Maj. Gen. Yoram Halevy, the Jerusalem District police commander, said knives, slingshots, batons, spikes and unexploded ordnance were found during the police sweep.

He also said that Jerusalem municipal workers had entered the mosque Saturday to clean up after the police.

In the aftermath of the attack, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas held a rare phone call, with Netanyahu saying that there would be no change to the current arrangements at the complex and Abbas, in a rare move, condemning the violence and calling on Netanyahu to reopen the site.

After holding a security briefing Saturday night, Netanyahu agreed to do so, ordering the mosque to reopen Sunday. But by early afternoon, only Muslim residents of the city were being allowed to enter, and all worshipers had to pass through newly installed metal detectors.

“Those three who were killed Friday didn’t do anything good for Muslims or for Jerusalem,” said Hafez Sublaban, who runs a small grocery store opposite one of the entrances to the mosque. “The only ones who benefit from it are the Jews. They have taken advantage of the situation.”

Sublaban, who has run his kiosk for more than 20 years, said he did not

recall a situation in which worshipers were prevented from entering the mosque. But, he said, residents of Jerusalem’s Old City endure surveillance 24 hours a day, seven days a week from hundreds of Israeli police security cameras that dot the narrow alleyways and monitor the entrances to the holy site.

“This is not the right state of mind for those who want to go and worship,” he said.

“This is our mosque and our place of worship; we are against these ruthless procedures,” Umm Amar, a 53-year-old resident of the Old City, said as she was about to pass the newly set up Israeli police checkpoint to reach the mosque.

“We don’t really know what happened on Friday — only God knows that — but what we do know is that it has made the situation worse,” she said. “I was born here in 1964, and I don’t ever remember a time that the mosque was closed for worship.”

A family from Jordan that had arrived in Jerusalem on Saturday stood nearby. Because of the tight security, Israeli police officers turned them away.

“This is unacceptable,” said Jamal Ishtwayeh, a resident of Amman, Jordan’s capital. “It’s like someone coming here from the Vatican and discovering that their church is closed.”

Ami Meitav, a former Israeli security coordinator for the Old City, said installing metal detectors at the site is not a simple procedure, with more

than 2,000 people entering the mosque most Fridays.

“I don’t think the police will be able to check everyone; they will check some of them, but if people know there is a check control maybe they will not come with a gun because they know that it’s possible to touch them in the gate,” he said.

What’s most important from where the world meets Washington

Until now, Israel has allowed security personnel employed by the Wakf to take responsibility for security arrangements after pressure from Jordan, which oversees the site in a complicated arrangement dating back to the 1967 war.

Jordanian news agency Petra reported that Jordan’s King Abdullah II called Netanyahu on Saturday. The king condemned the violence and called for the mosque to be immediately reopened.

Speaking to Israel Army Radio on Sunday, Israeli Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan said that it was up to Israel to decide security protocol for the site and that metal detectors would now be installed at all nine gates into the compound. He also said that police cameras should be able to view the public areas around the mosque.

Sufian Taha contributed to this report.

The New York Times

Erdogan and Supporters Stage Rally on Anniversary of Failed Coup

Patrick Kingsley

ISTANBUL — Less than a week after the largest opposition rally in Turkey in years, hundreds of thousands of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s supporters made their own show of strength by gathering on Saturday night to commemorate the anniversary of last year’s failed coup.

It was a sign that the president, who has led a vast crackdown against his opponents in the 12 months since the botched putsch, still has significant support.

The failed coup has given Mr. Erdogan more opportunities to buttress his new national narrative for the country and extend his grip on power, firing or suspending about 150,000 people and arresting

50,000 others suspected of supporting the coup attempt.

Mr. Erdogan has often referred to the coup plotters’ defeat as a “second war of independence,” and the rally on Saturday was the centerpiece of an elaborate day of pageantry that implicitly placed the president as the hero of what he implies is a liberation struggle.

After speaking in Istanbul, the president flew to Ankara, Turkey’s capital, where he appeared at another rally before attending a special ceremony in Parliament at 2:32 a.m. on Sunday, a year to the minute since putschist pilots bombed the building in 2016.

To encourage people to attend the rallies, Turks were allowed to travel free by public transportation —

ferries, subways and buses — which was mostly covered with banners and slogans about the attempted coup's anniversary. Officials unveiled several monuments to victims of the coup, and cellphone companies sent text messages reminding their customers of the anniversary. Some even played a recorded message from the president before some calls.

The pageantry masked rising unease about the scale of Mr. Erdogan's post-coup crackdown.

This time last year, mainstream political factions were united in their opposition to the coup attempt, in which more than 240 were killed and over 2,000 injured before civilians and loyalist soldiers managed to regain control.

In the year since, the political opposition has gradually grown disaffected with Mr. Erdogan's crackdown. This purge has been used to target most forms of peaceful opposition, rather than the alleged masterminds and protagonists of the putsch, who are believed to hail largely from an Islamic movement loyal to Fethullah Gulen, the exiled Muslim cleric.

On July 9, hundreds of thousands of protesters turned out for a rally in Istanbul, the culmination of a three-week trek from Ankara that was led by the head of the opposition, who challenged Mr. Erdogan to institute changes or face a "revolt against injustice."

But on Saturday, standing on the shores of the Bosphorus in Istanbul, both Mr. Erdogan and his supporters appeared unapologetic about the

intensity of the crackdown.

"We will rip off the heads of those traitors," Mr. Erdogan said. "Be sure that none of the traitors who betrayed this country will remain unpunished."

He also repeated a threat to reinstate the death penalty, a warning he has often made in the past year, and one that would end Turkey's chances of joining the European Union.

"I don't look at what Hans and George say," Mr. Erdogan said, in a dig at European politicians. "I look at what Ahmet, Mehmet, Hasan, Huseyin, Ayse, Fatma and Hatice say."

The crowds cheered the comments. In interviews, several attendees said the president was right to prioritize the security of the state above all else.

"These things are necessary," said Halit Emin Yildirim, a 21-year-old student at the rally. "The homeland comes first. If I don't have a homeland, where can I have a democracy?"

Officially, however, the anniversary events were a commemoration of the failed coup's victims and a celebration of the resilience of Turkish democracy, rather than a means of burnishing Mr. Erdogan's brand.

"We're actually very sad when somebody is saying that the government is taking advantage of this military coup," said Mehdi Eker, a lawmaker and deputy head of Mr. Erdogan's party, the Justice and Development Party, or A.K.P.

Saturday's pageantry, Mr. Eker added, was intended "to fortify the democratic institutions."

But critics of the government say that Mr. Erdogan has tried to use the failed coup not only as the pretext to accelerate a crackdown on most forms of opposition, but also to further his vision of a new Turkey.

Since his party's election in 2002, Mr. Erdogan, a conservative Muslim, has slowly eroded some of the foundational myths that had underpinned Turkish identity since the creation of the secular Turkey republic, in 1923.

Though avoiding a full-frontal challenge to secularism, Mr. Erdogan has long expressed a wish to create "a new Turkey." He spoke of inspiring "a pious generation" of young Turks, steadily increased references to Islam in the national curriculum and removed some references to the ideas of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey.

Mr. Erdogan has also revived interest in the Ottoman sultans who ruled Turkey and the surrounding region before the creation of the Turkish republic, and whose legacy Ataturk sought to play down.

At noon prayers on Friday, thousands of imams read a sermon, written by the central government, that compared the failed coup's civilian victims to those who died during the liberation struggle. In his speech on Saturday, Mr. Erdogan even cited a nationalist poem about that war.

"This is Erdogan 2.0 in tackling the secular republic," said Aykan Erdemir, a former opposition lawmaker who is now an analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a research organization.

"Rather than tackling the secular republican vision head on, he is transforming it" by harnessing some of the key touchstones of the secular republican tradition for his own purposes, Mr. Erdemir said.

But while liberals see Mr. Erdogan as a threat to many democratic freedoms, his supporters often argue that he has upheld the civil rights that are most important to them. Since coming to power 15 years ago, he has gradually removed restrictions on public displays of Islamic piety while rapidly improving infrastructure, health care and social security programs.

Another supporter at the rally on Saturday, Mustafa Bas, a 44-year-old tile builder, recalled visiting Europe in 2000 and being crushed with disappointment that the services there might never be available in Turkey.

"I sat down and cried," said Mr. Bas, who carried a placard in honor of a relative killed during the coup attempt. "I thought, 'When will these things come to Turkey?' And then Tayyip Erdogan brought them all to Turkey, all these things that citizens deserve."

**The
Washington
Post**

Josh Rogin : The Trump administration's shortsighted war on terrorism

While in Paris last week, President Trump praised the liberation of Mosul while blaming the Obama administration for allowing the Islamic State to run amok in Iraq in 2014. But Trump's administration is repeating mistakes of the past on counterterrorism, neglecting the long game and increasing the likelihood that the terrorists will be back.

"Now we must work with the government of Iraq and our partners and allies in the region to consolidate the gains and to ensure that the victory stays a victory, unlike the last time," Trump said.

While he was making those remarks, a senior U.N. official was shaking a cup around Washington, explaining to lawmakers and administration officials that if urgent humanitarian relief funds were not forthcoming, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who fled Mosul during the

fighting would soon lack basic necessities.

The day's most important stories.

Bruno Geddo, the Iraq representative for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told me that the gains achieved militarily in Mosul, at great human and financial cost, could be squandered if the international community fumbles the next stage — stabilization and reconstruction.

"The stakes are higher than just shelter, food and water," he said. "We think Iraq is at a crucial stage. It's a turning point, and we want to make sure we do everything we can to make sure it turns to a better future."

More than 900,000 Iraqis fled the city, with more than 700,000 yet to return, but only 21 percent of UNHCR's Iraq budget for this year has been funded, Geddo said.

Unless the organization gets \$126 million in the next two months, it will be forced to scale back crucial humanitarian services. The United States covers about a quarter of UNHCR's Iraq program.

If humanitarian assistance is cut off, the largely Sunni population in northern Iraq could feel abandoned and turn back to the extremists, Geddo said. That, of course, is what happened about a decade ago. "Hopefully this time around, a lesson will have been learned," he said.

The Trump administration doesn't seem to have learned that lesson. For example, the United States doesn't have a well-developed plan to help rebuild the cities in Iraq and Syria damaged during the fight, said former White House counterterrorism adviser Richard Clarke.

"The best breeding ground for terrorists is a city without services,"

he said. "The short-termism in our counterterrorism policy is baffling, because we will have to come back and do it all again."

Trump's budget shows a clear disdain for programs focused on preventing wars or keeping finished wars finished. The State Department's spending request would slash programs that build capacity in partner countries for fighting terrorism and cut funding for all manner of U.N. activities. After cutting \$600 million from the U.N.'s peacekeeping budget, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley boasted, "We're only getting started."

In Syria, the current strategy is to partner with Russia to establish deconfliction zones and temporary cease-fires that Trump often praises. But partnering with Russia in Syria without a better plan to help liberated areas prosper could lead to disaster. The Assad regime and its partners could expand their control

of Sunni Arab regions, exacerbating grievances that led to the rise of extremism there in the first place.

The United States must do more to help local Sunni governance take hold, not hand over Sunni land to the regime, said Charles Lister of the Middle East Institute. "We need to continue to invest in these communities."

The shortsighted nature of U.S. strategy is not limited to the Middle East;



Year after coup, Turkey's opposition on the march. But to where?

July 14, 2017
Istanbul—The crowd stretched for as far as the eye could see: the biggest flag-waving Turkish opposition rally in many years.

They were Turks angry at the authoritarian rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan; Turks joyful that their call for "justice" may be heard; Turks hopeful that the promises of opposition unity may be real.

The mass rally on July 9 marked the culmination of a 25-day, 280-mile opposition march from the capital, Ankara, to Istanbul that attracted tens of thousands of citizens. They flocked to the opposition's banners despite being pilloried as akin to "terrorists" and dangerous provocateurs by Mr. Erdoğan and the Islamist ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

Yet, as emotional as the mass event was, it is still far from clear whether the political spectacle will inspire a credible resurgence of Turkey's fractured opposition.

This weekend marks the anniversary of last summer's failed coup, which Erdoğan's critics say he has exploited to fortify his own power and crack down on a range of political opponents. Speaking Thursday, the president highlighted the "epic dimension" of the coup attempt, saying Turkey learned in those dramatic hours "that we will either die or exist," and declaring: "We are leaving a very important legacy to future generations."

"While [the rally] is undoubtedly a huge act of courage and defiance, I want to caution against seeing this as a major game changer," says Aslı Aydintaşbaş, a senior fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) in Istanbul.

Tens of thousands of Turks wave Turkish flags and "justice" banners at an opposition rally to cap a 25-day, 280-mile protest march from

counterterrorism policies at home are similarly out of balance.

The Trump administration is focused on tightening immigration from several Muslim-majority countries and boosting spending on border defenses. But most recent terrorist attacks on U.S. soil were committed by people long inside the country.

Yet Trump's Department of Homeland Security budget would cut programs that help prevent or minimize the damage from domestic

Ankara to Istanbul, Turkey, on July 9.

Scott Peterson/The Christian Science Monitor/Getty Images

Caption

"The 50 percent is united on anti-Erdoğan sentiment, and united in their opposition to authoritarianism, but not in a common vision for Turkey," says Ms. Aydintaşbaş. The opposition task "is to use the hope and energy" created by the march and rally to lay out a plan to unify disparate factions.

Notably missing, she says, is a charismatic figure who can unite the opposition.

"Turkey needs a Turkish Macron, and it's not out there yet," says Aydintaşbaş, referring to French President Emmanuel Macron, who despite being a political unknown a year ago, recently upset a crowded field of seasoned candidates. "This was a good step, but I haven't got the feeling there is a day-after scenario yet."

Anniversary of coup

The opposition show of strength comes as Erdoğan and the AKP are preparing elaborate ceremonies to mark the July 15 anniversary of the attempted coup as a day when 246 Turkish "martyrs" died, they say, "defending democracy."

But that event also yielded a continuing state of emergency, a fierce crackdown on civil society, the arrests of 50,000 people, a purge of 140,000 teachers, soldiers, police, judges, and others, and a tighter grip by Erdoğan – all reasons such a broad spectrum of Turks took to the streets for the opposition march and rally.

The march was led by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), in the first sign of opposition life since the April referendum.

terrorist attacks, including funding for Federal Emergency Management Agency first responders and programs that engage Muslim communities inside the United States.

The administration is focused on borders but not paying enough attention "to what we are doing inside our borders to defend the country" from terrorism, said Rand Beers, former deputy homeland security secretary.

"The final day of the 'justice march' is a new beginning and a new step," Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu boomed from the stage at the sea of supporters, who chanted "Rights, law, justice!"

"It's not the end of a march.... It's a new climate, a new history, a new birth," he said. "We marched because we are against a one-man regime [and] because we are against terrorist organizations and because of the fact that the judiciary has been taken under the orders of politics."

"Erdoğan is a dictator!" said one rally-goer amid the crowd, sweating under the hot summer sun, a white headband with the Turkish word for justice, *adalet*, across his forehead. Others were far less charitable about the man who has ruled Turkey with an increasingly tight grip since 2002.

Obstacles to opposition unity

But analysts say despite the unexpectedly popular stratagem of the march, there are immense obstacles to converting that rejuvenated energy into unity between the CHP, nationalists, and the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). In an election two years ago, in a rare electoral setback for Erdoğan, the HDP exceeded for the first time the 10 percent threshold for representation in parliament. The party has been under especially sustained attack, with arrests of its leaders and lawmakers on terrorism charges, since fighting between the Turkish state and Kurdish militants reignited in southeast Turkey in July 2015.

The HDP called on its supporters to join the rally for "social justice," to "be in the field with all our power, to deepen the crack in the fascist-chauvinist bloc."

Critics charge that Erdoğan and the AKP have used the coup, and the tools of the state of emergency, to consolidate their own power by jailing opponents and journalists and restricting opposition parties.

Terrorism isn't a root cause; it's a symptom of wider problems faced by disenfranchised populations in the Middle East and at home. The Trump administration's penny-wise, pound-foolish approach addresses the symptoms while leaving the causes in place.

Kılıçdaroğlu derides the state of emergency as a second – successful – coup against the Turkish people.

Criticizing the march this week, Erdoğan invoked Muslim piety: "They could walk 450 kilometers for the terrorists, but could not take 4-1/2 minutes to read a *fatiha* [Quranic prayer] for the [July 15] martyrs?"

Erdoğan noted the demand of marchers to end the state of emergency, which has been extended repeatedly: "This job will end when it's completely over," he said.

Doubts about opposition

The scale of the march "was a key moment, but I think that one should be very realistic regarding what the opposition is capable of achieving in Turkey, because contrary to all the rhetoric, there is no opposition front in Turkey – it doesn't exist," says Cengiz Aktar, a senior scholar with the Istanbul Policy Center at Sabanci University.

"Will the opposition manage to gather its forces, especially including the Kurds? I have very serious doubts," says Mr. Aktar. CHP voters "are historically anti-Kurdish, and it will take them another decade probably to understand that without due attention paid to the Kurdish issue there won't be a political alternative to Mr. Erdoğan and the AKP."

In a bid to broaden the appeal of the march and rally, CHP leaders ordered that only non-party banners be flown, include the national flag, the "justice" motto of the event, and portraits depicting the secular founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

"Maybe the best outcome of this 'justice' march was that people, after one year, are today more concerned about the consequences of the so-called coup, rather than the coup itself," says Aktar. "People realize more and more it was a big, big game and the entire country is paying the price."

'Not the same Turkey'

The CHP joined the AKP after the coup attempt in a sign of national unity, and supported national solidarity rallies that lasted across the country for a month. But the march began mid-June, the day after one senior CHP official was sentenced to 25 years in prison for leaking information to the media about the Turkish state providing weapons to Islamists fighting in Syria.

The New York Times

Rick Gladstone

An American student from Princeton University was arrested in Iran and has been sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges he was spying for the United States, an Iranian judiciary official said on Sunday, an action bound to aggravate relations between the two countries.

The arrest and sentencing of the American, Xiyue Wang, a graduate student in history, was announced months after he had vanished in Iran, where he was doing research for a doctoral thesis. There had been rumors of his arrest, but the announcement on Sunday from Iran was the first official confirmation.

A spokesman for Iran's judiciary, Gholam Hossein Mohseni-Ejei, said at a weekly news conference that one of "America's infiltrators" had been prosecuted, but he did not identify Mr. Wang by name or nationality. The judiciary's Mizan News Agency provided his name and his age, 37, saying he had "spider connections" with American and British intelligence agencies.

Mizan also said Mr. Wang, whom it described as fluent in Persian, had digitally archived 4,500 pages of Iranian documents and had done "super confidential research for the U.S. Department of State, Harvard Kennedy School and British Institute of Persian Studies."

A Princeton spokesman, Daniel Day, confirmed that Mr. Wang, an American citizen of Chinese descent, was the man arrested in Iran. "That's our student," Mr. Day said in a telephone interview.

He also said the university had known about the arrest for months but had been trying to work quietly to have Mr. Wang freed.

In a statement issued after news of his arrest and sentence was reported, the university said Mr. Wang was a fourth-year doctoral candidate specializing in 19th- and early-20th-century Eurasian history who had been arrested last summer

The fact it was led day after day in sweltering temperatures by the 68-year-old CHP chief, accused in the past of uninspired and ineffective leadership, "showed that nothing is impossible," wrote columnist Semih İdiz in the *Hürriyet Daily News*.

"No one is expecting an overnight miracle to emerge from this march, [but] we are not the same Turkey as we were before it took place," wrote Mr. İdiz. "Erdoğan and the AKP are no doubt sleeping a little less comfortably now, with presidential

while doing scholarly research in Iran on the Qajar dynasty.

"Since his arrest, the university has worked with Mr. Wang's family, the U.S. government, private counsel and others to facilitate his release," the statement said.

"We were very distressed by the charges brought against him in connection with his scholarly activities, and by his subsequent conviction and sentence," the statement continued. "His family and the university are distressed at his continued imprisonment and are hopeful that he will be released after his case is heard by the appellate authorities in Tehran."

News of Mr. Wang's sentencing came as the judiciary spokesman also announced that the brother of President Hassan Rouhani of Iran had been arrested in a corruption inquiry, in what appeared to be a move by Mr. Rouhani's hard-line rivals to undermine and embarrass him.

The brother, Hossein Fereydoun, had been one of Mr. Rouhani's close aides.

The arrests suggested ominous new pressure on Mr. Rouhani, a moderate cleric who was re-elected to a second four-year term a few months ago.

His re-election was seen as a referendum vote by Iranians for more cooperation with other nations, including the United States, despite the entrenched anti-American hostilities harbored by other powerful interests in Iran, including its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei; the judiciary and intelligence services; and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps paramilitary force.

The news of the arrests coincided with the second anniversary of Mr. Rouhani's signature achievement: the agreement with the United States and other world powers to curb Iran's nuclear activities in return for the easing of economic

and parliamentary elections not so far away in 2019."

Fractures in the opposition aside, the intense official reaction may meanwhile have as much to do with dissent within AKP's own ranks, says Aydıntaşbaş from ECFR.

"This is what the AKP leadership fears the most, not so much what happens with the opposition, but what happens with their own constituents, the internal grumbling, the quiet resentment about what

sanctions that have long isolated Iran.

The agreement has not produced the desired economic boom in Iran, giving political ammunition to conservatives who opposed the pact. Critics of the agreement in the United States have also complained, saying it is too weak.

President Trump, who has escalated tensions with Iran, repeatedly assailed the nuclear agreement during his 2016 campaign as "the worst deal ever." He must decide by Monday whether Iran is honoring the deal, under an American law that requires the administration to certify every 90 days that Iran is complying with the terms.

Mr. Fereydoun, a former ambassador to Malaysia, has long been considered a potential political vulnerability for Mr. Rouhani over allegations of nepotism and cronyism.

Hard-liners accused Mr. Fereydoun more than a year ago of improper dealings with money-changing companies during the final years of the administration of Mr. Rouhani's predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. They said Mr. Fereydoun had continued those dealings while serving as an adviser to Mr. Rouhani.

Mr. Fereydoun also has been accused by hard-liners of using his influence to place colleagues in high-paying positions, and of exploiting his connections to gain a coveted spot in a doctorate program at an Iranian university. He has denied the accusations.

"Rouhani and the reformists won a landslide victory in the May presidential elections, yet this detention makes clear the conservatives are still strong and can lash out," said Cliff Kupchan, chairman of the Eurasia Group, a political risk consultancy in Washington. The president's brother, Mr. Kupchan said, is "low-hanging fruit for conservatives seeking to cut Rouhani down to size."

AKP has come to symbolize," she says.

"This may not come out publicly, but in quiet corners of AKP, people are complaining, saying, 'This is not what we set out for 14 years ago. We are jeopardizing our gains by becoming too authoritarian,'" Aydıntaşbaş says.

Iran's judiciary spokesman, Mr. Mohseni-Ejei, said on Sunday that Mr. Fereydoun had been arrested the day before, according to the judiciary's news agency, and because he was not able to provide bail, he was jailed until he could do so.

Mr. Mohseni-Ejei did not specify the bail amount or the precise charges.

Referring to Mr. Wang, the spokesman said the person sentenced in the espionage case had been "identified and arrested by the Intelligence Ministry's forces, and it was established that he was gathering information and was involved in spying activities."

Once the verdict is final, Mr. Mohseni-Ejei said, he would "be able to explain more about this person's intentions and activities," adding, "Unfortunately he was taking direct orders from America."

In a statement, the State Department said: "The Iranian regime continues to detain U.S. citizens and other foreigners on fabricated national-security related charges. We call for the immediate release of all U.S. citizens unjustly detained in Iran so they can return to their families."

A number of American citizens, mostly Iranian-American dual citizens, have been imprisoned in Iran over the years on similar charges.

Five were freed when the nuclear deal took effect in January 2016, including Jason Rezaian, a former Washington Post correspondent in Tehran. But others continue to languish in Iranian prisons, despite repeated calls by the United States and others to release them.

The most notable prisoners include Siamak Namazi, an Iranian-American businessman who had called for improved relations; his father, Baquer Namazi, a former UNICEF diplomat; and Nizar Zakka, a Lebanese citizen with permanent United States residency.

Mr. Zakka's lawyer in the United States, Jason Poblete, said his

client had been on a hunger strike for the past three weeks. Mr. Zakka

was sentenced a few months ago to 10 years in prison.

**The
Washington
Post**

Venezuelans Rebuke Their President by a Staggering Margin

Ana Vanessa
Herrero and

Ernesto Londoño

CARACAS, Venezuela — Millions of Venezuelans signaled their disapproval of President Nicolás Maduro's plan to hold a constituent assembly by casting ballots on Sunday in a vote unlike any other in this nation's history.

More than 98 percent of voters sided with the opposition in answering three yes-or-no questions drafted with the aim of weakening Mr. Maduro's legitimacy days before his constituent assembly is expected to convene. Opponents see the assembly as a power grab by an increasingly unpopular leader and fear he may use it to do away with democratic elections.

Sunday's exercise, known as a popular consultation, was organized by a slate of opposition parties that dominate Venezuela's National Assembly.

Organizers had hoped that a large turnout and a lopsided result would widen rifts within the governing party and deepen the government's international isolation, undermining Mr. Maduro's plan to appoint an assembly of handpicked supporters to draft a new Constitution.

Shortly before midnight, a group of Venezuelan university administrators tasked with overseeing the vote count said that more than 7,186,000 ballots had been cast. Organizers hailed the outcome and the turnout.

"This country demonstrated once again that it conquers its aspirations

through the vote," Cecilia García Arocha, the head of the Central University of Venezuela, said as she announced the results.

"This fight was born on the street and today it continues and will continue to be waged on the streets until we restore democracy and liberty," Leopoldo López, an opposition leader released from prison and placed under house arrest last weekend, said on Twitter. "Today millions decide and establish a mandate. No one should doubt that it is binding and that we must defend it and ensure it is heeded."

Voters were asked whether they rejected the effort to hold a constituent assembly that has not been approved by voters; whether they wanted the country's armed forces to uphold the current Constitution and the decisions of the opposition-run National Assembly; and whether they wanted free elections to pick a new "national unity government."

The Venezuelan Constitution passed under Mr. Maduro's predecessor, Hugo Chávez, in 1999 includes a provision authorizing popular consultations as a means of safeguarding "people's exercise of their sovereignty." Venezuela's election commission did not play a role in Sunday's vote, which was run by volunteers. The opposition, citing the Constitution, says the vote is binding, but the government dismisses it as illegitimate.

While Mr. Maduro is widely expected to ignore the outcome, organizers hope that it invigorates a protest movement that has gained

momentum over the past couple of months. Tensions have soared across Venezuela amid widespread food and medicine shortages and spiraling inflation that the government routinely plays down.

For ordinary Venezuelans, Sunday's vote was the first opportunity to cast ballots since the 2015 legislative election that ended the United Socialist Party's dominance of the National Assembly. The government has postponed every election that was scheduled to take place since then.

While the vote unfolded smoothly in most cities, there were scattered reports of violence and intimidation, including the killing of a 61-year-old woman on the outskirts of Caracas, the capital, during an attack by gunmen near a voting site. The attorney general's office identified the woman, a nurse, as Xiomara Escot.

Voters waited in line for hours to slip ballots printed on simple paper into old cardboard boxes that bore logos of items such as toilet paper and doughnuts.

Daniela Ramos, 64, a homemaker in Caracas, said she was voting with a heavy heart. One of her daughters, a mother of two, was killed during a robbery. The killing prompted her other daughter to move to the United States. "I vote so my daughter can come back," she said. "I vote for my slain daughter."

Rainiero Paz, 39, said he was stunned by the turnout. "This exceeded our expectations; I haven't even seen this during

presidential elections," said Mr. Paz, who recently lost his job at a warehouse after Mr. Maduro ordered wage increases.

While opponents of the government lined up to vote, Maduro loyalists held a "drill" for the constituent assembly, calling on supporters to participate in a mock voting exercise that was covered widely on state-run news outlets. The turnout for that was notably thin.

Attorney General Luisa Ortega, who recently broke ranks with Mr. Maduro and has criticized his plan to convene a constituent assembly as undemocratic, stopped by an opposition-run voting station. As she greeted voters, one told her, "Welcome to freedom."

Ms. Ortega's husband, a lawmaker from Mr. Maduro's United Socialist Party, cast a ballot responding only to the first question.

Abroad, opposition leaders set up dozens of polling stations in cities with large communities of Venezuelan expatriates. In Rio de Janeiro, voters lined up at a park next to a large banner that said "S.O.S. Venezuela."

"Our best weapon is this: our vote," said María Carolina Ceballos, 31, who had a Venezuelan flag wrapped around her shoulders. "We reject violence and we will continue to defend Venezuela always through democratic means."

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Venezuelans Hold Symbolic Vote Against Bid to Rewrite Constitution

Anatoly Kurmanaev, Kejal Vyas and Juan Forero

CARACAS—Millions of Venezuelans at home and abroad voted in an unauthorized referendum staged by government opponents to defy President Nicolás Maduro and his plans to rewrite the country's constitution.

Of the nearly 6.5 million who voted inside of Venezuela on Sunday, 98% rejected the government's proposal. Nearly 7.2 million voted in all, but ballots cast abroad had yet to be counted by early Monday.

Organizers said the torrent of voters, accounting for a third of those eligible, served as a mass repudiation of Mr. Maduro's planned

national election on July 30 to pick a 545-member special assembly that would have the power to draw up a new constitution. That body is widely expected to remake the political system, giving what critics call an increasingly authoritarian president more power while possibly dissolving the opposition-controlled congress, the National Assembly.

"This result is without precedent in Venezuela," said opposition lawmaker Americo de Grazia. "Now the ball is in our court. In the coming days, we have to propose concrete measures to honor the people's will."

The government didn't have an immediate response to the results, but Mr. Maduro's government had said it wouldn't recognize the

referendum, saying it isn't sanctioned by electoral officials. Mr. Maduro had characterized it as an internal consultation by the opposition, while other aides like Caracas Mayor Jorge Rodríguez tried to discredit it, alleging fraudulent voting.

The poll came in the midst of more than three months of unrest in Venezuela in which nearly 100 people have been killed, the vast majority of them young antigovernment demonstrators. With Venezuelans enraged about a deep economic crisis and the government's plans for a new constitution, opposition leaders had been hoping that upward of 10 million Venezuelans would vote against the government on Sunday.

Violence broke out outside one voting station in the poor west side of Caracas when a pro-government mob opened fire, killing a 61-year-old woman and wounding four others, the Attorney General's office said. The bloodshed marred a day of largely orderly voting across several time zones and underscored the country's deep polarization.

While Mr. Maduro has said the new assembly to rewrite the constitution would help resolve the country's deepening political and economic crisis by giving him the powers to take decisive action, the opposition fears it would instead expand his power and bypass elections. Polls show Mr. Maduro and the ruling party would lose an election.

"If the government can't see that we the poor are tired of living lives that are worsening each day, it's better they just get out," 56-year-old phone-company worker Luis Oliveros said at a voting center in the western Venezuelan city of Maracaibo.

The symbolic referendum was open to Venezuelans inside and outside the country, taking in a large community of exiles who have in recent years fled the violence and economic chaos of their homeland for the U.S., Spain, Colombia and other countries.

"This is a proud moment for those of us who had to flee the country," said Edward Triana, a 31-year-old engineer who worked on an oil refinery in Venezuela until arriving in Colombia three months ago. "We want this disaster to end as quickly as possible," he said after he cast his vote in a tent in front of

Colombia's congress.

The coordinators of the referendum said Venezuelans voted in hundreds of cities across dozens of countries, with churches, stores, parking lots and schools used as voting centers. Eighty thousand volunteers worked to stage the vote, they said.

"The message that we're sending is that we're the majority," said Beatriz Olavarria, who has lived in Miami for 17 years and was among the organizers in that city. "The people are doing this as a form of protest."

In Spain, William Cardenas, a former Venezuelan diplomat, said Venezuelans were voting in two large plazas in Madrid, as well as several other cities across the country. "The people see this as civil disobedience," he said.

With polls showing that four of five Venezuelans oppose rewriting the constitution, Sunday's outcome

wasn't in dispute. The question now is what tangible impact it would have.

Casting paper ballots in boxes, voters were asked to reject the so-called constituent assembly Mr. Maduro would use to rewrite the constitution. They also responded to two more questions: whether they wanted presidential elections now and to call on the armed forces, which are seen as oppressive by many Venezuelans, to adhere to the current constitution. The results, though incomplete, showed only a few thousand voted against the opposition's proposals.

"While Maduro's government uses violence, the opposition uses democracy," said former Colombian President Andres Pastrana, one of five ex-heads of state from around the region who traveled to Caracas to show support for the opposition initiative.

As sky-high inflation and chronic food shortages weigh on society, protests have flared in working class neighborhoods that were once strongholds of the ruling Socialist Party, like La Pastora in Caracas. "We want liberty!" shouted more than 100 opposition supporters who lined up there Sunday, near the Miraflores presidential palace.

Just blocks away, another large crowd of red-clad government supporters sang and danced around a mock voting station, preparing for Mr. Maduro's vote this month.

"This is the people sending a message: we want peace, no more violent protests," said 63-year-old homemaker and pro-government activist Josefina Borges.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

In Venezuela, a Latin American Throwback: Political Prisoners

Ryan Dube and
Mayela Armas

CARACAS—To young Venezuelan activists imprisoned by the government, Lisbeth Añez was a saint, delivering food, clothing and medicine while they were detained at a notorious prison run by the spy agency.

Now, the 51-year-old known as "Mamá Lis" is also jailed there, charged in May by a military court with treason and rebellion, say her lawyers and relatives.

"I'm not alone," Ms. Añez wrote in a letter she recently released to relatives and supporters. "The love of Venezuela, together with God, accompany me."

While the recent transfer of opposition leader Leopoldo López from a military stockade to house arrest has received world-wide attention, Venezuela's jails now hold more political prisoners than at any time in 18 years of rule by the self-declared leftist Bolivarian Revolution, say human rights groups.

The trend harks back to an era in Latin America when dictatorships from Nicaragua to Argentina jailed thousands of dissidents. With the exception of Cuba, the spread of democracy since the 1980s changed all that, but now Venezuela's government has revived the practice, rights groups say.

Foro Penal, a Caracas group whose lawyers represent many detainees, counts about 440 political prisoners, up from 117 before large antigovernment demonstrations

began on April 1. Many recent detainees—including university students, professors and a prominent electoral expert—face the threat of years in prison, their lawyers and relatives say.

In all, 3,500 people have been detained since the protests began, most for short periods, more people even than when Venezuela was shaken by sustained street unrest, in 2014. Most aren't charged; others face charges ranging from treason to inciting violence.

"We've never seen this rate of detentions before," said Nizar El Fakih, a lawyer who leads the rights group Proiuris.

Calls and emails to government officials weren't returned. President Nicolás Maduro and other top officials deny the existence of political prisoners in Venezuela and describe demonstrators as "terrorists" and part of a conspiracy to topple the state.

Mr. Maduro's crackdown has recently taken a more sinister turn with his government's use of military tribunals to try civilians critical of his administration, say activists, opposition members and families of detainees. The policy has gathered momentum since the attorney general broke with Mr. Maduro's administration and voiced concerns over prisoners of conscience.

Prisoners are regularly denied access to lawyers and their relatives, these people say. Defense attorneys say they often don't know when hearings have been scheduled, until last-minute notifications are issued. When

lawyers arrive at court—often improvised tribunals at a military facility—they are given only a few minutes to confer with their clients.

"This is systematic persecution," said Lilia Camejo, a lawyer for several prisoners.

Opposition politician Wilmer Azuaje, who was detained by intelligence agents, according to Human Rights Watch, after alleging corruption among government officials, has been held without access to his family and lawyers, said Kelly Garcia, his wife. She said she only receives occasional photos of her husband, the latest one showing him chained to a metal tube.

"For us, this is very hard," she said. "We have children, ages 1 and 3. The 3-year-old asks for her father."

Francisco Marquez, an antigovernment activist, was arrested after National Guardsmen searched his car and found political pamphlets, \$3,000 in cash and documents about a recall referendum the opposition had once planned to stage against Mr. Maduro. He was shuttled between jails for four months.

"I would not see sunlight on a regular basis," he said. "I was basically in a feces-infested dungeon. That was my cell." After his release last year, Mr. Marquez fled Venezuela and now lives in Washington.

Others who were briefly held, like Argenis Agueto, a 27-year-old university student, said their jailers used the threat of long prison terms to scare them away from antigovernment politics. Mr. Agueto

said the National Guard detained him and five friends on their way to protests in April. He said Molotov cocktails, knives and rocks were planted in their knapsacks and that they were beaten when they denied owning them.

"They said that we would be imprisoned for 10 years, 20 years," said Mr. Agueto, who was released in a month but must report his whereabouts regularly.

Pressure to release prisoners has come from the streets, where protests continue, and from foreign capitals, including Washington, calling on Mr. Maduro to open the jail cells.

The country's most prominent prisoner, Mr. López, who leads the Popular Will party, was transferred home after mediators led by former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero met with top Maduro aides.

Mr. López received the attention of U.S. President Donald Trump after his wife, Lilian Tintori, went on a global tour to condemn Mr. Maduro's government. Others, however, like Ms. Añez, are barely known outside of Venezuela.

The imprisoned activist has hepatitis and back problems and hasn't received any treatment while in jail, said her son, Luis Fernando González. But Mr. López's release has given her some hope, her son said.

"She thinks this can have an effect on the rest of the political prisoners," he said.

O'Grady : How Cuba Runs Venezuela

Mary Anastasia O'Grady

The civilized world wants to end the carnage in Venezuela, but Cuba is the author of the barbarism. Restoring Venezuelan peace will require taking a hard line with Havana.

Step one is a full-throated international denunciation of the Castro regime. Any attempt to avoid that with an "engagement" strategy, like the one Barack Obama introduced, will fail. The result will be more Venezuelas rippling through the hemisphere.

The Venezuelan opposition held its own nationwide referendum on Sunday in an effort to document support for regularly scheduled elections that have been canceled and widespread disapproval of strongman Nicolás Maduro's plan to rewrite the constitution.

The regime was not worried. It said it was using the day as a trial run to prepare for the July 30 elections to choose the assembly that will draft the new constitution.

The referendum was an act of national bravery. Yet like the rest of the opposition's strategy—which aims at dislodging the dictatorship with peaceful acts of civil disobedience—it's not likely to work. That's because Cubans, not Venezuelans, control the levers of power.

Havana doesn't care about Venezuelan poverty or famine or whether the regime is unpopular. It has spent a half-century sowing its ideological "revolution" in South America. It needs Venezuela as a corridor to run Colombian cocaine to the U.S. and to Africa to supply Europe. It also relies heavily on cut-rate Venezuelan petroleum.

To keep its hold on Venezuela, Cuba has embedded a Soviet-style security apparatus. In a July 13 column, titled "Cubazuela" for the Foundation for Human Rights in Cuba website, Roberto Álvarez Quiñones reported that in Venezuela today there are almost 50 high-ranking Cuban military officers, 4,500 Cuban soldiers in nine battalions, and "34,000 doctors and health professionals with orders to defend the tyranny with arms." Cuba's interior ministry provides Mr. Maduro's personal security. "Thousands of other Cubans hold key positions of the State, Government, military and repressive Venezuelan forces, in particular intelligence and counterintelligence services."

Every Venezuelan armed-forces commander has at least one Cuban minder, if not more, a source close to the military told me. Soldiers complain that if they so much as mention regime shortcomings over a beer at a bar, their superiors know about it the next day. On July 6 Reuters reported that since the

beginning of April "nearly 30 members of the military have been detained for deserting or abandoning their post and almost 40 for rebellion, treason, or insubordination."

The idea of using civilian thugs to beat up Venezuelan protesters comes from Havana, as Cuban-born author Carlos Alberto Montaner explained in a recent *El Nuevo Herald* column, "Venezuela at the Edge of the Abyss." Castro used them in the 1950s, when he was opposing Batista, to intimidate his allies who didn't agree with his strategy. Today in Cuba they remain standard fare to carry out "acts of repudiation" against dissidents.

The July 8 decision to move political prisoner Leopoldo López from the Ramo Verde military prison to house arrest was classic Castro. Far from being a sign of regime weakness, it demonstrates Havana's mastery of misdirection to defuse criticism.

Cuba's poisonous influence in Latin America could be weakened if the international community spoke with one voice. The regime needs foreign apologists like former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and the leftist wing of the Vatican. It also needs the continued support of American backers of the Obama engagement policy, who want the U.S. to turn a blind eye to human-rights abuses.

Yet there are limits to what can be brushed off. When opposition congressmen were attacked by Cuban-style mobs on July 5, and their bloodied faces showed up on the front pages of international newspapers, the Zapateros of the world began to squirm. That was Havana's cue to improve the lighting for Mr. Maduro.

First Mr. Maduro claimed he knew nothing about it, though his vice president was on the floor of the legislature while it was happening. That was not believable. Three days later came the sudden decision to move Mr. López from military prison to house arrest. Mr. Maduro said it was a "humanitarian" gesture. Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino, an acolyte of Fidel, said that it was a "product of dialogue and tolerance."

Thus the images of the savagery in the National Assembly receded while photos of Mr. López, kissing a Venezuelan flag atop a wall outside his home, popped up everywhere. Mission accomplished and Mr. López remains detained.

For too long the world has overlooked the atrocities of the Cuban police state. In 1989 Fidel was even a special guest at the inauguration of Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Today the "special guests" are brutalizing Venezuela as the world wonders what went wrong.

Editorial : The U.N. Bans Nuclear Weapons

The United Nations banned nuclear weapons this month, in case you hadn't heard, and all the children of the world joined hands and sang together in the spirit of harmony and peace, as Steve Martin once put it.

Ok, not that last part. But 122 non-nuclear U.N. member states—two-thirds of the total—did adopt the 10-page Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons this month.

Nations that sign

the treaty at the U.N. General Assembly in September will be committing not to "develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices." The treaty takes effect when 50 countries sign it.

Kim Jong Un's North Korea hasn't declared where it stands on the treaty, perhaps because it's too busy building more nuclear weapons and missiles to deploy them. But you'll be pleased to know Iran is on

board. This may have something to do with the treaty's provision that allows "research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes," without defining what "peaceful" means.

The world's nine nuclear powers boycotted the treaty vote, the Netherlands voted no and Singapore abstained. In a joint statement the U.S., Britain and France denounced the ban, saying it "clearly disregards the realities of the international security

environment" that "continue to make nuclear deterrence necessary" and recommitted to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that hasn't stopped nuclear proliferation.

If the U.N.'s record holds, this new treaty will take effect right about the time Kim Jong Un launches a nuclear attack.

Editorial : Trump's Disastrous Thinking on Trade

Apparently, Donald Trump's administration is about to release its report on the national-security implications of steel imports. This week the president again complained about the dumping of steel in the U.S. market, and talked of the need for tariffs or quotas. "Maybe I'll do both," he said.

Either would be a terrible idea. Blanket tariffs would punish American manufacturers, jeopardize jobs and growth, needlessly raise consumer prices, burden U.S. exporters by inviting retaliation, and rashly undermine the global system of resolving trade disputes. Import quotas would accomplish all of the above without raising revenue and

with an added dose of administrative complexity.

And for what?

Trump's bluster aside, such measures won't bring back jobs. Although steel employment has been in long-term decline, that's more the result of technological advances than of trade imbalances.

The last time the U.S. imposed broad steel tariffs -- under President George W. Bush, in 2002 -- it worsened price increases that led to 200,000 jobs losses and \$4 billion in forgone wages. Don't expect better this time around.

Likewise, the idea that such protectionism is necessary for

national security is absurd: Only 3 percent of domestic steel production currently goes toward defense or homeland security, while the majority of imports comes from allies such as Canada and South Korea. Invoking national security on such a flimsy basis only encourages trading partners to do the same -- and on plenty of other products besides steel.

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

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Nor would these measures do much to change China's behavior, as Trump has sometimes alleged. China may well be unfairly supporting its steel producers. But given the small percentage of its steel exports that go to the U.S.,

broad tariffs and quotas won't be much of a deterrent. A better way to address unjust subsidies is by continuing to impose targeted sanctions and to keep up the pressure on China at the World Trade Organization, as the U.S. has successfully done for years.

Trump's mooted protectionist measures would be economically misguided and strategically self-

defeating. That's why much of American industry, most of Trump's own cabinet, and most every reputable economist opposes them. If he goes ahead, it will be his biggest economic policy mistake to date.

ETATS-UNIS



Zelizer : Some prominent voices in conservative media doubt Trump over Russia

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

(CNN)During the 2016 campaign, Donald Trump famously told the world that he could "stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and "shoot somebody" and he wouldn't "lose any voters."

For some time, his prediction has appeared to be true. No matter what he said and regardless of what he did, the famous "base" continued to express their support for him. Most Republican legislators and voters have dismissed the Russia scandal as a phony distraction by the media.

Even as the President bungles the Republican moment of united government with a huge legislative nothing-burger and has national approval polls that have fallen from 42 percent in April to a political

danger zone

of 36 percent, they have swallowed their pride as they try to make the most of the time that is left before everyone turns their attention to the midterms.

But this week something changed following the revelation of Donald Trump Jr.'s

June 9, 2016

meeting in Trump Tower. The release of Trump Jr.'s emails, the discovery of the meeting and the frequently changing account of what the meeting was about and who was there has shaken the confidence of a key player in the world of politics -- the conservative media.

Over the past week, a number of conservative commentators have expressed some pretty strong criticism of President Trump. In his column, entitled "A Conspiracy of Dunces," the conservative New York Times columnist Ross Douthat began by saying that, "Here is a good rule of thumb for dealing with Donald Trump: Everyone who gives him the benefit of the doubt eventually regrets it" and also wrote that "we should drop the presumption that such collusion is an extreme or implausible scenario."

At the Washington Post,

Charles Krauthammer

, who is a Fox News contributor, announced that "The Russia scandal has entered a new phase, and there's no going back." Stressing that he had been skeptical about the charges of possible collusion with the Russians, he

writes

: "The evidence is now shown. This is not hearsay, not fake news, not unsourced leaks. This is an email chain released by Donald Trump Jr. himself."

Now many people on the right would say, big deal. These are conservatives who write on the pages of the liberal mainstream media, so how much weight do they actually carry? The truth is, a lot. These are papers read by policymakers, and both men appear regularly on television to discuss their thoughts. But if this is not enough one can just turn to Fox News, the home of the conservative media, to see some cracks starting to emerge. Fox News has been extremely supportive of the Trump administration. As CNN's Brian Stelter

has shown

much of its coverage has echoed the talking points of the administration in response to each piece of bad news that emerges.

Last month, though, some frustration became evident when Neil Cavuto

lashed out

at the President for his continued attacks on news organizations such as CNN

by saying

: "Mr. President, it's not the 'fake-news media' that's your problem. It's you. It's not just your tweeting -- it's your scapegoating. It's your refusal to see that sometimes you're the one whose feeding your own beast -- and acting beastly with your own guys."

After the Donald Jr. emails were released, Chris Wallace said, "This really shouldn't be a matter of liberal v. conservative, pro-Trump vs. anti-Trump. If you're a fair-minded citizen, you ought to be concerned about the fact that we were repeatedly misled about what this meeting concerned."

Shepard Smith had what Aaron Blake of the Washington Post called his "

Cronkite moment

" when he told Wallace, "If there's nothing there -- and that's what they tell us, they tell us there's nothing to this and nothing came of it, there's a nothingburger, it wasn't even memorable, didn't write it down, didn't tell you about it, because it wasn't anything so I didn't even remember it -- with a Russian interpreter in the room at Trump Tower? If all of that, why these lies? Why is it lie after lie after lie? ... My grandmother used to say when first

we practice to -- Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive. The deception, Chris, is mind-boggling."

One day we might look back at this moment as an important turning point in the Trump presidency. Historically, significant shifts among journalists in how they cover and analyze a story can have major political effects. The media has the power to sway public opinion.

In 1954, Edward Murrow

broadcast

a powerful episode of "See It Now" which exposed the contradictions and lies of rabid anti-Communist crusader Sen. Joseph McCarthy. "This is no time for men who oppose Sen. McCarthy's methods to keep silent," he said, "or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result ... The actions of the junior Senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad, and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it -- and rather successfully. Cassius was right. 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.'" Murrow's broadcast was an important moment in Sen. McCarthy's downfall.

Blake's reference to a "Cronkite moment" harked back to 1968 when CBS nightly news anchor Walter Cronkite, perhaps the most trusted voice in the media, ended his special broadcast about the Vietnam War's Tet Offensive by saying that, "To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past ... To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only

realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion."

Watching on one of his television sets in the Oval Office, Johnson told his aides, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America." Cronkite was not alone. Historians have documented how the increasingly critical coverage in the late 1960s

fueled

anti-war sentiment.

Of course, today's media landscape is different. The conservative media that has taken form since the 1970s has an especially

strong hold

on the beliefs of Republican voters. This has been very important to the political insulation that President Trump has enjoyed.

Unlike President Richard Nixon, he has been able to count on a well-developed and sophisticated conservative media universe. And, to be sure, some of the conservative media has tried to find creative ways of defending Trump Jr. and minimizing the revelations, even

suggesting

without any evidence that the approach to Donald Trump's son was part of a Democratic plot to entrap him.

It is much too early to tell if the voices of protest heard this week will turn into something bigger and more sustained, or if the majority of the coverage on these outlets remains pro-Trump. As Joshua Green wrote in *The New York Times*, most of the conservative media still

clings

to an "alternative reality" that fits President Trump's own narrative.

That said, we must remember that it took many months for public opinion to turn on Richard Nixon as a result of

Watergate

so the administration should not be so buoyant about his ability to hold his approval ratings among his base so far. If at some point, President Trump really does lose Fox News, then he might lose Middle America as well.

The New York Times A Russian Developer Helps Out the Kremlin on Occasion. Was He a Conduit to Trump? (UNE)

Neil MacFarquhar

MOSCOW — Russian Island, near the port city of Vladivostok in the far east, was a decaying former military base and home to a scattering of cattle when President Vladimir V. Putin suddenly envisioned it as a \$1.2 billion campus where he could welcome heads of state for an Asia-Pacific conference.

That sent Kremlin officials scrambling to find a developer to transform a site lacking fresh water, a pier or roads. They rejected numerous bids before one of them took a flier on a man known mostly for his glamorous shopping malls: Aras Agalarov of the Crocus Group.

A little more than three years later, in 2012, Mr. Putin opened the spectacular Far Eastern Federal University, some 70 modern buildings built in a crescent overlooking the sparkling Pacific Ocean.

Not long after, Mr. Putin pinned a blue-ribboned state medal, the Order of Honor, on Mr. Agalarov's chest at a dazzling Kremlin ceremony. Soon, a string of demanding, more prominent projects followed: a stretch of superhighway ringing Moscow; two troubled stadiums for the 2018 World Cup, including one in a Baltic swamp.

Mr. Agalarov, 61, also worked on a project with a future president, Donald J. Trump. Last week, the Russian developer and his crooner son and heir, Emin, were thrust into the swirl of speculation about whether the Trump campaign colluded with the Kremlin to influence the 2016 election.

Their names popped up in emails about arranging a meeting with Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian lawyer who claimed to have incriminating information about

Hillary Clinton, but the president and his son have both insisted that nothing of value was provided.

"This is obviously very high-level and sensitive information but is part of Russia and its government's support for Mr. Trump — helped along by Aras and Emin," wrote Rob Goldstone, a music producer and publicist working for Emin.

The American attorney for the Agalarovs, Scott S. Balber, contradicted Mr. Goldstone's version, asserting in an interview that the senior Mr. Agalarov's role was merely a matter of an introduction. "People in the business world do favors for each other all the time. As a courtesy to a lawyer they had a relationship with, they made an introduction," Mr. Balber said. "We were not in possession of damaging info. We had no reason to believe this was in relation to the Russian government."

While there is no indication beyond what was said in the emails that the Agalarovs were serving as a conduit between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign, wealthy and well-connected businessmen are often called on to do the bidding of the Russian government.

Kremlin analysts stress that its red, crenelated walls conceal not a well-oiled machine but a hornet's nest of interests and influences competing to dominate an Erector Set of ad hoc policies and sudden opportunities, many of them highly lucrative.

When it comes to exploiting those opportunities, the Kremlin often ignores its own bureaucrats, diplomats and other agents in favor of someone it thinks will get the job done — a charmed group whose members rise and fall in status along with their usefulness to Mr. Putin and his top aides.

In that context, analysts find it entirely plausible that the Kremlin would tap Mr. Agalarov, a construction tycoon with a web of contacts to Mr. Trump, as a way to pass information to the Trump presidential campaign.

"In a sense, almost no one is a direct agent of the Kremlin, but almost anyone can become one if the need arises," said Ekaterina Schulmann, a political scientist at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

Aleksei A. Navalny, the leading opposition figure in Russia and an anticorruption campaigner, says he has no doubt that the Agalarovs would do the bidding of the Kremlin if asked.

In a blog post, Mr. Navalny refers to Yuri Chaika, the Russian state prosecutor — a position equivalent to the United States attorney general — whom Mr. Goldstone identified in his emails as the source of the information on offer at the Trump Tower meeting. Mr. Chaika, a staunch Putin loyalist, has been in that position since 2006.

In the view of Mr. Navalny, a bitter opponent of Mr. Putin, it makes perfect sense that information passed from the Kremlin through Mr. Chaika and Mr. Agalarov to Mr. Trump, as the security services could easily have used such a trusted channel to reach out to the Trump campaign.

That is no more than informed speculation, yet there are deep connections among the men. After Mr. Navalny released a documentary in 2015 accusing Mr. Chaika of corruption, for example, Mr. Agalarov rose to his defense. Writing in the newspaper *Kommersant*, he said the film mixed fact and fiction and echoed the work

of Joseph Goebbels, the chief Nazi propagandist.

Natalia Veselnitskaya, the lawyer who met with the younger Mr. Trump, and her former husband both worked in the prosecutor's office of the Moscow region, the district surrounding the capital, and would have been under Mr. Chaika's overall umbrella.

Ms. Veselnitskaya has done legal work connected to real estate for Mr. Agalarov's company in Russia, said Mr. Balber, the family lawyer.

Mr. Trump entered this circle with the 2013 Miss Universe contest, carried out with the help of lower-level bureaucrats and Mr. Agalarov, who paid \$20 million to bring the pageant to his family's Moscow concert pavilion, Crocus City Hall.

It would be natural for the Kremlin, aware of that relationship, to reach down to that level to try to get something done with the Trump campaign, analysts said.

"If you are a business person, you are supposed to do something that the Kremlin asks you; you are otherwise free to pursue your own interests. That is how Russia works," said Mrs. Schulmann, noting that most would be eager to respond to any such call as an expression of loyalty.

In this particular case, the Kremlin has denied any involvement, saying it was not in touch with Mr. Agalarov and did not even know the lawyer, Ms. Veselnitskaya. It is unclear precisely what was discussed at the meeting with members of the Trump team. Participants have said that it dealt largely with an American law called the Magnitsky Act, which blacklists those suspected of human rights abuses in Russia, and a ban on the adoption of Russian children, and that nothing of significance was given to the campaign.

Mr. Agalarov, in a Russian radio interview, called the story around the meeting — that it was about information damaging to Hillary Clinton — a “fabrication.”

The Crocus Group did not respond to a request to interview Mr. Agalarov.

For Mr. Agalarov, the involvement in the Trump administration’s Russia scandal is at best an unwelcome diversion in a career of steady if not always spectacular success.

He was born in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, then part of the Soviet Union, where he studied computer engineering and was a member of the Baku City Committee of the Communist Party.

He went to Moscow to study, and even before the collapse of the Soviet Union began trying to fill pent-up Russian demand for Western goods, especially computers.

What started as a modest trading company grew into a business organizing trade fairs that eventually mushroomed into the Crocus Group, a real estate empire that encompasses mammoth shopping malls, a chain of hypermarkets, an exposition center, restaurants, luxury housing developments and other enterprises.

Forbes magazine puts Mr. Agalarov 51st on its list of the richest Russians, with a fortune estimated at \$1.7 billion.

“He is not the biggest retail guy, but Crocus City Mall was the first luxury mall to appear in Moscow,” said Darrell Stanaford, a 20-year veteran

of the Russian real estate world as the former managing director in Moscow for the CBRE Group, a Los Angeles-based commercial real estate firm. “He likes the glitz. It is high-end luxury, so that is why he becomes such a good matchup for Trump.”

Mr. Agalarov keeps a modest footprint on social media, mostly by standing next to his photogenic son: on their luxury Moscow golf course development, for example, or posing with Robert De Niro at the opening of one of the two Nobu restaurants in Moscow where they are partners.

Mr. Trump pops up from time to time. On his Inauguration Day, both Agalarovs posted old pictures of themselves with him, along with effusive praise for their old friend.

Aside from the 2013 Miss Universe contest, it is not known what business ties, if any, the Agalarovs have with Mr. Trump, or with any other American companies. They clearly have an affinity for the United States, however, naming one chain of shopping malls “Vegas” and another luxury residential complex “Manhattan.”

In November 2013, after the buzz of the Miss Universe pageant in Moscow had subsided, Mr. Trump met privately with a group of elite Russian businessmen, including the head of Russia’s state-owned Sberbank at one of the Nobu restaurants in Moscow.

The elder Mr. Agalarov had been talking with Mr. Trump about building a Trump Tower in Moscow as part of a \$3 billion real estate

project involving hotels, a shopping center and office space.

Sberbank was ready to make it happen. About a week after the meeting, the bank announced a “strategic cooperation agreement” with the Crocus Group to finance about 70 percent of the ambitious project, including, potentially, a building bearing the Trump name.

“It was one of the 14 buildings that we planned to build here,” Mr. Agalarov’s son Emin said in a March interview with Forbes, adding that if Mr. Trump “hadn’t run for president, we would probably be in the construction phase today.”

The Sberbank financing — reported at the time as the biggest real estate development loan the bank had made — was another measure of the Agalarovs’ increasingly close connections to the centers of power in Russia.

In another indication, the Crocus Group was written into a 2014 bilateral treaty with the government of Kyrgyzstan to help that country integrate into Russia’s regional alliance, the Eurasian Economic Union.

In that deal, worth \$127 million, the Crocus Group was designated the “single supplier” of services to integrate the two countries’ bureaucracies and reinforce the new customs common border, by, for example, building new border posts.

By naming the company in an international treaty, the Russian government avoided opening the work to competitive bidding,

ensuring that the Crocus Group won the contract, Edil Baisalov, a former Kyrgyz presidential chief of staff, said in a telephone interview.

In Kyrgyzstan, he said, the apparent giveaway to Kremlin-connected insiders became known as “Crocusgate.”

Mr. Agalarov mentions occasionally how difficult it is to earn money on public works, telling the newspaper Vedomosti in 2015 that he had to buy a larger Gulfstream jet to make the cross-continental trek to Vladivostok to check on progress at the Far Eastern Federal University. On that project, he said, he spent more than \$100 million of his own money because the official plans skipped significant costs like roads and landscaping. He won some of it back in court.

Statements about losing money are all part of the game, analysts said, noting that construction costs on Russian infrastructure routinely run 30 percent higher than for comparable projects in Europe.

“It is showing the wounds that he got in the service of the motherland,” said Ms. Schulmann, the political scientist. “You see how indifferent I am to profit when I do a service for the Kremlin. I have to make sacrifices.”

Mr. Agalarov, however, was more candid than most when asked whether it is altruism that leads him to respond when the Kremlin calls. In the interview with Vedomosti, he said, “There are things that you cannot turn down.”



Goodman and Mowatt-Larsen: How the Don Jr. meeting fits into the larger Putin game plan

Ryan Goodman and Rolf Mowatt-Larsen

Ryan Goodman is professor of law at New York University and co-editor-in-chief of Just Security, an online forum on national security law and policy. He served as special counsel to the general counsel of the Department of Defense from 2015 to 2016. You can follow him on Twitter @rgoodlaw. Rolf Mowatt-Larsen is the director of the Intelligence and Defense Project at Harvard’s Belfer Center. He served as director of intelligence and counterintelligence at the Department of Energy 2005 to 2008 and as chief of the CIA’s European Division 2004 to 2005 as part of a 23-year career in the CIA. The opinions expressed in this commentary are theirs.

(CNN)Many in the media have focused too narrowly on how Donald Trump Jr.’s June 2016 meeting with a Russian lobbyist and lawyer in Trump Tower looks bad.

But what the media, the public and investigators should really focus on now is what happened after the meeting. The key is to think more broadly, including asking two questions.

First, assuming this was an overture by Russian intelligence agencies, despite the

Kremlin’s denials

, what would the Russian government most likely have done next?

Second, how should we then interpret subsequent actions of the Trump circle in light of the actions

the Kremlin would have pursued? The answers to those questions suggest that the alleged collusion between the Trump circle and Putin’s team could well have continued far beyond June 9.

Instead, the media coverage seems geared toward making the meeting explicable in terms of an ill-advised, short, perhaps even forgettable meeting for which Donald Trump Jr. takes the heat. That narrative often

also includes

the idea that this may have been an independent, ill-conceived attempt on the part of a Russian lobbying group to provide what was ultimately fairly useless information about Hillary Clinton.

We have

focused

on how the meeting bears all the hallmarks of a Russian intelligence operation and, in particular, a test to gauge whether the Trump campaign would be open to assistance from the Russian government.

In that event, Moscow got a green light. The only problem with the Russian attempt, according to Trump Jr. and the Russian lawyer, was that the quality of the information on Clinton

was poor

. Trump Jr. and his team apparently wanted more.

So why would the Kremlin provide nothing of value to the Trump principals and disappoint them, especially when we know that by May, according to the

US intelligence report

, Putin had in his possession what he needed from the DNC server?

The logical explanation is because their intention was to establish interest in the Trump campaign's receiving compromising material, not in satisfying their appetite for it. The information that was reportedly passed at this meeting has the feel of representing intelligence "feed material" to establish interest in more, higher quality information in the future.

Coincidentally, perhaps, it was only after the meeting

that the DNC emails began to leak as part of a large scale influence operation to affect the presidential election.

Putin would need to keep a close eye on Donald Trump himself to see if his mercurial and contradictory positions on various issues during the campaign were ever reflected in his approach to Russia. Presumably, it would also be in the Russian interest to seek a direct signal from Trump himself that he was on board with the operation.

The Trump team's actions in the days following that fateful meeting are incriminating, and bear a

stunning consistency

with what is reported in the Christopher Steele dossier.

Rather than notify authorities about the Russian overture, they kept it mum and

denied any Russian contacts

when asked. In early July, according to Politico, Carter Page was

dispatched

to Moscow. The Trump team would have had to know, at the very least, that Page would be approached by Russian intelligence agents. The campaign and Page long refused to say whether he was authorized to travel to Moscow, until the news media

discovered

that the campaign did indeed authorize the trip.

began picking up conversations

in which Russian officials were discussing contacts with Trump associates, and European allies were starting to pass along information" that described "meetings in European cities between Russian officials --and others close to Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin -- and associates of President-elect Trump." Trump has denied that his campaign had any contact with Russian officials. .

The Washington Post

reports

that Michael Flynn's undisclosed communications with the Russian ambassador involved a "series of contacts ... that began before the Nov. 8 election." In late July, within a few days of officially securing the

GOP nomination at the Republican convention, candidate Trump

openly invited

Russian assistance and election interference.

And in December, Jared Kushner, in an undisclosed short meeting with the Russian ambassador, proposed establishing a channel of communications with Moscow inside a Russian embassy or consul.

Was that also just another ill-advised idea of a neophyte? The former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency and a Russia hand, Flynn was the

other member

of the Trump transition team who actively participated in the meeting. He knew better, just as Paul Manafort did during the June 9 meeting. The list goes on.

Two other pieces of information that stand out: First, Trump has

always denied

Russian election interference, which is bizarre given the consensus of opinion among US and foreign intelligence communities.

Why does he do this? Here's a theory: Because it takes two to collude, and if one party doesn't know what the other is doing, that's a way out politically and legally. Second, it is

not uncommon

for foreign governments and their diplomats to communicate with a presidential campaign and the major party candidates. Why then completely deny it ever happened?

Based on recent reporting, we know now that the June 9 meeting included, on the Russian side,

two active supporters

of one of Putin's top priorities:

getting rid

of the Magnitsky Act. What was offered in the room that day -- remarkably in accord with what

Trump Jr.

and

Rinat Akhmetshin

, one of the Russian-American lobbyists in attendance, have themselves both said on the record -- boils down to a quid pro quo for incriminating information on Hillary Clinton in exchange for sanctions relief.

Understanding the context for each drip of information associated with the Trump campaign and Russia is crucial for properly interpreting the significance of each event, and how each fits into a greater whole. Through this process, America will finally have the truth that is being sought.

POLITICO How the White House and Republicans underestimated Obamacare repeal

Nancy Cook

The longer Republican efforts to repeal Obamacare flounder, the clearer it becomes that President Donald Trump's team and many in Congress dramatically underestimated the challenge of rolling back former President Barack Obama's signature achievement.

The Trump transition team and other Republican leaders presumed that Congress would scrap Obamacare by President's Day weekend in late February, according to three former Republican congressional aides and two current ones familiar with the administration's efforts.

Story Continued Below

Republican leaders last fall planned a quick strike on the law in a series of meetings and phone calls, hoping to simply revive a 2015 repeal bill that Obama vetoed.

Few in the administration or Republican leadership expected the effort to stretch into the summer months, with another delay announced this weekend, eating into valuable time for lawmakers to tackle tax reform, nominations or spending bills.

As Trump himself infamously remarked, "nobody knew healthcare could be so complicated" — even though health care has reliably tripped up past administrations.

Now that the difficulty of getting 50 senators to rally around a bill has come into stark relief, Republicans are starting to acknowledge they misjudged the situation.

"It's easier to rage against the machine when you're not in control of the machine, No. 1. And the perception that we are in control of the machine is inaccurate," said Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.). "Needing 50 out of 52 members on the same

page in the Senate? I think that is not being in control of the machine."

The failure of the plan to quickly repeal Obamacare earlier this year forced Republican leaders to start over and attempt the daunting task of crafting a more comprehensive health care plan that would unite all sides of a squabbling conference. And the Trump administration's lack of sufficient staff and planning for that early effort helped lay the groundwork for the legislative chaos the GOP's agenda is mired in today.

A senior administration aide said that although the White House didn't expect health care to take so long, the blame game will dissipate if the president signs a health care bill by August.

"If, a week from now, we have completed the repeal of Obamacare, I don't think people looking back on it will do the woulda, coulda, shoulda game," the aide said.

Still, rank-and-file senators now say starting with tax reform could have done more to unify the party and avoid the GOP's ongoing quagmire.

"I would have much preferred to start off with tax. But that wasn't my decision," said Sen. David Perdue (R-Ga.). "Tax is the heavy lift here. It's not going to be easier than health care. And we've been doing this for seven months."

Past administrations have also been hurt by health care. Democrats said after the passage of Obamacare that they wished they had delayed the topic until more of their agenda was underway — House Democrats lost their majority in 2010 shortly after the law passed.

First lady Hillary Clinton took flak in the early 1990s for her failed health care task force, and President George W. Bush faced tremendous opposition when his administration pushed through the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit — even

though the program has cost less than original estimates.

Still, after the November 2016 election, few in Trump world or Congress saw potential problems after Republicans campaigned on killing off the Affordable Care Act for seven years.

"We are probably all guilty of not being as creative as we needed to be," said one former congressional leadership aide. "Every administration likes to check off an accomplishment."

During the transition, the Trump administration never established a great deal of coordination with the Hill or a concrete game plan for health care, according to congressional aides and one former transition official.

The transition had just a handful of health policy people, who were also tasked with working on the confirmation processes for Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma. The administration official said the lengthy confirmation process, which he blamed on Democrats, hurt the White House because it meant the administration did not have two key health policy experts in place.

Helping sort through the process were Marc Short, now the White House legislative affairs director; Rick Dearborn, the White House deputy chief of staff; and Stephen Miller, a senior adviser for policy. All three had congressional experience, but several Republicans said Trump's staff lacked experience negotiating or moving major legislation.

"I just don't have confidence that the administration had the health care expertise and policy advice that

they needed there," said G. William Hoagland, former staff director for the Senate Budget Committee and former leadership aide to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. "The result is what we are seeing today."

On the Hill leading up to the inauguration, one leading idea was to resurrect the 2015 House and Senate bills that repealed much of the law. Republicans were already on the books supporting the bills, which needed only 50 votes in the Senate instead of 60.

But when GOP leaders in January pitched the idea — which involved repealing the law and figuring out a replacement later — they were met with stern resistance from lawmakers worried about constituents who had gained insurance through the 2010 law and who could lose coverage if it were suddenly revoked.

"Health care looks much easier when you're at the talking point level," said Larry Leavitt, a senior vice president at the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation and senior health policy adviser during the Clinton administration. "It always gets more difficult as you start filling in the details."

This was the first hint of real trouble for the Republican health care efforts. Passing a bill they knew would be vetoed under Obama was easy; passing one that would thrust their constituents into uncertainty was riskier.

"When you're six years into a program, to change it when people are relying on it, there's a fear that it may affect their own policies or their own families," said Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.). "This is tough; this is complex. We knew it would be, but it's really tough."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Barnes : Republicans Aren't Team Players

Politics is a team sport, and Republicans are playing it poorly. They have one more chance in the Senate to repeal and replace ObamaCare—possibly their last hope for a victory.

Democrats are performing like a well-coached team. Minority Leader Chuck Schumer has all 48 members of his caucus on board with saving ObamaCare at all cost. It's been a successful strategy.

It works for one reason: Republicans are divided. Their 52-48 majority in the Senate means they can lose two votes and still prevail, since Vice President Mike Pence is the tiebreaker. After

promising to get rid of ObamaCare for the past seven years, it shouldn't be difficult.

But as many as eight Republican senators opposed the first GOP bill, forcing Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to come up with a revised version. While an improvement, it has encountered opposition too. Mr. McConnell is skillful in bringing senators together. But here his task is more difficult than usual because the dissidents don't all agree on what's wrong with the bill. Appeasing one senator may alienate another.

This is an example of why legislative success depends on operating as a team. You don't

In late January, lawmakers at a closed-door session at a Republican retreat in Philadelphia raised a myriad of concerns about tackling Obamacare, from the contours of the replacement plan to ways to keep premiums affordable. One former Republican Senate aide later called that meeting with Andrew Bremberg, the head of the White House's Domestic Policy Council, prescient, because lawmakers privately raised many of the concerns that have since dogged the bill.

At the same policy retreat, House Speaker Paul Ryan laid out a three-pronged approach to scrapping Obamacare. He wanted to repeal as much of the legislation as possible, eliminate more through deregulation, and then work with Democrats on a replacement, said one former Republican aide.

Many Republican lawmakers doubted Democrats would work with them on redoing the health care law.

The president and one of his former campaign rivals also unexpectedly helped undermine the GOP's repeal plans. Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) said on television the GOP needed a replacement plan if it was going to repeal the law. Then Trump endorsed that requirement. Their comments caused GOP leaders to start from scratch.

Now that the Senate's attempt to revamp the health care law has run into roadblocks — with moderates insisting on protecting coverage for their constituents, while conservatives focus on undoing as much of Obamacare as possible — both Paul and Trump have suggested going back to a repeal-only bill.

Many Republicans say that's unworkable now.

"We're not just trying to get rid of the law, we're trying to replace it with something better. Getting rid of it is pretty straight-forward," said Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.). "Replacing it with something better is a significant undertaking, but it needs to be done."

Now, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell maintains that the Senate will vote soon, though he was forced to delay again while Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) recuperates from surgery. With two Republicans saying they will definitely vote no, the bill could not pass without McCain present. Other senators are still undecided.

"They're trying to turn around a massive piece of public policy that has been the law of the land for seven years," said Lanhee Chen, policy director for the 2012 Romney-Ryan presidential campaign. "One cannot overstate the magnitude of what is being attempted. This is a totally unique experiment in some ways."

In the meantime, neither the White House nor Congress wants to claim responsibility if it doesn't work out. While lawmakers grumble that Trump should have started with an easier policy goal, White House aides say they assumed congressional Republicans had it under control.

Republicans had campaigned on undoing Obamacare since 2010, the senior administration official said: "That was not contingent on President Trump."

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abandon your team just because you don't get everything you want (or want left out). You hold your nose and vote for an imperfect measure, sometimes merely because it's politically beneficial and better than the alternative.

This is especially true in dumping ObamaCare. The Republican alternative is a more free-market health-care system in which people can buy the insurance they want, not what government requires.

Sticking with the team makes that possible. But too many Republicans aren't comfortable as team players. To them, it's shady and unprincipled to vote for something about which you have serious doubts.

Democrats are more realistic and less persnickety, so they're better at uniting.

The political consequences of failing to eliminate ObamaCare would be disastrous for Republicans next year. Midterm elections are always tough for the party that holds the White House. But reneging on the promise to "repeal and replace" would put Republican control of the House and even the Senate at risk.

Worse, ObamaCare would be further entrenched with Republican help. If repeal fails, Mr. McConnell's Plan B is to compromise with Democrats to stabilize the health insurance marketplace and keep

ObamaCare alive and kicking. He would have no other choice.

When the voting begins, Republican senators need to ask themselves three questions: How would the result affect you? How would it affect your party? How would it affect the country?

On the first question, if any Republican senator sees voting to uphold ObamaCare as politically safer, think again. Trying to reach across the aisle to protect Medicaid's rate of growth won't win you any new Democratic votes. But if you desert the GOP, the base won't forget or forgive. Republicans care passionately about ending ObamaCare. If you cross them on this vote, large numbers will cut you loose. There's private polling on

this, by the way.

The House Freedom Caucus learned this the hard way. In May, when its members blocked the first House health-care bill from going forward, they expected to be hailed as heroes. They weren't. When a second bill was offered, they did nothing to stop it. They got behind the team and it passed.

If the Republican Party fumbles the Senate vote, it will suffer—and will deserve to. Having made the death of ObamaCare its overriding concern, a GOP that fails to deliver would shatter its credibility. An important element of the Republican brand is its identity as the conservative party. Fewer would see it that way if ObamaCare survives. GOP voter turnout would

fall, and the party's candidates would feel the difference.

What about the country? It wouldn't benefit from making ObamaCare permanent. Health care would cost more and heal less. A political comeback by Democrats could lead to a single-payer system. Anyone who has experienced medical treatment at a Veterans Administration hospital would find the new system quite familiar.

Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky opposes the Senate bill because it leaves too much of ObamaCare in place. But the alternative is to leave all of it in place.

Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada feels the bill's Medicaid reforms would hurt thousands of his state's

residents and jeopardize his re-election in 2018. But preserving ObamaCare would hurt millions nationwide and his prospects for winning a second term.

Sen. Susan Collins of Maine says the bill won't "fix the flaws" in ObamaCare. But the alternative would lock those flaws in place, probably forever.

Messrs. Paul and Heller and Ms. Collins are playing politics as if it's an individual sport, like golf, boxing or gymnastics. In the Senate, only a team can win.

Mr. Barnes is an executive editor of the Weekly Standard.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

GOP Push to Pass Health-Care Law Faces New Setback (UNE)

Byron Tau, Louise Radnofsky and Kristina Peterson

WASHINGTON—A Republican push to pass a sweeping health-care law experienced another setback as Senate leaders said they would delay a vote set for this week, sparking fresh doubts about whether congressional leaders can muster support for a marquee GOP policy priority.

President Donald Trump and party leaders in Congress were hoping the Senate would vote this week on a plan to overturn parts of the 2010 Affordable Care Act and make other changes to the health system. But Senate leaders announced a delay after Sen. John McCain said he would recover in Arizona from surgery removing a blood clot above his left eye, leaving supporters short of the votes needed to move ahead with the bill.

The delay prolongs the uncertainty over the bill's prospects. GOP leaders have pursued a fast-paced timeline, as health-policy changes are often controversial. Sen. John Cornyn, a member of Senate GOP leadership, told reporters last month that passing the bill is "not going to get any easier" with time. Another GOP senator, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, said the bill "is not like fine wine; it doesn't get better with age."

Meantime, insurance companies, state governors and congressional critics continued to line up against the bill, with their objections running the ideological gamut. Governors, including some Republicans, have said they are concerned about its proposed cuts to the growth of Medicaid spending, while two top insurance industry groups objected to a change to the GOP bill

proposed by Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas as "unworkable."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.), who can't afford more than two defections among the 52 GOP senators, has been balancing demands by more-centrist lawmakers for additional money for Medicaid and consumer subsidies with a push by conservatives to pare back requirements on insurers in order to lower premiums for younger, healthier people.

One centrist and one conservative GOP senator who have bucked their party before, Susan Collins of Maine and Rand Paul of Kentucky, have said they can't support the bill, for different reasons. But others have yet to commit, and one more defection would derail the legislation. Mr. McCain's absence means GOP leaders are short of the votes this week for a procedural motion to consider the bill.

Ms. Collins, speaking on Sunday on ABC, said that eight to 10 Republicans had "deep concerns" about the bill, even after a new version was unveiled last week to address issues raised by some GOP senators. "I think it would be extremely close," she said when asked whether Mr. McConnell had the votes for passage.

Senate GOP leaders, spurred on by the White House, had been building toward a deadline of this week that had been intended to isolate and spotlight holdouts, warning them that they would pay a price for bucking their party and undermining its collective legislative goal of the past seven years. They have emphasized insurance-market woes under the ACA in some states as proof of the urgency of the cause.

Mr. McConnell had hoped to finish the health debate this week so the Senate could turn to the annual defense-policy bill, confirmation of more of Mr. Trump's nominees and raising the debt limit before adjourning in mid-August.

The McCain absence gives Mr. McConnell and the White House a chance to continue working on holdout senators without having to back down from a vote this week. But it also creates a window for the 2010 health law's supporters to continue a fight they believe is more likely to be successful the longer they wage it.

"A key factor is time: The longer the bill languishes, the less likely it will pass," said Greg Valliere, chief global strategist at Horizon Investments. "And there won't be much time left after Labor Day, as Congress shifts its focus to budget and tax issues. So, while McCain's absence complicates the health debate, it already was in deep trouble, even when he was healthy."

Prime targets for both sides are the remaining senators who had opposed an earlier version of the Senate bill but haven't taken a public stance on its latest iteration. Sen. Dean Heller (R., Nev.), up for re-election next year, is likely under the most pressure, due in part to concerns about the bill from the GOP governor of his state. Other Republicans from states that expanded Medicaid, including Sens. Rob Portman of Ohio and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, will be in the limelight this week.

The extra time also allows for more scrutiny of a measure from Mr. Cruz that would allow insurers to offer cheaper plans with less comprehensive coverage than required under the ACA, if they also

offer plans that meet ACA coverage requirements. The proposal has alarmed insurers and centrist Republicans who say it would cause premiums to surge for sicker people, who would more likely buy more-comprehensive plans without the costs being offset by policies that younger and healthier people buy.

Senate leaders said they are confident they could hold the procedural vote to advance the bill as soon as Mr. McCain was back in the Senate. The White House declined to comment at length on the setback Sunday. "We wish Sen. McCain a speedy recovery," said spokeswoman Helen Aguirre Ferré.

The Trump administration has previously said a quick timeline on a health vote was best, particularly as Democrats and liberal organizers have stepped up their advocacy of preserving the ACA, which they see as former President Barack Obama's signature domestic achievement.

"The left, I think, has been more organized in their messaging on this than collectively Republicans have as far as advocating for the benefits of the bill," said Marc Short, the White House director of legislative affairs, last week.

The difficulty for many Republicans is that supporting the bill or opposing it both carry political risk. On the one hand, the party has for years vowed a full repeal of the ACA, known as Obamacare. "I think not being able to deliver on that promise would do serious and long-lasting damage to the credibility of Republicans," Mr. Cruz said in an interview.

Others are weighing the fallout over health policy and how its changes

would affect some states, particularly rural ones. "This bill would make sweeping and deep cuts to the Medicaid program....It would also jeopardize the very existence of our rural hospitals and our nursing homes," Ms. Collins said on ABC. Conservative

lawmakers say the financing for Medicaid as now configured is unsustainable.

Rep. Mark Amodei, a Republican representing a competitive district in Nevada, opposed an early draft of the House health bill but voted for the final version in May. He said

that ultimately, he would expect GOP voters to be frustrated if Congress doesn't repeal the ACA, or large swaths of it, but he recognizes the political peril either way.

"If somebody's looking for safe harbor and no hard votes, this is

going to be an awful year for them, because I think it's going to be hard vote after hard vote after hard vote," he said.



In an arid, lonely stretch out west, the health coverage that bloomed is now at risk (UNE)

Goldstein

By Amy

activist, "it's criminal that this is happening."

In this speck of high desert, along a stretch of highway that Life magazine once called the loneliest road in America, the only doctor in town comes just one day a week. In the past few years, though, health insurance has arrived in force.

The county that includes Silver Springs now has more than 3,500 additional residents on Medicaid, because Nevada's governor was the first Republican in the country to expand the program through the Affordable Care Act. Nearly 1,400 others have private plans through the law and the Silver State Health Insurance Exchange.

Incomplete as it is, with many still falling through the cracks, such progress encouraged the health system that runs a little outpost in town to invest here in long-distance medicine. The new coverage has paid for back surgeries and brain surgeries for people who otherwise would have been left broke or unhealed.

Yet 2,600 miles away, what Congress is now doing — or not doing — imperils these two strands of insurance that lately have cut Nevada's uninsured population by half. Republican lawmakers would start to erase the money that props up Medicaid's expansion. And even with a GOP health-care plan teetering in the Senate, months of uncertainty about the ACA's future have heightened insurers' qualms in Nevada about whether its marketplace is a financially safe space to be.

The sole company that had been expected to remain on the state exchange in Lyon County and Nevada's 13 other rural counties announced otherwise last month and will be gone by January. Unless Anthem or another insurer reverses course, 8,000 people across hundreds of miles will be left without any ACA insurer next year — by far the largest such bare patch in the nation.

"In a place where health care was already a disaster," said Shaun Griffin, a local poet and community

The stakes in this land of dusty winds and scarce jobs attest to the special vulnerability of rural communities to the health-care politics of Washington. The toehold that insurance has gained, even here in strong Trump country, suggests why Nevada Sen. Dean Heller became an early, overt critic of what his Republican Party leaders want to do. It also explains why even sustained pressure from the White House has not altered Gov. Brian Sandoval's opposition to the Senate's bill.

In Silver Springs, where finding medical care is iffy in the best of circumstances, an insurance card isn't a guarantee. But it is a leg up.

Robert Garcia was living in his horse trailer with three crushed discs in his back when a county caseworker told him that, because the state's rules had changed with the ACA, he could get onto Medicaid.

Garcia used to earn about \$50,000 a year doing electrical work at a nearby gypsum mine. He lost his insurance when he was laid off in 2011. His marriage fell apart. Rodeo had been his passion since he was a boy, and he moved into the trailer, filled with championship buckles and saddles, that carried him and his horses to competitions. It had a generator for electricity, and Garcia parked it on different friends' land, taking showers from hoses outside in the dark.

He picked up money by breaking horses until the day a young mustang with a fiery spirit got spooked and lunched, throwing the cowboy off its left side. He landed on his neck. Despite the pain, he kept riding and roping for another month before paying for an X-ray. He couldn't afford the surgery he needed.

In 2015, a woman at the local food pantry took him to the county's health and human services branch in Silver Springs. There he got onto Medicaid. After more rounds of doctors, he had surgery last year at a Reno hospital.

But in the kind of seesawing scraping-by that is common here, the Social Security disability benefits for which Garcia was finally approved in April meant he could afford to rent a mobile home. But he no longer qualified for Medicaid — which meant no return to the doctor to see whether he could get back on a horse. At 50, with a bad knee, fingers still numb from the fall and anxiety, he now is waiting on a health plan through the state exchange. The coverage may be fleeting.

"That would devastate me," he said. "I don't know what I would do."

'Sign me up'

Straddling U.S. Route 50 in a mountain-ringed valley studded with saltbush, Silver Springs sits about an hour from the neon of Reno and even less from the state capitol building in Carson City. It is not as remote as Nevada's huge frontier counties, where the nearest hospital can be hours away.

Still, it is rural enough that Bret Bellard, the family doctor who works at Renown Health's clinic on Mondays, sees patients bitten by their donkey or kicked by their goat, along with diabetes and addictions. Wild horses run through the clinic's parking lot.

The area's big moments were during the Pony Express and gold rush days. Today, the economic glitter of a Tesla Gigafactory under construction less than an hour away has stoked hopes that good jobs might spill down a road being built from Route 50.

They are pipe dreams for now. The Silver Strike Casino and a Nugget Casino branch each offer some jobs. So do a Family Dollar and Dollar General, the only stores. With no local grocery, the two gas stations' food marts are the only places to buy even a carton of milk; the Silver Stage Food Pantry, which serves the town and tinier Stagecoach just to the west, is trying to foster community gardening.

In this environment, the cinder block clinic that had been here for decades called it quits during the

Great Recession. Renown, a Reno-based nonprofit, took over in 2008 and managed to get it federally certified as a rural health clinic. Since attracting health-care professionals to the area is hard, the designation means a young nurse practitioner and a physician assistant can work to help repay student loans. This year, Renown installed a telehealth system so that patients with bad hearts or troubled mental health, for example, can sit in an exam room and talk with a doctor via a computer screen.

The federal label also allows the clinic the luxury of seeing any patient who can get an appointment, no matter how much they can pay. But Renown's president, Anthony Slonim, is pragmatic about what could happen if the Senate Republicans' Better Care Reconciliation Act became law. "None of us are making money in the rural environment, trust me," Slonim said. "If more people become uninsured, expenses will go up and revenue will go down. . . . It gets increasingly challenging for us to sustain those practices. People's care will suffer."

The scarcity of health services dovetails with an individualistic streak that has long coursed through the West. Yet even the most independent at times need help.

Tom Lovelace, who has a landscaping business in Silver Springs, didn't vote in the last election. He says he doesn't believe in government, though he thinks Trump is "cool." He also doesn't like the idea of health insurance — just take care of yourself or tough it out.

Still, Lovelace reflects the realities plumbed by a recent Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation survey, which found that most rural Americans consider Medicaid very important to their communities — including nearly three people in five who voted for Trump.

Tom Lovelace works on a new garden outside his mobile home in Silver Springs. He never knew he could get health coverage through Medicaid until after surgery for an aneurysm. He signed up despite his

anti-government views. (Melina Mara/The Washington Post)

Rockie Rossberg, 4, is called in for dinner by her mother, Hoppie Rossberg, at their double wide mobile home and small ranch in Silver Springs, Nev. Hoppie Rossberg believes fewer Medicaid entitlements would be better for the economy and the country. (Melina Mara/The Washington Post)

The day after he turned 30 in 2014, Lovelace woke up at 4 a.m., sweaty, his speech slurred. He told his customers he thought he'd had a stroke. He was living in Carson City at the time, and, two weeks later, a friend took him to an emergency room. He got an MRI but left before finding out the results.

The next month, he had an awful headache one day and started to see double, then triple. When he went back to the emergency room, the doctor told him he was relieved to see him. He had an aneurysm, a weakened spot in a blood vessel in his brain. At Renown's hospital in Reno, he had it repaired and — uninsured — received a \$99,000 bill.

Nearly three months later, as Lovelace was signing up for food stamps, a worker at the welfare office asked whether he wanted to get Medicaid. He was surprised. He knew of it as help for his three kids — their names tattooed on his arms and chest — and their mothers. Not for a guy like him.

"Sign me up," he replied. Medicaid retroactively paid his hospital bill.

The New York Times

Krugman : Republicans Leap Into the Awful Known

Paul Krugman

Sometime in the next few days the Congressional Budget Office will release its analysis of the latest version of the Republican health care plan. Senator Mitch McConnell is doing all he can to prevent a full assessment, for example by trying to keep the C.B.O. from scoring the Cruz provision, which would let insurers discriminate against people with pre-existing conditions. Nonetheless, everyone expects a grim prognosis.

As a result, White House aides are already attacking the C.B.O.'s credibility, announcing in advance that whatever it says will be "fake news." So why should we believe the budget office, not the Trump administration? Let me count the ways.

First, this White House already has a record of constant, blatant lying about health care that is, as far as I can tell, without precedent in

'Why do we have to change?'

On June 27, the governor sent a letter to all four insurers that have been selling health plans through the state's ACA marketplace this year and are part of Nevada's managed-care Medicaid in its urban areas. "The reduced footprint of carriers on the exchange," Sandoval wrote, "is a national embarrassment for a state that has made great strides in reducing our uninsured population." He asked them to "find a . . . solution."

The governor and his chief of staff, for years Nevada's health secretary, waited three days before Sandoval sent another letter saying he was "disappointed" in the insurers and summoning them to his office Tuesday to try to hammer out a plan.

The prospect of losing ACA coverage in every rural county is a reversal of fortune for a state whose embrace of the 2010 health-care law has brought dramatic results. Before the ACA, 23 percent of Nevadans were uninsured, one of the worst rates in the country. Today, it is 12 percent.

Mike Willden, the chief of staff, said officials are talking with the Trump administration about how much it can bend the ACA's rules to ward off the exchange's rural meltdown next year. Perhaps they could let people enroll in the health plans available in Reno and Las Vegas, though their doctors would be farther away. Perhaps the state's four ACA regions could be collapsed into one, so that any insurer wanting to stay in the urban

areas would have to sell health plans in the rural places, too. And a study is going to look at a novel strategy endorsed this spring by the legislature — letting any Nevadan pay to join a Medicaid health plan.

No one knows whether any of these ideas might work.

In the meantime, Sandoval, like Nevada's senior U.S. senator, has been speaking out against what his fellow Republicans are trying to do in Washington. The state has documented ways the expanded insurance has improved residents' well-being, especially in access to mental health care.

"If it is working in Nevada," Willden asked, "why do we have to change?"

Over at the Silver State exchange, Executive Director Heather Korbucic is already worrying about what will happen this winter to people who suddenly may be without coverage in counties such as Lyon.

"It's such a tenuous time," she said. "It's not that we are not trying. . . . But insurers in Nevada have been resistant to these rural counties for a very long time."

Today's Headlines newsletter

The day's most important stories.

It was the 5 p.m. news on KOLO-8 out of Reno that told Jenny Claypool her new health plan is going away next year.

"What!?" she exclaimed. Despite her job with a community health

group and \$350 in a monthly insurance subsidy through the ACA, Claypool relies on help from her 78-year-old mother in California to afford the \$300 she still must pay in premiums every month. Only ACA coverage comes with subsidies.

Fifty-one and divorced for a decade, she lives in Dayton, a bit west of Silver Springs. She had insurance when she worked for the county school system, but then she changed jobs and went several years without any. Her mental health is fragile — bipolar and borderline personality disorder. During one bad spell, she went to an emergency room in Carson City, which transferred her to a state hospital.

When Claypool heard in 2014 that Medicaid was expanding, she signed up right away, started therapy and began filling her prescriptions at the pharmacy inside the Smith's grocery store in Dayton, just like anyone else. Last year, Medicaid paid for surgery to repair a tear in her hip. Last fall, she became ineligible for the program after she got a raise at work that lifted her pay from \$15 an hour to \$17. She turned to the exchange, picking a health plan called Anthem Silver Pathway. The plan will be gone Jan. 1.

That coverage "is a huge sense of security," Claypool said. "I am going to be out there with nothing."

modern history. Just a few days ago, for example, Vice President Mike Pence made the completely false assertion that Ohio's expansion of Medicaid led to a cutback in aid for the disabled — a lie that the state's government had already refuted. On Sunday, Tom Price, the secretary of Health and Human Services, claimed that the Senate bill would cover more people than current law — another blatant lie. (You can't cut hundreds of billions from Medicaid and insurance subsidies and expect coverage to grow!)

The point is that on this issue (and others, of course), the Trump administration and its allies have negative credibility: If they say something, the default assumption should be that they're lying.

Second, the C.B.O. is hardly alone in its negative assessments of Republican health care plans. In fact, just about every group with

knowledge of the issue has reached similar conclusions. In a joint letter, the two major insurance industry trade groups blasted the Cruz provision as "simply unworkable." The American Academy of Actuaries says basically the same thing. AARP has condemned the bill, as has the American Medical Association.

Third, contrary to White House disinformation, the C.B.O. actually did a pretty good job of predicting the effects of the Affordable Care Act, especially when you bear in mind that the act was a leap into the unknown: We had very little experience of how an A.C.A.-type system would work.

True, the C.B.O. overestimated the number of people who would buy insurance on the exchanges the act created; but that was partly because it overestimated the number of employers who would drop coverage and send their workers to

those exchanges. Overall gains in coverage have been reasonably well in line with what the C.B.O. projected — especially in states that expanded Medicaid and did their best to make the law work.

Finally — and this seems to me to be the most compelling argument of all — predicting the effects of destroying the A.C.A. is much easier than predicting the consequences when it was enacted, because what the Senate bill would do, pretty much, is return us to the bad old days. Or to put it another way, what McConnell and Senator Ted Cruz are selling is a giant leap into the known, taking us back to a system whose flaws are all too familiar from recent experience.

After all, before Obamacare, most states had more or less unregulated insurance markets, similar to those the Senate bill would create. Many of these states also had skimpy, underfunded Medicaid programs,

which would be the effect of the bill's brutal Medicaid cuts.

So while careful, nonpartisan modeling, the kind the C.B.O. excels in, is important, you don't need a detailed analysis to know what American health care would look like if this bill passes. Basically, it would look like pre-A.C.A. Texas, where 26 percent of the nonelderly population was uninsured.

And lack of insurance wouldn't be the only problem: Many people

would have "junk insurance" — insurance with deductibles so large or coverage limitations so extensive as to be effectively useless when needed.

Now, some people might be satisfied with that outcome. Hard-core libertarians, for example, don't believe making health care available to those who need it is a legitimate role of government; letting some citizens go bankrupt and/or die if they get sick is the price of freedom as they define it.

But Republicans have never made that case. Instead, at every stage of this political fight they have claimed to be doing exactly the opposite of what they're actually doing: covering more people, making health care cheaper, protecting Americans with pre-existing conditions. We're not talking about run-of-the-mill spin here; we're talking about black is white, up is down, dishonesty so raw it's practically surreal. This isn't just an assault on health care, it's an assault on truth itself.

Will this vileness prevail? Your guess is as good as mine about whether Mitch McConnell will hold on to the 50 senators he needs. But the mere possibility that this much cruelty, wrapped in this much fraudulence, might pass is a horrifying indictment of his party.

The New York Times A Top Republican Vows a Vote on Health Care, but Uncertainty Reigns (UNE)

Robert Pear

WASHINGTON — A top Senate Republican vowed on Sunday to bring the party's health care bill to a vote as soon as possible, even as detractors said they would use a delay caused by the absence of Senator John McCain to mobilize further opposition to the measure.

"I believe as soon as we have a full contingent of senators, that we'll have that vote," the No. 2 Senate Republican, John Cornyn of Texas, said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

But questions emerged Sunday over when that might be. Mr. McCain, 80, had a craniotomy — a procedure in which doctors create an opening in the skull — on Friday to remove a blood clot above his left eye, and he is recovering at home in Arizona. A statement from his office had indicated that he would be out this week, but neurosurgeons not involved with Mr. McCain's surgery said the recovery period for such a procedure was often longer.

"For most patients, the time to recover from a craniotomy is usually a few weeks," said Dr. Nrupen Baxi, an assistant professor of neurosurgery at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City.

Mr. McCain's surgeons are not giving interviews. His communications director, Julie Tarallo, said more information would be released when it became available.

Aides to the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, said it was unclear how long the delay would last.

The timing of the Senate vote is crucial. The more it is delayed, the more likely the bill is to fail, supporters and opponents say. Moreover, the Senate schedule will soon be packed with other legislation, like an increase in the statutory limit on federal borrowing

and spending bills for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1. In addition, Republicans are eager to cut taxes and simplify the tax code.

The Senate has struggled to pass a health care bill, delaying a vote on a previous version of the legislation in June.

Several Republican senators have expressed reservations or outright opposition to the new version as well, and Republicans need Mr. McCain's vote to have any chance of passing it.

The bill, to repeal and replace major provisions of the Affordable Care Act, is a top priority for President Trump and Republicans in the House, which passed its own repeal bill in early May.

Mr. Cornyn acknowledged that "there's uncertainty about what the final outcome will be." Asked what would happen if the bill did not pass, he said: "I assume we'll keep trying. But at some point, if Democrats won't participate in the process, then we're going to have to come up with a different plan."

Critics of the Senate's health care bill, taking advantage of the delay, said Sunday that Republican leaders needed to rework the legislation in fundamental ways. Given the additional time, they said, Senate committees should hold hearings to solicit opinions from the public and from experts on health care and insurance.

"We should not be making fundamental changes in a vital safety net program that's been on the books for 50 years, the Medicaid program, without having a single hearing to evaluate what the consequences are going to be," Senator Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, said on CNN's "State of the Union."

Roughly 20 million people have gained coverage through the Affordable Care Act, a pillar of President Barack Obama's legacy.

But Mr. Cornyn described the law on Sunday as a failed "exercise in central planning and command and control."

The White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, declined to comment beyond wishing Mr. McCain a quick recovery, as did Marc Lotter, a spokesman for Vice President Mike Pence. Mr. Trump has been urging lawmakers to pass the bill, saying he is waiting with pen in hand.

On Friday, Mr. Pence assured skeptical governors that "the Senate health care bill strengthens and secures Medicaid for the neediest in our society," putting the program, which serves more than 70 million low-income people, on "a path to long-term sustainability."

But Ms. Collins said: "I would respectfully disagree with the vice president's analysis. This bill would impose fundamental, sweeping changes in the Medicaid program, and those include very deep cuts. That would affect some of the most vulnerable people in our society, including disabled children, poor seniors. It would affect our rural hospitals and our nursing homes. And they would have a very difficult time even staying in existence."

She added, "There are about eight to 10 Republican senators who have serious concerns about this bill."

Republicans hold 52 Senate seats, and all Democratic senators oppose the bill. Ms. Collins and Senator Rand Paul, Republican of Kentucky, have said they will vote against even starting the debate, meaning all other Republican senators need to vote for the legislation if it is to pass.

Mr. Paul's reasons for opposing the bill are very different from Ms. Collins's; he says it retains too much of the Affordable Care Act. And he predicted that support for the legislation would erode because

of the delay prompted by Mr. McCain's absence.

"The longer the bill's out there, the more conservative Republicans are going to discover that it's not repeal," he said Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation." "And the more that everybody's going to discover that it keeps the fundamental flaw of Obamacare. It keeps the insurance mandates that cause the prices to rise, which chase young, healthy people out of the marketplace and leads to what people call adverse selection, where you have a sicker and sicker insurance pool and the premiums keep rising through the roof."

Voters "elected us to repeal Obamacare," Mr. Paul added. But with the bill drafted by Mr. McConnell, the senior senator from his home state, he said, "we're going to keep most of the taxes, keep the regs, keep the subsidies and create a giant bailout superfund for the insurance companies."

The Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer of New York, said Sunday that he did not think delaying the vote would change the outcome.

"Time is not the problem in the present health care bill," Mr. Schumer said. "The problem is the substance. It slashes Medicaid, which has become something that helps middle-class New Yorkers — millions of them, literally — and millions of Americans."

The delay gives critics of the repeal bill more time to investigate numbers being used by the Trump administration to defend it.

The administration has been telling Congress and governors that the bill includes plenty of money to provide private insurance for people who would lose Medicaid coverage. But those estimates are based on particular assumptions chosen by administration officials. Gov. Brian Sandoval of Nevada, a Republican,

and others have questioned the validity of those assumptions.

The assumptions, made by political appointees in the Trump administration, specify how states would use money provided by the bill and how many people losing Medicaid would buy private insurance.

In a report on the House bill last month, the office of the actuary at the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said most of the people who lost Medicaid coverage would “ultimately be uninsured, though a small fraction would choose to purchase individual insurance.”

Millions of people have gained coverage in the 31 states that chose to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, and many of

them are projected to lose that coverage under the Senate and House bills, which would roll back the expansion of Medicaid.

When Congress convened in January, Republicans appeared to be on course to repeal the Affordable Care Act within a month or two, but they met with growing resistance as lawmakers, consumers, doctors, hospitals and insurance companies scrutinized the proposals. Mr. McConnell delayed a vote scheduled for the week before the Fourth of July. Then, with no visible progress toward agreement, he delayed the Senate’s August recess by two weeks so senators could keep working.

Administration officials will use the time provided by the latest delay to try to persuade undecided

Republican senators to vote for the bill. They will also try to raise doubts about the work of the Congressional Budget Office, which estimated that an earlier version of Mr. McConnell’s bill could increase the number of uninsured Americans by 22 million by 2026, compared with current law.

The nonpartisan budget office had been expected to issue a report on the latest draft of the bill on Monday, but it now plans to take more time.

Lawmakers are eager to see what the office says about a proposal added to the bill last week in a bid for support from the most conservative Republican senators. Under the proposal, insurers could offer cheaper, less comprehensive health plans if they also offered three standard plans with all the

benefits required by the Affordable Care Act.

The author of the proposal, Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, said it would give consumers “the freedom to choose among more affordable plans” that were “free from Obamacare’s insurance regulations.”

The skimpiest plans would cover less and presumably cost less, and insurers said they would also attract healthier people.

“These junk insurance plans could charge people more or simply deny them coverage based on pre-existing conditions,” said Senator Maria Cantwell, Democrat of Washington.



Editorial : The CBO finds Mr. Trump’s budget lacking

TRUMPONOMICS IS monumentally unwise, to the extent anyone can make sense of it. Contrary to the Trump administration’s grandiose assurances, the independent analysts at the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) said Thursday that there is no proposal in President Trump’s budget that would supercharge economic growth — the president promised 3 percent per year — and balance the budget within a decade. Instead, they found a lot of question marks and missing details.

Without the miraculous economic growth Mr. Trump promised, the CBO found that the president’s plan would cut federal revenue by nearly \$ trillion over a decade. Deep spending cuts would offset this decline, but nowhere near enough to balance the budget. The cumulative deficit would drop by about a third between now and

2027 and slow the rise in the national debt, but hefty deficits would nevertheless remain. And that’s assuming Congress would enact the spending cuts along with the tax reductions, which it wouldn’t.

What fiscal discipline Mr. Trump’s plan contains would be achieved by cutting the wrong things, hobbling basic government functions, while leaving the major drivers of the country’s fiscal problems mostly untouched. The president would suck money out of health programs such as the Affordable Care Act (ACA). He would also squeeze discretionary spending — that is, what most people think the government does, from running the national parks to conducting medical research to maintaining foreign embassies — to a place unprecedented in modern times, dropping it from 6.3 percent of gross domestic product to 4.1 percent in a decade. It has not fallen below 6 percent in more than 50 years.

Evening Edition newsletter

The day’s most important stories.

The president is counting on an ambitious rejiggering of the tax code to stimulate economic growth. Critics, we among them, point out that his tax plan appears to be based on the fantasy that the tax cuts will pay for themselves. For its part, the CBO found that the president’s tax plan was so vague, it was unreasonable even to try to assess its specific effects on economic growth and the nation’s fiscal balance.

But wouldn’t the economy get a boost from a promised infusion of infrastructure spending? Not really. The \$200 billion Mr. Trump has proposed would be largely offset by cuts in various types of infrastructure spending elsewhere in the budget.

The CBO will release this week another, much-anticipated assessment — of the latest Senate health-care bill. In a Post op-ed, the White House pre-buffed the office’s findings by continuing its assault on the experts, arguing that they were off in past projections and that their new estimates “will be little more than fake news.”

In fact, the CBO’s record on the ACA is not perfect but quite good. Its critics certainly can point to no alternative analysis that is more credible. The CBO produces rigorous projections using consistent methods and advanced economic modeling. Unlike executive agencies populated by Trump administration loyalists, the CBO is largely insulated from political pressure. No projection will be perfect. But no official organization deserves more trust to get it right.



Samuelson : Is the upper middle class really hoarding the American Dream?

Samuelson

By Robert J.

faith, because it’s impeding poorer Americans from getting ahead.

That conclusion is dead wrong, but it contains just enough truth to seem plausible. We need to separate fact from fiction.

Reeves, a scholar at the Brookings Institution, makes his case in a new book titled “Dream Hoarders,” as in the American Dream. The hoarding refers to all the economic opportunities that the upper middle class is allegedly manipulating for itself. Zoning restrictions segregate

it into economically homogeneous neighborhoods, with the best schools. This provides an advantage in getting into selective colleges, leading to better internships and jobs.

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

All this is self-perpetuating, Reeves says. Class structure is becoming frozen. Downward mobility from the top is limited. Upper-middle-class parents are obsessed with supporting their children, from

helping with homework to teaching bike-riding. The story seems so compelling that it could become conventional wisdom. Parents are destiny. Just recently, David Brooks, the influential New York Times columnist, bought into most of Reeves’s theory.

“Upper-middle-class parents have the means to spend two to three times more time with their preschool children than less affluent parents,” he wrote. He also excoriated “the structural ways the well-educated rig the system” — mainly restrictive

zoning and easier college admissions, including legacy preferences.

But the facts don't fit the theory. Reeves defines the upper middle class as households with pretax income from \$117,000 to \$355,000, representing the richest 20 percent of Americans excluding the top 1 percent (whose status he considers a separate problem). It's doubtful whether families at the bottom of this range feel rich. For example, a household with two teachers earning average salaries (\$56,000 in 2013) would nearly make the cutoff. (Disclosure: Reeves acknowledges belonging to the upper middle class, as do I.)

By Reeves's arithmetic, the upper middle class — again, a fifth of the population minus the top 1 percent — accounted for 39 percent of income gains from 1979 to 2013,

only slightly lower than the 43 percent share of the bottom 80 percent. (The top 1 percent's share was 18 percent.) This growing income gap is worrisome, because it implies dramatically different life experiences among Americans. The differences "can be seen in education, family structure, health and longevity," writes Reeves.

But these undesirable trends aren't caused by a rigid upper-middle-class oligarchy that's hoarding opportunities for itself. Contrary to Reeves's argument — but included in his book — is one study finding that among children born into the richest fifth, only 37 percent remained there as adults. Roughly two-thirds dropped out. How much more downward mobility does Reeves want? He doesn't say.

Similarly, some advantages claimed for the upper middle class are

weaker than advertised. Access to the best schools? Sure, but that doesn't cover all upper-middle-class students. Reeves reports that nearly two-fifths of the richest 20 percent of families live near schools ranked in the top fifth of their states by test scores. But that means that about three-fifths of these wealthier families don't. It's also true, as Reeves notes, that the causation works in the other direction: Good students make good schools.

Though economic opportunities abound, the capacity to take advantage of them does not. That, not hoarding, is our real problem. Reeves reports that less than half the students at community colleges "make it through their first year." Similarly, only 6 out of 10 children raised in top-income families have bachelor's degrees. If parents are so obsessed with — and controlling

of — their children's fates, why isn't the share 9 out of 10 or higher?

The irony is that Reeves has the story almost backward. As a society, we should try not to restrict the upper middle class, but to expand it. In general, it's doing what we ought to want the rest of society to do. Its marriage rates are higher, its out-of-wedlock births are lower, its education levels are higher.

As for parents, why make them feel guilty for wanting to help their children? What are parents for, after all? To be sure, there are (and will be) excesses and examples of undeserved privilege — brats. Life is messy. But let's not blame the struggle of the lower middle class and poor on the success of the upper middle class. The two are only loosely connected, if at all.

**The
Washington
Post**

Applebaum : It's now clear: The most dangerous threats to the West are not external

Just over a week has passed since President Trump offered, in Warsaw, a very particular defense of Western civilization. He praised Poland for its fight against Nazism and Soviet communism long ago, though he said little about the country's success since 1989. He spoke of the things that hold the West together, including classical music and God, but made only glancing references to democracy. He also spoke of the threats to the West, alluding to dangers from the "South or the East" as well as from an "oppressive ideology," radical Islam, that "seeks to export terrorism and extremism all around the globe."

In the days since that speech, rapidly moving events in Warsaw have proved him wrong: As I write this, Poland is proving that the greatest threat to the West is not radical Islam. The greatest threat is not even external: It is internal. In Poland, a democratically elected but illiberal government has, in the past few days, escalated its attack on its own constitution, pushing new laws

openly designed to create a politicized judiciary. And it feels emboldened to do so by the visit of the U.S. president.

The Polish government is led by Law and Justice, a nationalist ruling party with a slim parliamentary majority but no popular mandate and no mandate to change the constitution. Nevertheless, since taking power, it has methodically subjugated a series of previously independent institutions: the public broadcaster, the prosecutor's office and, most seriously, the Constitutional Tribunal. It has politicized the civil service. Its conspiratorial defense minister has eliminated much of the professional military leadership, too.

The day's most important stories.

Last week, only days after Trump's visit, it also passed a bill that will politicize the National Council of the Judiciary, the constitutional body that selects judges. Then it went further: Without public hearings, it introduced another bill that, if signed

into law, would enable the justice minister, in breach of the constitution, to dismiss — immediately — all of the members of Poland's highest court.

As in the past, the European Union will object. It's conceivable that European institutions might even impose sanctions on Poland. Having been a pillar of European unity in the past — so much so that a former Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, is now president of the European Council — Poland has become a source of real frustration and anger across the continent. If the West were united in this view, that might have some impact in Poland. But Trump's visit to Warsaw sent the opposite message. The United States' message has encouraged Law and Justice to isolate itself in Europe, safe in its belief that America has its back.

We can all imagine the future consequences of a supine, pro-government judiciary. It could enable the government to falsify

elections, to evade corruption investigations, to prosecute opponents. And this will matter: For a quarter-century, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent triumph of Central European democracy were together perceived around the world as one of the great achievements of the West. For the past decade, Polish advice on democratic transition was sought around the world, too, from Burma to Tunisia to Ukraine. A Polish pivot away from democracy will undermine not only the unity of the West, but the broader appeal and the attraction of the West in those countries, too, allowing other "oppressive ideologies" from the "South or the East" to take its place.

When Trump was elected president, many people, myself included, wrote of the impact he might have on international democracy. Many worried that he would encourage populist, nationalist or illiberal parties in Europe and elsewhere. And now he has.

**The
Washington
Post**

Scarborough : Trump is killing the Republican Party

By Joe Scarborough

a leader hopelessly ill-informed about the basics of conservatism, U.S. history and the Constitution.

I did not leave the Republican Party. The Republican Party left its senses. The political movement that once stood athwart history resisting bloated government and military adventurism has been reduced to an amalgam of talk-radio resentments. President Trump's Republicans have devolved into a party without a cause, dominated by

America's first Republican president reportedly said, "Nearly all men can stand adversity. But if you want to test a man's character, give him power." The current Republican president and the party he controls were granted monopoly power over Washington in November and already find themselves

spectacularly failing Abraham Lincoln's character exam.

"Morning Joe" co-hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski joined Stephen Colbert on "The Late Show." Scarborough announced that he could no longer support the Republican Party because of its allegiance to President Trump. "Morning Joe" co-hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski joined Stephen Colbert

on "The Late Show." Scarborough announced that he could no longer support the Republican Party because of its allegiance to President Trump. (Erin Patrick O'Connor/The Washington Post)

(Erin Patrick O'Connor/The Washington Post)

It would take far more than a single column to detail Trump's failures in the months following his bleak inaugural address. But the

Republican leaders who have subjugated themselves to the White House's corrupting influence fell short of Lincoln's standard long before their favorite reality-TV star brought his gaudy circus act to Washington.

Today's Headlines newsletter

The day's most important stories.

When I left Congress in 2001, I praised my party's successful efforts to balance the budget for the first time in a generation and keep many of the promises that led to our takeover in 1994. I concluded my last speech on the House floor by foolishly predicting that Republicans would balance budgets and champion a restrained foreign policy for as long as they held power.

I would be proved wrong immediately.

As the new century began, Republicans gained control of the federal

government. George W. Bush and the GOP Congress responded by turning a \$155 billion surplus into a \$1 trillion deficit and doubling the national debt, passing a \$7 trillion unfunded entitlement program and promoting a foreign policy so utopian it would have made Woodrow Wilson blush. Voters made Nancy Pelosi speaker of the House in 2006 and Barack Obama president in 2008.

After their well-deserved drubbing, Republicans swore that if voters ever entrusted them with running Washington again, they would prove themselves worthy. Trump's party was given a second chance this year, but it has spent almost every day since then making the majority of Americans regret it.

The GOP president questioned America's constitutional system of checks and balances. Republican leaders said nothing. He echoed Stalin and Mao by calling the free press "the enemy of the people." Republican leaders were silent. And as the commander in chief insulted allies while embracing autocratic

thugs, Republicans who spent a decade supporting wars of choice remained quiet. Meanwhile, their budget-busting proposals demonstrate a fiscal recklessness very much in line with the Bush years.

Last week's Russia revelations show just how shamelessly Republican lawmakers will stand by a longtime Democrat who switched parties after the promotion of a racist theory about Barack Obama gave him standing in Lincoln's once-proud party. Neither Lincoln, William Buckley nor Ronald Reagan would recognize this movement.

It is a dying party that I can no longer defend.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Jon Meacham has long predicted that the Republican and Democrats' 150-year duopoly will end. The signs seem obvious enough. When my Republican Party took control of Congress in 1994, it was the first time the GOP had won the House in a generation. The two parties have been in a state of turmoil ever since.

In 2004, Republican strategist Karl Rove anticipated a majority that would last a generation; two years later, Pelosi became the most liberal House speaker in history. Obama was swept into power by a supposedly unassailable Democratic coalition. In 2010, the tea party tide rolled in. Obama's reelection returned the momentum to the Democrats, but Republicans won a historic state-level landslide in 2014. Then last fall, Trump demolished both the Republican and Democratic establishments.

Political historians will one day view Donald Trump as a historical anomaly. But the wreckage visited of this man will break the Republican Party into pieces — and lead to the election of independent thinkers no longer tethered to the tired dogmas of the polarized past. When that day mercifully arrives, the two-party duopoly that has strangled American politics for almost two centuries will finally come to an end. And Washington just may begin to work again.

The Washington Post As companies relocate to big cities, suburban towns are left scrambling (UNE)

By Jonathan O'Connell

OAK BROOK, Ill. — Visitors to the McDonald's wooded corporate campus enter on a driveway named for the late chief executive Ray Kroc, then turn onto Ronald Lane before reaching Hamburger University, where more than 80,000 people have been trained as fast-food managers.

Surrounded by quiet neighborhoods and easy highway connections, this 86-acre suburban compound adorned with walking paths and duck ponds was for four decades considered the ideal place to attract top executives as the company rose to global dominance.

Now its leafy environs are considered a liability. Locked in a battle with companies of all stripes to woo top tech workers and young professionals, McDonald's executives announced last year that they were putting the property up for sale and moving to the West Loop of Chicago where "L" trains arrive every few minutes and construction cranes dot the skyline.

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

In Chicago, McDonald's will join a slew of other companies — among them food giant Kraft Heinz, farming supplier ADM and telecommunications firm Motorola Solutions — all looking to appeal to and be near young professionals

versed in the world of e-commerce, software analytics, digital engineering, marketing and finance.

Such relocations are happening across the country as economic opportunities shift to a handful of top cities and jobs become harder to find in some suburbs and smaller cities.

From McDonald's to ConAgra to Motorola, Chicago is luring an array of corporate headquarters. This is Mayor Rahm Emanuel's pitch. Big companies are moving to Chicago. This is the city's pitch. (Lee Powell/The Washington Post)

(Lee Powell/The Washington Post)

Aetna recently announced that it will relocate from Hartford, Conn., to Manhattan; General Electric is leaving Connecticut to build a global headquarters in Boston; and Marriott International is moving from an emptying Maryland office park into the center of Bethesda.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel (D) said the old model where executives chose locations near where they wanted to live has been upturned by the growing influence of technology in nearly every industry. Years ago, IT operations were an afterthought. Now, people with such expertise are driving top-level corporate decisions, and many of them prefer urban locales.

"It used to be the IT division was in a back office somewhere," Emanuel said. "The IT division and software, computer and data mining, et cetera, is now next to the CEO. Otherwise, that company is gone."

The migration to urban centers threatens the prosperity outlying suburbs have long enjoyed, bringing a dose of pain felt by rural communities and exacerbating stark gaps in earnings and wealth that Donald Trump capitalized on in winning the presidency.

McDonald's may not even be the most noteworthy corporate mover in Illinois. Machinery giant Caterpillar said this year that it was moving its headquarters from Peoria to Deerfield, which is closer to Chicago. It said it would keep about 12,000 manufacturing, engineering and research jobs in its original home town. But top-paying office jobs — the type that Caterpillar's higher-ups enjoy — are being lost, and the company is canceling plans for a 3,200-person headquarters aimed at revitalizing Peoria's downtown.

"It was really hard. I mean, you know that \$800 million headquarters translated into hundreds and hundreds of good construction jobs over a number of years," Peoria Mayor Jim Ardis (R) said.

Long term, the corporate moves threaten an orbit of smaller

enterprises that fed on their proximity to the big companies, from restaurants and janitorial operations to subcontractors who located nearby.

"The village of Oak Brook and McDonald's sort of grew up together. So when the news came, it was a jolt from the blue — we were really not expecting it," said Gopal G. Lalimalani, a cardiologist who also serves as the village president.

Lalimalani is no stranger to the desire of young professionals to live in cities: His adult daughters, a lawyer and an actress, live in Chicago. When McDonald's arrived in Oak Brook, in 1971, many Americans were migrating in the opposite direction, away from the city.

In the years since, the tiny village's identity became closely linked with the fast-food chain as McDonald's forged a brand that spread across postwar suburbia one Happy Meal at a time.

"It was fun to be traveling and tell someone you're from Oak Brook and have them say, 'Well, I never heard of that,' and then tell them, 'Yes, you have. Look at the back of the ketchup package from McDonald's,'" said former village president Karen Bushy. Her son held his wedding reception at the

hotel on campus, sometimes called McLodge.

The village showed its gratitude — there is no property tax — and McDonald's reciprocated with donations such as \$100,000 annually for the Fourth of July fireworks display and with an outside status for a town of fewer than 8,000 people.

McDonald's, though, came under pressure to update its offerings for the Internet age, so it opened an office in San Francisco and a year later moved additional digital operations to downtown Chicago, strategically near tech incubators as well as digital outposts of companies that included Yelp and eBay.

Chief executive Steve Easterbrook, who took over in spring 2015, sought to keep innovating, launching mobile ordering, emphasizing self-serve kiosks in restaurants and expanding delivery through a partnership with UberEats.

As McDonald's embraced technology, it decided that it needed to be closer not just to workers who build e-commerce tools but also to the customers who use them, said Robert Gibbs, the former White House press secretary who is a McDonald's executive vice president. That is because the next generation of fast-food consumers may be more likely to arrive via iPhones than drive-throughs.

"The decision is really grounded in getting closer to our customers," Gibbs said.

The site of the new headquarters, being built in place of the studio where Oprah Winfrey's show was filmed, is in Fulton Market, a bustling neighborhood filled with new apartments and some of the city's most highly rated new restaurants.

Bushy and others in Oak Brook wondered aloud if part of the reasoning for the relocation was to effectively get rid of the employees who have built lives around commuting to Oak Brook and may not follow the company downtown. Gibbs said that was not the intention.

"Our assumption is not that some amount [of our staff] will not come. Some may not. In some ways that's probably some personal decision. I think we've got a workforce that's actually quite excited with the move," he said.

Chicago's arrival as a magnet for corporations belies statistics that would normally give corporate movers pause. High homicide rates and concerns about the police department have eroded Emanuel's popularity locally, but those issues seem confined to other parts of the city as young professionals crowd into the Loop, Chicago's lively central business district.

Chicago has been ranked the No. 1 city in the United States for corporate investment for the past four years by Site Selection Magazine, a real estate trade publication.

Emanuel said crime is not something executives scouting new

offices routinely express concerns about. Rather, he touts data points such as 140,000 — the number of new graduates local colleges produce every year.

"Corporations tell me the number one concern that they have — workforce," he said.

To Peorians, Caterpillar's change of heart came suddenly. Two years ago, the company's leadership team joined state and local officials at a ceremony to announce plans for a new \$800 million, 31-acre headquarters aimed at reviving a downtown pockmarked by vacant storefronts.

"We're here in Peoria to stay," Caterpillar's then-chief executive Doug Oberhelman declared at the time. Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner (R) stood to applaud.

Then, in January of this year, Caterpillar abruptly canceled the Peoria headquarters complex and said it would move about 300 top executives to the Chicago area.

The local reaction wasn't just disappointment but bewilderment. Three generations of the city's residents have worked at Caterpillar — designing, assembling and painting tractors and pipelayers.

Like other firms, Caterpillar had a digital hub in downtown Chicago, just over a mile from the new McDonald's headquarters. But now it is also moving many of its top executives away from where colleagues are designing, producing and shipping the company's

products — and the possibility of more Caterpillar jobs leaving looms.

"There are definitely people in this region who don't want to go to Chicago and are worried that their jobs are going there," said Jennifer Daly, former chief executive of the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council.

If more jobs go, it will diminish the options for highly qualified managers and executives who have chosen to make their homes in Peoria — a far more affordable, less congested place than Chicago or Deerfield.

"The people who built this company from 1925 on were Peorians, they were Midwesterners, they weren't city people," said Rennie Atterbury, a longtime former Caterpillar executive and general counsel.

The decision has left Peoria officials scrambling. They are focusing on different industries, such as health care, and helping the city's other manufacturing firms to find work beyond building tractors. About 100 small manufacturers in the area rely largely on Caterpillar contracting work.

"We really want to help them diversify," Daly said. "These manufacturers are not used to having to pursue sales outside of the earth-moving industry."

Lee Powell in Peoria contributed to this report.