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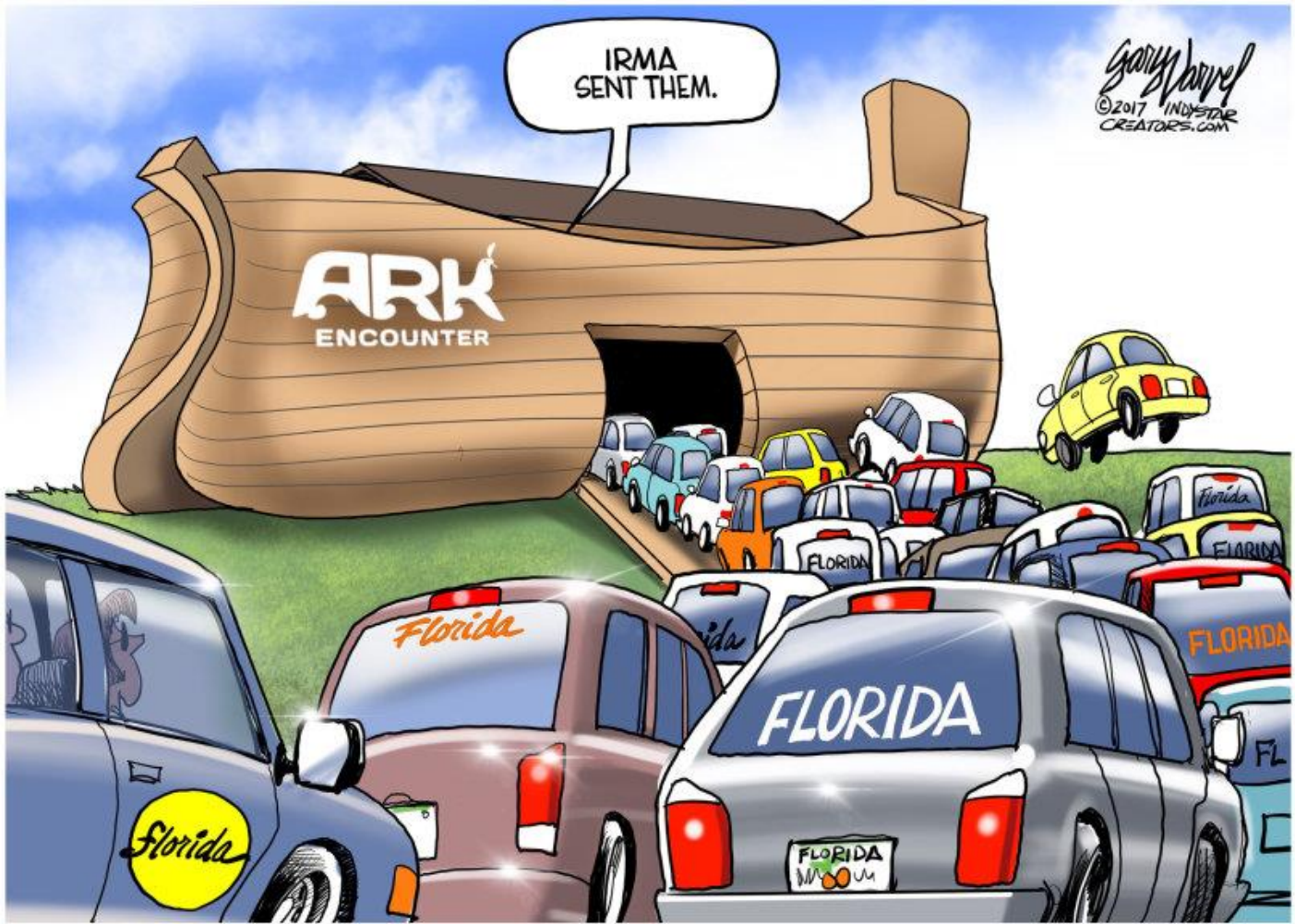
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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

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FRANCE – EUROPE



France's President Emmanuel Macron Intent on Labor Reforms

Vivienne Walt
6-8 minutes

It is as French as the [croissant](#): The vast labyrinth of labor laws that for decades have ensured watertight job protections for people, no matter how poorly they perform, and handsome packages once they leave. But as the French get back to work this week after their long summer vacations (a minimum five weeks' vacation is also enshrined in law),

that labyrinth is crumbling, with the biggest overhaul in workplace rules in generations. The reforms are so far-reaching that President [Emmanuel Macron](#) has dubbed them a "Copernican revolution," after the 16th-century discovery that the earth revolves around the sun. Macron, just four months in office, [told the French magazine *Le Point*](#) last week that he is determined to "liberate... a country corseted by rules."

Related

The changes will not come without a fight. Just a year ago, while Macron was Economy Minister, [thousands went on strike](#) and fought street battles with police, in protest at Macron's attempts to rewrite the labor laws. Exasperated, Macron quit the government and ran for president in May. He won handily, then [crushed the ruling Socialists](#) in parliamentary elections with his brand-new République En Marche political party. Now the 39-year-old leader is determined to power through his plan, even as his opinion rating has dropped over 20 points since his election.

Yet the fights are far from over. The far-left CGT union has asked its members to strike next Tuesday, Sept. 12. And the far-left France Unbowed political party says it will march in protest later this month. Macron's plan, however, seems unstoppable. He has spent months in meetings with unions and business leaders, outlining his plans. And with his party's commanding majority in parliament, Macron can in any case ram through his decisions. This fact is only now

sinking in for many French, who have grown accustomed to politicians vowing to bring change, only to see them back down in the end.

These new labor laws might seem modest to most Americans, but in France they represent dramatic change. The giant severance packages awarded to laid-off employees by state-run labor courts will be capped, and dozens of rules trimmed for companies that have 50 or more employees, theoretically making it easier for French businesses to hire new staff. The regulatory body that governs independent contractors will be shuttered, vastly simplifying the work rules for freelancers.

But most far-reaching of all is a move that companies and economists have pushed for for years, with no success: Allowing companies to negotiate directly with their employees, rather than adhering strictly to France's byzantine [Labor Code](#)—a 3,500-page tome that determines almost every detail of how people are hired and fired, and how they work.

For years, economists have long argued that the Labor Code—a brick-sized red book published by the government each year—has paralyzed France's job market. Many employers are simply too scared to hire new staff, for fear of violating one of the thousands of government rules within the bureaucratic bible.

The consequence, say economists, is chronic unemployment rates around 10%—and nearly 25% for

youth—far above almost every advanced country in the world. "It is ridiculous to have exactly the same, very deep, labor code for all employers in France," says Gilbert Cette, an economist at the University of Aix-Marseille, who [co-authored a major report](#) in 2015 outlining how French labor laws needed to change. "If you hire someone a few hours a week to clean your house, you have to abide by the Labor Code."

Indeed, the Labor Code has ballooned far beyond its original intention when it was written in 1906, after a factory fire killed dozens of people. In the 11 decades since, lawmakers have been deeply reluctant to alienate unions by scrapping regulations, opting instead to expand them. (The five-week minimum vacation leave, for example, dates back to the 1930s.) "We have been more and more unable to reform for 30 years," says Stéphane Siro, a labor historian. "We have rules and laws superimposed on top of one another, and we have never retreated from anything, ever."

Now, after years of struggling to find job opportunities, many French appear open to change. The CGT, which led last year's street protests, was overtaken this year as France's largest trade union by a far more moderate group, the French Democratic Federation of Labor, or CFDT, which has refused to join next week's general strike.

And yet, although Macron's presidency has dramatically shaken up France, it is still not clear that the changes will bring the "revolution"

he is seeking – at least not in France's relationship to the state.

According to some economists, most French still expect their government to solve the country's problems, after decades of heavy state interference in their lives—a culture that they say has helped to stifle entrepreneurship. [Nearly 58% of France's GDP](#) comes from public spending—the second-highest of any industrialized country—compared with about 37% in the U.S., and about 40% in Germany. That is unlikely to change dramatically, since it will take years for the labor reforms to filter through the economy, and France continues to have generous public health care and pension benefits.

Even once hiring and firing becomes a far simpler process, the notion that the government will continue to look after its citizens is likely remain deeply engrained. And when a crisis hits, the French expect their government to step in, as Macron's has proven itself happy to do. In July, for example, his government [nationalized](#) the shipbuilding company STX in order to prevent an Italian competitor from buying it outright. "Macron is only one man, but it is a whole system that needs to change," says Karel Lannoo, CEO of the Center for European Policy Studies in Brussels. "It has to come to people's minds that the state is not there to take care of everything, from A to Z."

That could take years, or perhaps decades, to happen. And until then, some rules are sure to remain—including France's cherished long vacations.

The New York Times Emmanuel Macron, in Greece, Calls for 'Rebuilding' E.U. (online)

Niki Kitsantonis
5-7 minutes

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece, left, greeted President Emmanuel Macron of France on Thursday at Pnyx hill in Athens. Orestis Panagiotou/European Pressphoto Agency

ATHENS — In an appearance filled with symbolism on his first state visit to [Greece](#), President Emmanuel Macron of [France](#) on Thursday outlined his vision for a stronger, more united Europe from the heart of the country whose severe financial problems threatened the [viability of the euro](#).

"I want to talk to you about a new Europe," Mr. Macron he said, proposing a "road map" for the "rebuilding of the [European Union](#)."

In an impassioned speech beneath the Acropolis, on Pnyx Hill, a meeting place for popular assemblies in antiquity, Mr. Macron elaborated on his vision for a stronger union. "Today in Europe, sovereignty and democracy are under threat," he said, calling for national conventions to debate "what kind of Europe we want."

"We must not be scared," he said, "of this extreme ambition."

Europe's challenges, Mr. Macron added, include "how to become a power that can face the U.S. and China."

After [taking office in May](#), Mr. Macron vowed to lead the way in reforming the union, partly by jump-starting the French economy to gain more leverage with European partners, notably Germany. But French unions and civil servants have been riled by spending cuts aimed at keeping the French budget

in line with the E.U.'s deficit limit of 3 percent of gross domestic product, and by [new labor regulations](#) that would make it easier to hire and fire staff.

This raises the specter of the kind of anti-austerity protests common in [Greece](#) at the peak of its crisis.

Mr. Macron has also been leading an effort to toughen screening of major Chinese investments in Europe. He was rebuffed recently in Brussels by a group of countries dependent on China's investments, including Greece.

Widely regarded as a counterweight to German leaders who have championed austerity in Greece and other southern European countries, the French leader expressed solidarity with Greece, which is still struggling with the fallout of a crippling financial crisis that struck in 2010. The Greek crisis was "a failure of Europe," Mr. Macron said.

But while he repeated his calls for a common budget and a eurozone Parliament — ideas opposed by Germany — his speech was otherwise short on specifics.

Prime Minister [Alexis Tsipras](#) of Greece, who spoke before Mr. Macron did, underlined the need for additional support for weaker European Union states, and for a "new democratic contract in Europe." He also called for an end to policies that "fuel cycles of crisis," a reference to the barrage of spending cuts and tax increase.

In a news conference with Mr. Tsipras earlier on Thursday, Mr. Macron said that Europe must protect growth and investments, and that it "must turn a page." As for Greece, he said "growth and recovery are returning." Mr. Macron said Europe should help in talks on Greek debt relief next year, and he called on the International Monetary Fund, one of Greece's foreign

creditors, to make no further demands on the country. The organization, he said, "should not intervene in European programs."

Mr. Macron said the French wanted to invest in Greece's recovery. But while dozens of French entrepreneurs were accompanying Mr. Macron on his visit, it was unclear whether any actual deals would be clinched.

The Greek government had been hoping for something concrete before a scheduled speech by Mr. Tsipras at an international trade fair in Thessaloniki

this weekend where Greek leaders traditionally outline their economic policy for the coming year.

Mr. Tsipras did take the opportunity to hail French involvement in the privatization of the port of Thessaloniki, Greece's second city. "Investors are realizing that, after many years of recession, trust is returning," he said.

Echoing his predecessors, Mr. Macron has repeatedly called for Greece to be relieved of some of its huge debt load — which stands at some 180 percent of gross domestic product, the highest rate in the

eurozone. In his comments on Thursday, however, he acknowledged that debt talks would not begin until next year, when Greece's third international bailout is set to officially end.

The French leader's declarations about growth and improved prospects came as the European Union's statistics service indicated that the bloc is indeed experiencing a robust economic upturn. According to Eurostat figures released on Thursday, the eurozone's gross domestic product expanded by 2.3 percent in the second quarter. The Greek

economy, too, has seen some recovery, its economy growing 0.8 percent in the second quarter, figures showed last week.

Correction: September 8, 2017

Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article misidentified the leader who said Europe should help in talks on Greek debt relief. It was Mr. Macron, not Mr. Tsipras.



Nektaria Stamouli in Athens
4-6 minutes

France's Emmanuel Macron Takes EU Renewal Push to Greece (online)

William Horobin in Paris and Nektaria Stamouli in Athens

location deliberately chosen to symbolize what his aides describe as France's push for democratic renewal in Europe.

The French President has to strike a careful balance, pushing Germany to bend, while keeping its powerful leader, Chancellor Angela Merkel, willing to work closely with him.

To coax Germany, Mr. Macron has proposed a ["new deal" for the eurozone](#), according to which France and other deficit countries will repair their finances and overhaul their economies, as European peers have long advocated. To that end, Mr. Macron has [vowed to impose spending cuts](#) to bring [France's budget within EU rules](#) and is pushing through a contentious [overhaul of France's labor code](#).

"Our eurozone needs to stop a kind of internal civil war where we look at little differences," Mr. Macron said earlier Thursday after a meeting with Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos.

Ms. Merkel has indicated some willingness to consider Mr. Macron's ideas. But the German leader, who faces elections in less than three weeks, has only suggested a small budget that would extend aid with conditions to countries attempting to overhaul their economies. Mr.

Macron, meanwhile, is pushing for a eurozone budget equivalent in size to "several" percentage points of economic output that could invest across the bloc.

"We need the maximum level of ambition," Mr. Macron said after the meeting with Mr. Pavlopoulos.

Mr. Macron said he would rally support behind his road map for change in Europe by holding "democratic conventions" in every country to discuss the changes. The conventions would take place in the first six months of 2018 with the aim of surfacing criticisms to find a consensus, Mr. Macron said.

The plan is risky, analysts say, because it could bring to light euroskepticism and divisions between countries.

"Not every country is ready to have a grass-roots democratic convention. It could trigger a backlash," said Guntram Wolff, director of the Bruegel think tank in Brussels.

Some of Mr. Macron's other ideas have run into hurdles. On the Eastern European leg of his European tour, he [clashed with the Polish government](#) over his attempts to put further restrictions on cheap labor from the east undercutting workers in France.

In Athens, the French leader received a warmer reception, as Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras sees close ties with France and Mr. Macron as a counterbalance to Germany in the eurozone.

Mr. Macron traveled to Athens with about 40 business leaders from Paris, officials say, in an effort to show the eurozone is ready to turn the corner on years of debt and economic crises and Greece is open for business as part of an integrated European economy.

Mr. Macron, as France's economic minister, pushed behind the scenes to keep Greece in the eurozone when the country was teetering on the edge of economic collapse in 2015. Since taking office, his government has lobbied for debt-relief measures in exchange for the Greek government's efforts to cut spending and overhaul its economy.

"France is fulfilling its historical role in the EU with its support to Greece," Mr. Pavlopoulos said.

—Andrea Thomas in Berlin contributed to this article.

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Sept. 7, 2017 3:43 p.m. ET

The European Union will crumble if it isn't overhauled, French President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday in Athens, attempting to reinvigorate his call for greater sharing of financial burdens in the eurozone.

The French leader's trip to Greece is part of a tour of European capitals to marshal support for the changes the 39-year-old says are needed to shelter the eurozone and Europe from further economic or debt crises.

Mr. Macron said he would propose to fellow European leaders a road map in coming weeks for greater economic and social convergence in Europe. For the eurozone, he says it should have new structures to create its own a budget, parliament and executive.

"In Europe, today, sovereignty, democracy and trust are in danger," Mr. Macron said.

Mr. Macron spoke at Pnyx hill, the meeting point of ancient Athenian assembly, a



Bloomberg : Macron Calls for Democratic Conventions to Rebuild EU

@gviscusi More stories by Gregory Viscusi

5-6 minutes

By

September 7, 2017, 2:37 PM EDT

- French president speaks at ancient birthplace of democracy

- Macron reiterates call for euro-zone budget, ministers

Emmanuel Macron

Photographer: Yorgos Karahalios/Bloomberg

French President Emmanuel Macron called for a series of "democratic conventions" across Europe as he vowed that his generation would rebuild citizens' trust in the European Union.

"Are you afraid of a European ambition that will enable us to win back our sovereignty, our democracy, our confidence?" he asked. "Have this crazy ambition. I promise you we will succeed."

Speaking at the Pnyx, a hill that was the center of Athenian democracy almost 2,500 years ago, Macron began speaking a few words of Greek to pay tribute to the founders of the city state. Switching to French, and with a stunning view of the Acropolis behind him, he

promised to unveil a "road map" by the end of the year for introducing greater democracy into the EU and the euro zone.

Rejecting the calls of populist parties to retreat behind national borders, Macron said "true sovereignty" over the economy and borders can only be achieved at the EU level. "Real sovereignty can only be built through Europe, by combining our forces, not by each one of us turning in on ourselves," the French leader said. "Our challenges are no longer

at the national level. Nations have their place, but the real scale is Europe."

Macron, 39, has shown a sense of symbolism since his May election: choosing the European rather than the French anthem the night of his victory, hosting Russia's Vladimir Putin at Versailles, and treating U.S. President Donald Trump to a bone-crunching handshake at NATO. He chose Greece as his first state visit because it's the birthplace of democracy and because its 2010 bailout laid bare the dysfunctions in the euro area that Macron has vowed to fix. Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, 43, spoke before

Macron, who littered his speech with citations from the Athenian statesman Pericles.

'Critical Study'

In his election campaign, Macron frequently linked French and European issues, saying France needed to reform its economy to win the confidence of Germany and other northern countries to win them over to accepting greater European integration.

"Our generation can find Europe again by starting with a deep critical study of what went wrong," Macron

said. "We can't leave it to those who hate Europe."

Macron, who defeated anti-EU candidate Marine Le Pen in May, said the conventions across the EU he's calling for would "decide what Europe we want." The EU had lost the trust of its citizens, he said, by focusing on "absurd" rules because it had lost the confidence to pursue grander ambitions.

After meeting Tsipras earlier Thursday, Macron said he expects Greece to be able to exit its bailout program when it expires next August and that he supports easing Greece's debt load. Macron took 40

French company leaders with him to Athens, saying their interest in investing in Greece is a sign of confidence in the country's recovery.

In his speech, Macron reiterated his call for a common budget for the euro zone with an "executive that is answerable to an elected euro parliament." He also called for political parties to present Europe-wide lists in the 2019 EU Parliament elections.

Before it's here, it's on the Bloomberg Terminal. [LEARN MORE](#)

CNBC : Macron hails democracy in Athens — and takes a sideswipe at the IMF

Joumana Bercetche

7-8 minutes

French President Emmanuel Macron delivered an ambitious vision for how the European Union should reform, but used the opportunity to lash out the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for its role during the euro zone debt crisis.

Macron was in Athens for a two-day visit, accompanied by 40 business executives from companies including Total and Vinci in a trip designed to encourage investment and show goodwill towards a country which is emerging from a multi-year recession.

In the historic speech Thursday on the Pnyx hill in Athens - the founding place of democracy - Macron emphasized the cultural ties that bind Greece and France together, and spelled out his idea for a more cohesive euro zone, warning that "sovereignty, democracy and trust"

are all "in danger."

He went on to stress the importance of bloc-wide structural reforms and reiterating calls for further fiscal coordination via the creation of a central euro zone budget and finance ministry.

Notably he posited the creation of a new European Monetary Fund to handle future crises, adding that "as far as I am concerned, the IMF had no place in EU affairs."

Greece has undergone three economic bailouts since 2010 that were accompanied by substantial austerity measures including tax increases and social security cuts. The EU and IMF oversaw the implementation of these measures - which has prompted backlash from a population that saw its unemployment rate rocket to 28 percent and output contract by more than 20 percent in the midst of the crisis.

The IMF has typically stuck to a "two-line" approach regarding Greece: The organization believes

there is a need to keep undertaking structural reforms to make the Greek economy competitive, while also implementing some form of debt relief for long-term sustainability. In Macron's speech he also added that while he also welcomes Greek reforms, they must "be accompanied by measures to lighten Greek debt."

Etienne Laurent | Reuters

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

The IMF is yet to officially comment on Macron's speech on Thursday.

The visit also comes at an interesting time for Greece's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras who himself may be looking to get a popularity boost on the back of Macron's symbolic visit.

In June, the Parliament passed further fiscal measures following the results of the bailout review in December. The economy is just starting to grow again and with unemployment on the decline, Tsipras - who is lagging behind rival party New Democracy in the polls - will look to capitalize on the positive comments from the French president to further encourage investments into the country and pave the way for an eventual full return to markets once the third bailout program ends in Autumn 2018.

The bigger question is one of debt relief (link to my former article).

President Macron will be back in France Friday night to host German Chancellor Angela Merkel. He is set to unveil a further roadmap for euro zone integration in the coming months, likely waiting until the German elections are over. In August, Merkel said she backed Macron's proposals for a euro zone budget and ministry.



France urges greater European investment in Greece

ABC News

3-4 minutes

French President [Emmanuel Macron](#) urged European firms to step up their investments in Greece to help reduce the cash-strapped country's growing reliance on non-European countries, notably China.

Addressing a round-table of Greek and French business leaders Friday, Macron said Greece was "forced" to choose non-European investors "because the Europeans were not there."

French enterprises, he said with certainty, would ramp up their investments in Greece, a country that's spent much of the past

decade hurtling from one crisis to the next and seen its economy shrink by a quarter and unemployment and poverty levels swell alarmingly.

"We want Korean, Chinese and American investments, these are very important," he said. "But if there are no European investors, then we are forced to select non-European investors."

A failure to respond, he said, would show that Europeans have "no faith in Europe."

Greece has relied on international bailouts to stay afloat, after losing bond market access in 2010. Following years of belt-tightening that's seen improvements in the country's annual budget, Greece's

bailout era is due to end in the summer of 2018.

In return for the money that's prevented the country's bankruptcy, Greece has been compelled to institute a wide array of economic reforms, including the sale of a raft of state-owned assets, such as airports, ports, railways and real estate. Many of those have ended up in the hands of non-European investors.

In two of the biggest privatization projects, China's Cosco expanded its stake in Greece's main port of Piraeus to 67 percent, while Chinese and Gulf investors are involved in an 8 billion-euro (\$9.6 billion) development scheme at the site of the old Athens airport, which

had also been used for the 2004 Olympic Games.

Macron's comments come a day after he met Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and presented his vision for Europe in a speech at the site of the ancient Athenian assembly, seen as an enduring icon of democracy worldwide.

Speaking with the ancient Acropolis as a backdrop, he urged the [European Union](#) to carry out six-month national reviews on EU reforms before imposing them. That's been interpreted as a signal that the new French president is distancing himself somewhat from the German-backed approach that's been based on fiscal discipline within the 19-country [eurozone](#).

"It would be a mistake to abandon the European ideal," Macron said Thursday. "We must rediscover the enthusiasm that the union was

founded upon and change, not with technocrats and not with bureaucracy."

Later Friday on his second and final day in Greece, Macron is due to visit French cultural institutions in Athens.

NEW YORK POST

China's president hopes France will restart talks on North Korea

By Reuters
2 minutes

BEIJING — Chinese President Xi Jinping told French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday that he hoped France could play a "constructive role" in restarting talks on North Korea, state TV said, days after the reclusive country conducted its sixth nuclear test.

"The Korean peninsula nuclear

issue in the end can only be resolved through peaceful means, including through dialogue and consultations," Xi said in a telephone call with Macron.

Macron said France was working to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula and valued China's role in resolving the issue, China Central Television said.

China hosted the on-again, off-again six-party talks on North Korea, including Japan, Russia, the United

States and the two Koreas, that fizzled out in 2008.

Tension on the Korean peninsula has escalated as North Korea's young leader, Kim Jong Un, has stepped up the development of weapons in defiance of U.N. sanctions, testing a string of missiles this year, including one flying over Japan, and [conducting its sixth and biggest nuclear test](#) on Sunday.

Experts believe the isolated regime is close to its goal of developing a powerful nuclear weapon capable of

reaching the United States, something U.S. President Donald Trump has vowed to prevent.

Xi discussed North Korea in calls with Trump on Wednesday and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Thursday.

Trump has urged China, North Korea's lone major ally, to do more to rein in its neighbor.

The New York Times

An 88-Foot-High Keith Haring Mural Is Restored in Paris

4-5 minutes

Roslyn Sulcas

"Tower," Keith Haring's exterior-stairwell painting at the Necker-Enfants Malades hospital in Paris's 15th arrondissement. Jerome de Noirmont/Keith Haring Foundation, Noirmont Art Production, Paris

"I made this painting to amuse the sick children in this hospital, now and in the future," the American artist [Keith Haring](#) wrote in his diary in 1987. He had just spent several days leaning off a crane, as he and his boyfriend Juan Rivera painted the exterior of a stairwell at the Necker-Enfants Malades hospital in Paris's 15th arrondissement.

The 88.5-foot-high artwork, "Tower," was revealed at the hospital in its newly restored state on Thursday.

But it almost didn't have a future: Heavily damaged by weather and wear, the stairwell and its exterior painting were threatened with demolition when the hospital began to plan building work in 2011. After a fund-raising operation spearheaded by the gallerist [Jérôme de Noirmont](#), in conjunction with the [Keith Haring Foundation](#), the work has been painstakingly restored by William Shank and Antonio Rava, who also restored Haring's "[Tuttomondo](#)" in Pisa, Italy, created a year before the artist's [death](#) in 1990, at the age of 31.

The Keith Haring work. "Tower" had been heavily damaged by weather and wear. It has been restored by William Shank and Antonio Rava. Jerome de Noirmont/Keith Haring Foundation, Noirmont Art Production, Paris

Mr. Shank, a former chief conservator at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, wrote in an unpublished essay that Mr. Haring called the cylindrical emergency stairwell at the Necker hospital the "ugly building."

Mr. Shank added: "His freehand design depicts a large pregnant woman, his signature crawling 'radiant babies,' and a handful of bouncing figures of adults interacting with children. All of the figures were applied in thick black lines, at close-range and without preliminary sketches, over free-form shapes of bright yellows, greens, blues and reds."

Mr. Shank said that in 2011, when the mural was first assessed, its condition was so bad that there was doubt it could be saved. The conservators eventually decided to keep the original paintwork to save

Mr. Haring's brush strokes, and to clean and varnish, adding new paint only when necessary. (Le Parisien newspaper [described](#) this more succinctly as a "mega-lifting.")

The restoration of "Tower" is part of a first phase of renovation at the Necker-Enfants Malades, Paris's primary pediatric hospital. Will Shank/Keith Haring Foundation, Noirmont Art Production, Paris

"Tower" is not the only Haring public artwork in Paris. His "[Life of Christ](#)" triptych — the last work he created before his death — was donated in 2003 by the Haring Foundation to the [Saint-Eustache](#) church in the center of the city. The restoration of "Tower" is part of the first phase of renovation at the Necker-Enfants Malades, Paris's primary pediatric hospital. A 97,000-square-foot garden will be planted around the mural in a second phase.

The New York Times

Brexit? For Now, E.U. Leaves Fights to the U.K.

Steven Erlanger
8-11 minutes

An anti-Brexit campaign group in London in August. Tolga Akmen/European Pressphoto Agency

BRUSSELS — The vexed question of Britain's exit from the European Union, or Brexit, is all-consuming there, the stuff of daily leaks, denials, political proclamations and banner headlines in the nation's newspapers, tabloid and otherwise.

Things are much calmer on the other side of the channel, where for the European Union, already looking beyond Britain to other challenges,

Brexit is a second- or third-order issue.

"For Britain, it's a question of head and heart, but for us it's become a much smaller question," Margrethe Vestager, the European Union's commissioner for competition, said in an interview.

The European Union has huge issues bearing down: shoring up the euro; handling Greek debt; coping with the challenge to democratic values in countries like Poland and Hungary; and terrorism, security, migration and borders.

With those matters in mind, Ms. Vestager said, the European Union leaves Brexit to its chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, while "we concentrate on the E.U. 27," the bloc minus Britain. "We think about

how it will be a different Europe. It changes the debate."

There is "sadness," but Brexit is a "sovereign national decision," and "we have no desire to punish Britain or 'teach it a lesson,'" she said on the margins of [the Ambrosetti Forum](#) in Italy, a gathering last weekend of senior European officials. "We want a good future relationship."

Ms. Vestager is from Denmark, one of Britain's usual allies in the European Union. But British efforts to lobby countries like Denmark, the Netherlands and Poland separately about the Brexit negotiations have been sharply rebuffed, senior European Union officials said.

Mr. Barnier, himself a former French minister and European commissioner, emphasized at the

forum that maintaining European Union solidarity was paramount [in the Brexit talks](#). The terms of Britain's exit (what he called the "divorce," and which is so preoccupying the British) were secondary.

"The future of Europe is far more important than Brexit," he said. "It's a serious issue but should not be on our leaders' radar screens all the time." He is "not aggressive," he said. "I don't want to punish or to be naïve."

The border between Britain and the Republic of Ireland is an issue in the Brexit negotiations. Andrew Testa for The New York Times

Like many European leaders, Mr. Barnier bemoaned Britain's apparently [intractable confusion](#)

about what it wants from Brexit. He put that down to the fact that the consequences of leaving the single market and customs union had “important consequences that perhaps were not explained well to the British people.”

Britain cannot, he said in so many words, have its cake and eat it, as its foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, famously and ill-advisedly [said a year ago](#). That is to say, relations with a Britain outside the bloc “could never be better than with a member state.”

The bloc, Mr. Barnier said, “will be intransigent on the single market and the four freedoms,” which include the right to work and travel freely within the European Union, “and a third country cannot imagine we will destabilize or make more fragile our own model” in any deal.

“So there is something pedagogical in our approach,” he said, a remark that infuriated the British news media, which saw it, probably accurately, as patronizing — adding to the ugly tone of much of the public discussion of Brexit. Mr. Barnier himself later commented on Twitter, somewhat unconvincingly, that he meant his remark generally.

Still, there is no question that significant differences remain on crucial early issues. Foremost among them are [Britain's exit bill](#), which Brussels insists should include British contributions to the 2014 to 2020 budget that it already agreed to, even after it formally leaves; how to manage a [new E.U. border](#) between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic; and how to

define and adjudicate the rights of the some 3.2 million European Union citizens living in Britain (and the approximately 1.2 million Britons living in the bloc) after Brexit.

The hope is that there will be substantial agreement on these issues before a European Union summit in mid-October, but most officials expect no serious decisions to be made until after the German elections on Sept. 24.

But the British position [remains in flux](#), to put it kindly. An early draft of a British government position paper, [published by The Guardian](#) on Wednesday, typically caused a furor. The paper would end “rights-based, unconditional free movement” after a 2019 Brexit and make it more difficult for low-skilled European Union workers to settle in Britain and harder for those already there to bring in family members.

The paper was quickly dismissed by the government, saying it was just a policy paper and had not been approved by any ministers.

The chief British negotiator, David Davis, told British legislators on Tuesday that the two sides still had “significant differences” and “very different legal stances” over Britain's financial settlement. He insisted to legislators that Britain's negotiating stance was “substantially more flexible and pragmatic than that of the E.U.,” and said he “urged the E.U. to be more imaginative and flexible in its approach.”

The chief Brexit negotiators — Michel Barnier, right, of the European Union, and David Davis of Britain — during a news conference

in Brussels. Geert Vanden Wijngaert/Associated Press

Mr. Barnier and the Europeans have rejected British efforts to tie future trading relationships into the discussions about the divorce bill, the Irish border and citizens' rights, despite British insistence that the border cannot be discussed in isolation.

At the same time, Britain's opposition Labour Party, which has been full of contradictions itself on Brexit, now says that it wants to leave but remain inside the single market and the customs union for a lengthy transition period, which is essentially the stance of some members of the Conservative government like Philip Hammond, the chancellor of the Exchequer.

Some in Labour want such a status permanently, but that would not seem possible under current European Union law. A lengthy transition would mean continuing to pay into the E.U. budget over several years, which would sharply reduce the divorce bill. But it would also delay Britain's effective exit, annoying voters who have not shifted their positions, opinion polls indicate, on the desirability of Brexit.

Labour has also announced that it would oppose the government's bill next week to enable the transposition of European law onto the British statute book in preparation for Brexit. Labour does not have enough votes to block the bill, but argues that it would give the government too much power and needs amendment. Still, the party is

risking criticism from its members who voted for Brexit.

The Europeans consider Britain's position greatly complicated by internal squabbling within the Conservative Party. Prime Minister Theresa May is supposed to provide more clarity in a speech this month, but part of the British confusion stems from the lack of clarity about what Brexit actually means in terms of a future relationship with the rest of Europe, and that is far from resolved.

But a more serious problem, according to Enrico Letta, the former Italian prime minister, stems from putting Mrs. May, who favored remaining in the European Union, in charge of the government.

“It's clear from everything she says that she has to overcome this ‘original sin,’ so has to sound tougher,” Mr. Letta said. “It would be better to have a success with a Brexiter, who would have more credibility with Britons and more room to compromise.”

Combined with the fierce British popular press, which favors Brexit, there is “less room for maneuver,” he said. “And in any negotiation, you need room for maneuver.”

While Brexit remains a procedural headache for the European Union, Mr. Letta said, it also provided an alert for Europeans, reminding them of the value of the bloc, however flawed.

“A year ago the British were united and we were divided,” he said. “Now, it's the reverse.”



Angela Merkel's rival Martin Schulz wanted to shake Germany. But now Germans ask why.

<https://www.facebook.com/griff.witte>

7-9 minutes

LEIPZIG, GERMANY — There was a time only months ago when Martin Schulz — a high school dropout, former bookseller and political unknown to many in this country despite a decades-long career — seemed poised to pull off the German equivalent of Mission: Impossible.

After the blunt ex-president of the European Parliament became leader of Germany's center-left Social Democrats, the long-moribund party's [popularity surged](#) as backers clambered aboard “the Schulz train.” Commentators excitedly speculated whether he could dethrone Angela Merkel after 12 years in power. Schulz himself

vowed a “conquest of the chancellery.”

But as that early-spring promise has met the reality of a late-summer German election campaign, it feels very distant.

With less than three weeks to go before voters choose their next government, Schulz and his party trail far behind in second place, while another Merkel term as chancellor — it would be her fourth — has taken on an air of inevitability. The Schulz train, once chugging ahead mightily, appears to be stalled on the tracks.

If Schulz's party does lose, the defeat would mark the latest in a long run of setbacks for center-left parties that have their roots in the West's industrial age but have struggled to define themselves in the 21st century.

With three weeks until election day, incumbent chancellor Angela Merkel is leading most polls. Many Germans, however, remain unconvinced by Merkel and her main opponent, Martin Schulz. With three weeks until election day, incumbent chancellor Angela Merkel is leading most polls. Many Germans, however, remain unconvinced by Merkel and her main (Reuters)

With three weeks until election day, incumbent chancellor Angela Merkel is leading most polls. Many Germans, however, remain unconvinced by Merkel and her main opponent, Martin Schulz. (Reuters)

[\[In German debate, Merkel and her challenger go after Trump, but not each other\]](#)

But it would also reflect the particular challenge of vying against Merkel, a politician of the center-right who adopts many positions on the left, leaving little room for a coherent opposition.

It doesn't help the SPD, as Schulz's party is known, that it has served as Merkel's coalition partner for two out of her three terms, including the current one.

“For 12 years, the SPD has more or less supported Angela Merkel's policies,” said Gesine Schwan, a political scientist and Social Democratic veteran who was twice the party's candidate for president. “It's very difficult to show up now and say, ‘We want to do things completely differently.’”

That dilemma was on display one recent afternoon as Schulz attempted to rally the faithful in

Leipzig, an eastern German city where the mix of university students, factory workers and government servants has long made it friendly turf for candidates of the left.

Schulz's party — Germany's oldest — got its start here as the General German Workers Association more than 150 years ago, and for 40 minutes on a warm August day, the stout, bearded and bespectacled Schulz punched the air and banged a lectern in the shadow of a 12th-century church where Johann Sebastian Bach once wowed the locals with his concertos.

The crowd applauded solemnly as Schulz invoked the SPD's history in standing up to Hitler, a position that cost party leaders their lives. It cheered lustily as he berated President Trump for his equivocal response to white-nationalist violence in Charlottesville. A poster of Germany's Social Democratic Party candidate for chancellor, Martin Schulz, is seen during an election rally in Leipzig, Germany, August 29. (Matthias Schumann/Reuters)

But when Schulz came to his critique of Merkel for not doing enough to ensure all Germans benefit from a growing economy, ("Our country isn't fair. We want to change that."), the best his audience

of nearly 1,000 in the city's central square could do was clap dutifully.

The muted response was in keeping with the overall mood in modern Leipzig, a city that feels economically prosperous but [politically sleepy](#) — much like the country overall. With a vibrant central shopping district that is full of organic smoothie joints and high-end home decor shops, some residents said they were reluctant to shake up what's working.

"Everywhere else is unstable. The U.S. is unstable. But what Angela Merkel does is keep this country stable," said Christoph Von Radowitz, a 51-year-old who works for a company that makes electronic vehicles and who said he showed up at Schulz's rally out of curiosity, not support.

Even those in the mood for change said they were unsure whether Schulz was the right agent.

Philip Fiedler, a 20-year-old student, said he disliked the close cooperation between Germany's top two parties — "they're like best friends" — and wants more debate. But he was willing to give Schulz a chance, if only for a somewhat unusual reason.

"He's not one of the best speakers or one of the smartest minds," said Fiedler, who said he was still

deciding which party to support. "He's just some normal person. But that's interesting."

That intrigue over Schulz's regular-guy persona was in fact a big part of the surge in support he experienced in late winter and early spring, said Hendrik Träger, a University of Leipzig political scientist.

Schulz's background as a school dropout from a working-class family, who has openly discussed his battle with alcoholism, makes him unusual in the relatively elite and highly educated world of German politics.

Schulz, 61, has been a politician for decades, rising from mayor of his small western German home town to member of the European Parliament and, up until late last year, its president. But he was relatively unknown on the German political scene when he [took over as SPD leader](#) early this year.

At first, Träger said, voters saw him as a fresh face with a background they could relate to.

"He was seen as the new Messiah, the big hope for the SPD and for Germany," he said. "But when voters found out more about him, they learned that he was part of the establishment."

As his biography lost its appeal, his message also failed to resonate. His

background may be working class. But his proposals are hardly the left-wing populism of a Jeremy Corbyn or a Bernie Sanders.

"He talks a lot about social justice and social equality, but he's very vague about it," Träger said. "What, exactly, is supposed to be more just?"

Perhaps Schulz's last chance to differentiate himself from Merkel before the vote was a nationally televised debate on Sunday where he largely pulled his punches.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

That may be strategic: After the election, one of the likeliest scenarios is another grand coalition between Germany's two largest parties, which would put Schulz in position to become one of Merkel's top ministers.

But Schwan, the political scientist and SPD veteran, cautioned that doing another deal with Merkel would be suicide for a party already struggling to define its reason for being.

"If that happens," she said, "then for the next 20 years, there's no chance for the SPD."



Spanish Court Suspends Catalonia's Vote on Independence

Jeannette Neumann

5-7 minutes

Updated Sept. 7, 2017 6:48 p.m. ET

BARCELONA—Spain's constitutional court on Thursday moved to block Catalonia from holding a referendum on separating from Spain, prompting vows from regional officials to push ahead with the vote in defiance of the ruling.

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy had asked the court earlier on Thursday to declare illegal the laws enabling the referendum, which were passed by the Catalan regional parliament just a day earlier. Late Thursday night, the court said it agreed unanimously to suspend the legislation while it weighs whether a referendum on independence breaches Spain's constitution. The court has previously ruled against Catalonia's steps to hold an independence vote.

Catalonia regional President Carles Puigdemont said his government and other separatists were undeterred by the court's decision.

"Democracy in Catalonia won't be suspended by a council of ministers or a court that's lost its legitimacy," Mr. Puigdemont said in televised remarks. The regional government was "staying apace of the preparations" for the vote to split from Spain, he added.

Thursday's announcement raises the stakes [in the conflict](#) between the central government in Madrid and the regional government in Barcelona, the capital of the Catalonia region, which has set the referendum on secession from Spain for Oct. 1.

Separately, state prosecutor José Manuel Maza said earlier Thursday his office would pursue criminal cases against the lawmakers in Catalonia's regional legislature, which is controlled by pro-independence parties, who approved the bill on Wednesday to hold the referendum. Mr. Maza said he would also go after regional government officials who have begun to organize the vote.

Mr. Maza called on Spain's national and regional Catalan police forces to seize anything that could be used in the voting, such as ballot boxes, on the legal grounds of disobedience,

malfeasance and misappropriation of public funds.

A spokesman for the prosecutors' office said it would likely be a matter of days before formal paperwork supporting the cases is filed.

The actions announced by the state prosecutors office "in no way change" the Catalan regional government's plans to hold the referendum, spokesman Jordi Turull said on Thursday. "Convening a referendum is not a crime," he added.

The central government, led by Mr. Rajoy, a conservative, says national courts have already ruled that any bid for independence is unconstitutional and that the referendum won't happen.

The Catalan regional government and pro-independence parties have sought to justify their defiance of Madrid, saying the courts are an arm of the government and rejecting their interpretation of Spain's constitution.

The aim of the central government, Mr. Rajoy said, is "to avoid the holding of an illegal referendum that would break national sovereignty,

destroy the peaceful coexistence we have shared during the last 40 years of democratic life, and also end the regime of self-government of Catalonia." Spain returned to democracy in the 1970s after the death of longtime dictator Francisco Franco and the country's new constitution gave significant autonomy to Catalonia.

Mr. Rajoy added: "We all have cause for concern, because never in our recent history have we witnessed an attack of this nature on our pact of coexistence."

Before the announcement in Madrid, Mr. Puigdemont expressed determination to proceed with the vote. "We will defend to the end the right of all Catalans to vote, decide and be the ones who decide their future," he said. The regional parliament would declare independence from Spain within 48 hours if a majority of those who participate in the referendum vote yes.

The conflict leaves Madrid and Catalonia, a wealthy region in northeastern Spain, at loggerheads just weeks before the scheduled referendum, in which voters are to be asked whether they want

Catalonia to be an independent state.

Political parties opposed to the holding of the ballot have said they would boycott the vote. That could tilt the results, since supporters are expected to turn out and the regional government has set no minimum participation for the vote to be considered legitimate.

The situation, and the looming prospect of a vote favoring independence, present Mr. Rajoy with a delicate balancing act. He must show he is making good on his promise to prevent the referendum and uphold what he says is Spain's rule of law. But he must avoid overplaying his hand, analysts and lawmakers say, since that could

further inflame independence sentiment.

"The strategy of the secessionists is to provoke the central government into an overreaction in order to increase international awareness about the Catalan cause," Antonio Barroso, a political analyst at Teneo Intelligence, a consulting firm, wrote in a research note.

"Both sides are reaching the cliff in their ongoing game of chicken, and things are likely to get worse before they get better," he added.

Write to Jeannette Neumann at jeannette.neumann@wsj.com

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INTERNATIONAL

**The
New York
Times**

How the U.S. Could Respond to Another North Korean Missile Test

David E. Sanger
7-9 minutes

Korean People's Army soldiers attended a celebration this week in Pyongyang, North Korea, for scientists involved in carrying out its largest nuclear blast to date. Kim Won-Jin/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

South Korea's prime minister is saying publicly what American officials will not: In the next few days, intelligence reports predict, [North Korea](#) will launch another intercontinental ballistic missile.

"A special measure is urgently needed to stop their recklessness," the prime minister, Lee Nak-yeon, told defense ministers in Seoul on Thursday.

He may be wrong about the timing. But at the White House and the Pentagon, and out in the Pacific, American officials are scrambling to decide how the United States should react, particularly if the North Koreans demonstrate without doubt that they can reach the American territory of Guam, or even a distance equivalent to striking the West Coast of the United States.

Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis said this week that President Trump had been presented with all military options and would meet threats with a "massive military response" that would be "effective and overwhelming." Mr. Trump's aides will not indicate whether fueling up another ICBM constitutes a threat, saying they want to keep North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, guessing.

The options for a nonmilitary response are becoming clear. On Wednesday, the United States circulated to members of the United Nations Security Council [a draft resolution](#) that would require all countries to cut off the North's oil and all refined petroleum products;

it would also allow the Security Council to designate North Korean ships that could be boarded and inspected using "all necessary measures," meaning whatever force was needed.

Ultimately, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson has said, the idea is to force North Korea to the negotiating table, but only after it begins to show a willingness to stop testing and gradually disarm.

But as several of Mr. Trump's advisers have noted in recent days, United Nations resolutions and negotiation strategies are for the medium term. How to handle the launch is the immediate, urgent question. Here is a look at the president's choices, and their downsides:

A Pre-emptive Strike

Mr. Trump told friends that he was proud of the moment in April when he ordered an airstrike on an air base where the Syrian government was believed to have launched chemical weapons attacks. The bombing unfolded during a visit to the United States by President Xi Jinping of China, giving Mr. Trump the chance to tell him about it during dinner and to send an unspoken message about what might happen in North Korea if it, like Syria, crossed a "red line."

Technologically, it would not be difficult to destroy North Korea's missiles. American warships off the Korean coast could easily hit the North Korean launch site, which is near the Sea of Japan. They might even provide warning to the North Koreans to evacuate the base.

But unlike the Syrians, the North Koreans know how to strike back — on the South Korean capital, Seoul, or American bases in Japan. Not long ago, President Moon Jae-in of South Korea said he had a veto on American attacks on North Korea, and promised "there will be no war" on the Korean Peninsula. (The Americans have a different view,

saying that when it comes to defending American territory, no other country has veto rights.)

But destroying one missile would do nothing to the North's many others. And the United States might have a difficult time proving that the missile was truly threatening without proof of where it was aimed.

American officials could argue, though, that Mr. Kim offered an unobvious hint when [he was photographed recently](#) by state-run media examining maps of targets in Guam, including an American air base that houses bombers that can reach North Korea.

Shooting Down Over the Pacific

Can the U.S. Stop a North Korean Missile?

The United States uses two different categories of missile defense to counter North Korea. Here's how they work and — sometimes — how they don't.

By ROBIN STEIN and DREW JORDAN on August 27, 2017. [Watch in Times Video »](#)

Never has there been a bigger moment for American missile defenses — or greater reluctance to use them.

In the vision the Pentagon has sold to Congress for decades, the warhead of an adversary's missile could be tracked and destroyed in mid-flight or closer to landing, known as the terminal phase. That's the event for which the United States often trains, with decidedly mixed results.

If the North Korean missile's target was Guam, or the waters near it, shooting it down would be an iffy proposition. The first shots would be taken, most likely, by Aegis destroyers armed with what are called Standard missiles, the most successful antimissile system in the American arsenal. But to make it work, the destroyers would have to be in the right place, former senior

officials say. A Thaad missile defense system, like the ones the United States [has placed in South Korea](#), could also be employed.

If the missile were headed toward the continental United States, it could be taken out by one of the antimissile systems in Alaska and California. In tests, they hit the target about half the time, under perfect conditions.

"That's the approach I'd take," former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry said during a visit to Washington a few months ago, as tensions mounted. "Ten years ago I would have advocated destroying it on the pad, but today that's too risky. Intercepting it looks far more like a purely defensive measure."

But American officials are haunted by one question: What if they miss? It would be obvious to all. That could leave Mr. Trump humiliated and call into question the wisdom of antimissile defenses, which the United States has spent \$300 billion to develop.

Let It Happen

This has been the approach thus far: Track the missile, determine quickly whether it is a threat to a populated area and let it fall into the sea. That is the most cautious response, and Mr. Trump could use it to press China and Russia to drop their objections to more United Nations sanctions.

But it is not cost-free. In each test, the North Koreans get more information to perfect their future launches. And after Mr. Trump warned that any threat to the United States would be met with "fire and fury," he is acutely aware that making no active response might make it look as if he had ignored his own red line, exactly what he accused President Barack Obama of doing with Syria.

Other Options

In the cyber age, perhaps the most tempting solution for presidents is to reach for America's most stealthy weapon. That is what Mr. Obama did in 2014, when he [ordered an](#)

[acceleration of cyberattacks](#) aimed at preventing launches.

But there is debate over the effectiveness of that operation and little visible evidence that the

cyberattacks, if continuing, are working now. Perhaps the United States is waiting for the right moment, but as one former senior

cyber operator said, no target is harder than North Korea.

And the North Koreans know it.

**The
Washington
Post**

Trump renews threat of force against North Korea over nuclear weapons

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

7-9 minutes

President Trump renewed a threat Thursday to use military force against North Korea and raised doubts about whether negotiations could succeed in resolving the brewing crisis over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons.

"Military action would certainly be an option. Is it inevitable? Nothing's inevitable," Trump said during a news conference. "It would be great if something else could be worked out. We would have to look at all of the details, all of the facts."

U.S. officials said an offer to negotiate with North Korea remains on the table, but Trump has repeatedly discounted the value of beginning another effort to talk North Korea out of its arsenal.

All previous efforts have failed, and North Korea now possesses both a stockpile of weapons and missiles capable of threatening U.S. shores.

"We've had presidents for 25 years now, they've been talking, talking, talking, and the day after an agreement is reached, new work begins in North Korea" on its rogue nuclear weapons program, Trump said. "So I would prefer not going the route of the military, but it's something certainly that could happen."

China's foreign minister said sanctions alone aren't the answer, but added his country will support further moves by the U.N. against North Korea. China's foreign minister said sanctions alone aren't the answer, but added his country will support further moves by the U.N. against North Korea. (Associated Press)

China's foreign minister said sanctions alone aren't the answer, but added his country will support further moves by the U.N. against North Korea. (Associated Press)

[\[Trump's North Korean options have growing military tone\]](#)

The United States is seeking the toughest-yet U.N. sanctions against

North Korea in response to its latest nuclear test, according to a draft resolution circulated Wednesday. The sanctions would stop all oil and natural gas exports and freeze the government's foreign financial assets.

North Korea greeted the proposal with a threat. "We will respond to the barbaric plotting around sanctions and pressure by the United States with powerful counter measures of our own," read a statement delivered at an Asian economic summit in Russia on Thursday.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Thursday that Beijing would support further U.N.-imposed "measures" against North Korea following its latest nuclear test Sunday but stopped short of saying whether China would back crippling economic sanctions such as a halt to fuel shipments.

Trump has put a priority on pressuring China to "do more" on North Korea. After Sunday's nuclear test, he tweeted that Pyongyang has become a "threat and embarrassment to China"—a critique of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

China — the main economic lifeline for North Korea — has long been hesitant to completely cut off the crude oil supply to North Korea, worried that economic instability could bring a flood of refugees to the Chinese border and the potential fall of its ally North Korea to U.S. ally South Korea.

"Given the new developments on the Korean Peninsula, China agrees that the U.N. Security Council should respond further by taking necessary measures," Wang, the foreign minister, told reporters. "We believe that sanctions and pressure are only half of the key to resolving the issue. The other half is dialogue and negotiation."

Trump did not address sanctions as he spoke at the White House, where he appeared alongside Sheikh Sabah Ahmed al-Sabah, the visiting Kuwait ruler.

Trump did not rule out an eventual U.S. strategy of containing North Korea's nuclear weapons instead of

eradicating them, saying he will not bargain with North Korea in public.

"I don't put my negotiations on the table, unlike past administrations. I don't talk about them," he said. "But I can tell you that North Korea's behaving badly and it's got to stop, Okay?"

[\[We'll see.' Trump says of potential attack on North Korea\]](#)

A U.S. official who briefed reporters later Thursday suggested that Trump is merely being careful and has not backed off the demand that North Korea give up its nuclear weapons. That demand has been a mainstay of U.S. policy for more than a decade and was the basis for extensive negotiations under former president George W. Bush, which ultimately failed.

"The president likes to keep his cards close to his chest, especially on matters of national security," the senior administration official said.

"I wouldn't read too much into the absence of an assertion" that North Korea must renounce its nuclear weapons, said the official, who requested anonymity to discuss some aspects of the evolving U.S. policy toward North Korea.

The kind of nuclear deterrence policy that the United States adopted toward the former Soviet Union would probably not work with North Korea, the official said. That policy relied on each nation's interest in self-preservation to prevent either from launching a first strike.

"We are very concerned that North Korea might not be able to be deterred, that there are real differences between North Korea and the small, small group of nations that have these weapons," the official said.

The official said the United States is worried about a rising threat of "miscalculation" by North Korea, which may think the warnings of U.S. force are hollow. That partly explains the recent emphasis by Trump, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and others on the overwhelming strength of U.S. military capabilities.

"Our military has never been stronger," Trump said Thursday. "Each day, new equipment is delivered; new and beautiful equipment, the best in the world — the best anywhere in the world, by far."

"Hopefully, we're not going to have to use it on North Korea. If we do use it on North Korea, it will be a very sad day for North Korea."

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has also invited negotiations under the right circumstances. Last month, he sought to reassure North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that the United States does not want to oust him or invade his country.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert insisted the strategy of applying diplomatic pressure on North Korea, while slow going, is effective. Several countries, including Spain, Peru and Kuwait, she said, have set numerical limits on guest workers and Pyongyang's diplomats.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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

"It will take time to help remove that money that the DPRK is getting, and which we believe is going to illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programs," she said, using the abbreviation for North Korea's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The threat of force and the offer of negotiations can coexist, U.S. officials said.

"We've left the door open to talks with the North Koreans from the earliest days of this administration," said an official, noting that Pyongyang has responded with ballistic missile tests, Sunday's test of what it claims was a hydrogen bomb and other provocations. "Their actions have spoken louder than words. It's just not the time to negotiate with North Korea. That's plainly clear to us."

Rauhala reported from Beijing. Carol Morello in Washington and Luna Lin in Beijing contributed to this report.

International Sanctions Against North Korea Are Being Subverted, U.N. Panel Finds

Ian Talley

4-5 minutes

Updated Sept. 7, 2017 12:27 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—United Nations member countries are helping North Korea evade [international sanctions meant to halt its nuclear-weapons program](#), a new U.N. report alleges, including through prohibited trade in arms and commodities and financing.

The draft report, prepared by the U.N.'s panel of experts on North Korea for the Security Council and reviewed by The Wall Street Journal, comes as the [U.S. is urging the sanctions be strengthened](#) in response to North Korea's latest nuclear and missile tests. It reinforces longstanding U.S. complaints about shortfalls in compliance, which lead Washington to act on its own.

"Despite an increased rate of member states' submission of national implementation reports to the Security Council, the actual

implementation of the sanctions lags far behind what is necessary to achieve the core goal of denuclearization," the panel of experts said.

This latest panel report, which gauges compliance as recently as early August, found that as the U.N.'s sanctions regime expands, so does the scope of evasion. The panel said "lax enforcement" and North Korea's evolving techniques to evade sanctions are undermining U.N. efforts to coerce Pyongyang to abandon the development of weapons of mass destruction.

The Trump administration has threatened to ban U.S. trade with countries, such as China, that continue to do business with North Korea, though experts and analysts have said this would be difficult. As it seeks to pressure China, Russia and other nations to cut off business and financial ties, the administration is expected soon to roll out additional actions targeting Chinese companies and banks.

North Korea doesn't recognize the sanctions as legitimate. Asked about them late Wednesday, a man

identifying himself as a staff member of North Korea's mission to the U.N. said they represent hostile policy toward his country.

The U.N. panel of experts said it documented the presence of North Koreans throughout Africa and the Middle East, particularly in Syria, acting on behalf of sanctioned entities.

The U.N. experts say they are investigating cooperation in chemical weapons, ballistic missiles and conventional arms between Pyongyang's primary arms dealer, Korea Mining Development Trading Corp., and Syria's Scientific Studies and Research Center, the government agency responsible for developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Two member states had interdicted shipments from North Korea to Syria, the panel said, and Pyongyang is involved in Syria's Scud and surface-to-air missile systems.

Over a six-month reporting period starting in late 2016, North Korea also generated \$270 million in

revenue from prohibited sales of commodities, including coal, iron and zinc, largely to China. After [China said it would temporarily bar purchases of North Korean coal](#), Pyongyang began routing sales to other countries, U.N. investigators said.

The U.N. panel also named several North Korean banks established, managed or owned by Chinese companies. Beijing told the panel that the companies aren't authorized to establish banks in North Korea, but the panel said it hadn't heard whether Chinese authorities had acted to shut them down.

The panel also recommended that the Security Council sanction a network—comprising individuals, companies and bank accounts in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the Middle East—that it said is operated by North Korea's intelligence agency for exporting military communications equipment.

Write to Ian Talley at ian.talley@wsj.com



A Sneak Peak at America's War Plans for North Korea

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

18-23 minutes

In a secret underground base, Command Post Tango, the combined headquarters of the U.S.-South Korean command, is abuzz with activity. North Korean artillery has pummeled sites around Seoul, leaving thousands of South Korean and American civilians and service members dead. A toxic combination of North Korean provocations and U.S. escalation has prompted the North to launch a last-ditch effort to seize the whole peninsula.

As the generals fill an auditorium-sized sand-table battlefield showing the disposition of friendly forces and the extent of likely follow-up attacks, hundreds of thousands of South Koreans are displaced in and around Seoul, seeking shelter and safety. Reports of North Korean insurgent strikes are streaming in as computer screens flash with alerts of cyberattacks on Seoul's infrastructure, taking water and power off the grid and paralyzing attempts to help the civilian population.

This is a fictional scenario, but an all-too-possible one. As a U.S. Army intelligence officer in South Korea, I helped prepare for various war scenarios by testing assumptions and refining war plans in several theaterwide exercises.

Put fears of full-blown nuclear war aside for a moment. We've never been closer to a conventional North Korean attack on South Korea, and I can attest that the U.S. military knows how devastating the consequences would be. We can expect a massive humanitarian crisis, enormous loss of life, and economic disaster. There's almost no doubt that the North would lose — but in going down Pyongyang could take much of the Korean Peninsula with it.

This undated photo released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on May 30, 2017 shows a test-fire of a ballistic missile at an undisclosed location in North Korea. (STR/AFP/Getty Images)

Pyongyang goes all in

What could provoke North Korea to start such a conflict? Kim Jong Un may eventually believe that he has no choice, given his country's

chronic humanitarian crisis, with an estimated 41 percent of the population [undernourished](#), and additional sanctions threatening to bring back the famines of the 1990s. Kim could calculate that a surprise attack on South Korea would rally the population and remind the world of the North's power. And the belligerent rhetoric of North Korean propaganda, with its talk of triumph and total war, could leave its own leaders mistakenly convinced that they would win such a conflict, just as the sloppy toughness coming out of the White House might leave them convinced that the United States is about to strike anyway.

Whatever the prompt, once the decision is made to attack, North Korea will move swiftly to accomplish its war objectives — either to seize all of its southern neighbor and make itself de facto master of the peninsula or to execute a limited attack to remind the world of its teeth. From the beginning, the North will operate on a ticking clock. The logistical capabilities of the North Korean military, assuming only limited wartime assistance from China at best, will only last for a few days before the country runs out of food,

ammunition, fuel, and water. Some units may be able to operate for as long as a few weeks, but maintaining supply lines across mountainous terrain will be an almost impossible task.

The North will most likely lose its major command-and-control infrastructure in the first few hours, crippling its ability to communicate across the battlefield. U.S. air power will target major brigade and division headquarters in the hope of leaving North Korean troops cut off, in confusion, and unable to launch coordinated attacks.

That will leave the North with only a brief window to entertain dreams of victory. Like the Imperial Japanese Army in World War II, the North will seek a decisive battle that, in its view, could knock out a weak-willed United States. That means a massive barrage in the first few hours of the conflict, targeting the largest U.S. military garrisons along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and in the Seoul region. Other targets could include air and naval bases in the South, and possibly Japan, to prevent an allied counterattack and soften defenses for a possible entry by the North Korean military along the DMZ or via small-scale amphibious landings in the east and

west. Pyongyang will fire short-range ballistic missiles and multiple rocket launchers near simultaneously to destroy these few dozen high-value defense infrastructure targets.

Although estimates vary, some figures indicate that North Korea has approximately [1,000 missiles](#) positioned across the country and most of them within reach of Seoul. Even a small number of missiles fired into the city, targeting South Korea's defense complex, will have a significant impact, as each [warhead](#) weighs between 500 and 1000 lbs. To put that in context, each would be enough to [annihilate](#) anything in one to two city blocks.

The missile attacks won't last for long, though, as South Korean and U.S. firepower will pick up their locations quickly. But the North's artillery ability to quickly retreat into underground complexes or [deep into caves](#) after attacking will make it very difficult to destroy the weapons immediately. With decades to prepare, the North's artificial cave networks far exceed even al Qaeda in Afghanistan or the Vietnamese before the battle of Dien Bien Phu.

Artillery on its own will wreak havoc, but it is just one part of the North's deadly arsenal. Since the end of the Korean War, the North has developed asymmetric capabilities in areas such as biological, chemical, and cyber. Some estimates indicate that North Korea possesses 2,500 to 5,000 metric tons of [chemical weapons](#) including nerve agents like sarin and VX. Biological weapons such as small pox and anthrax may also play a role. In the [brazen assassination](#) of Kim Jong Un's half-brother, Kim Jong Nam, the world saw that North Korea could effectively use chemical weapons.

In the event of a war, North Korea will not hesitate to launch chemical and biological weapons at South Korean and U.S. air bases or on main supply routes. A biologically or chemically contaminated site would have to be treated with special care, requiring all forces in the area to don protective gear and severely disrupting South Korean and U.S. movements across the battlefield. Delivering these payloads would not be challenging, as North Korean missiles are capable of carrying chemical and biological weapons in place of conventional explosives. Decentralized attacks could also be in the cards, as North Korea has [reportedly recruited hundreds of spies](#) across the world to conduct various missions. Those agents would likely be blended into the larger North Korean population and could be activated to carry out

attacks using weapons of mass destruction in the South.

But the North's cyberprogram could be even more frightening. In the past few years, North Korea has allegedly had a hand in various cyberattacks including the deployment of the WannaCry ransomware, theft of money from Bangladesh's central bank, and leaks of confidential data from Sony Pictures. The secretive Bureau 121 participates in offensive cyber-operations and has establishments [across the world](#) that could ensure that there will be no interruption of cyberattacks even in the event of heavy South Korean and U.S. counteroffensives on North Korean soil.

Given the country's past attacks against financial systems, North Korea could shut down the major Korean and U.S. banks, precluding millions of transactions and denying access to credit. The economy as a whole would grind to a halt, leaving cities in crisis as "just-in-time" delivery systems fail, businesses crumble, and stores empty in panic. Another attack could shut down the energy grid in the Seoul region. Food would turn bad, patients would struggle to survive as medical equipment failed, and personal communications would collapse. The South Korean and U.S. military and emergency services would be forced to divert resources to manage the chaos, allowing the North to push deeper into the peninsula.

Whether confined to conventional artillery or supplemented by unconventional warfare, within the first few hours of the conflict, tens of thousands of people will be dead and large swaths of Seoul in smoldering ruins. The South Korean capital is one of the most densely populated places in the world; some 43,000 people live in each square mile of the city. That's almost four times the density of Washington, resulting in horrific scenes even from a limited strike.

The United States will quickly activate its evacuation plan to gather all U.S. civilians in Seoul and move them to nearby bases or cities to airlift them out of the war theater and to countries unaffected by the war, though many will be lost in the chaos. Millions of Seoul residents will attempt to flee their homes; however, the frequent artillery attacks, patchy gas supplies, and blocked roads will make any escape from the city challenging.

There are some other options. Seoul residents have subway stations, tunnels, and [bomb shelters](#) where they could seek cover from the artillery barrage, as they have repeatedly drilled for. Several

stations can hold thousands of people and were dug deep underground with a [dual-use purpose](#). Some even have [backup generators and water facilities](#). The South Korean government will attempt to establish makeshift camps, away from the intense fighting, to provide basic necessities, but the feasibility of such a system is uncertain. What is certain is that it would trigger one of the greatest humanitarian crises in recent history, leaving millions of Koreans internally displaced refugees.

US Vice President Mike Pence shakes hands with U.S. military officers during a visit to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on the border between North and South Korea on April 17, 2017.

America's calibrated counter-attack

After the first day, a significant number of the original 28,000 U.S. service members stationed on the peninsula will be casualties — with luck, only a few hundred, but potentially far more. The remainder will form the core of the U.S. counterattack, consolidating into a single division to strike at the North. As their counterparts in Seoul prepare for the North's ground assault, U.S. and allied forces across the region will begin to scramble. Reinforcements and supplies from Japan, Australia, and the mainland would begin pre-deployment procedures to arrive on the peninsula in a few days.

At the same time, the vast U.S. war machine will move into full gear. Dozens of jets will stream across the peninsula, destroying North Korean bases and troop formations along the DMZ. Hundreds of Tomahawk missiles will light up the sky destined for targets deep in North Korea. U.S. submarines lurking hundreds of feet underwater will turn North Korea's fleet of [approximately 800 vessels](#) into sunken wrecks. Within a few hours, North Korea's air, sea, and artillery assets will likely have been destroyed.

On the diplomatic front, the United States will frantically work with China and Russia to contain North Korea from conducting further attacks and to avoid the use of nuclear weapons. Almost all the countries in the world will condemn the conventional attack. NATO will likely begin to mobilize its forces and equipment to support the United States. The United Nations will call for an emergency meeting to work a cease-fire among all warring parties. The *Global Times*, a Chinese Communist Party-run nationalistic newspaper, has said China will not come to North

Korea's aid if it launches missiles threatening the United States. If that proves to be the case, this would ensure significant pressure against North Korea to stop all offensive operations. The chief diplomatic objective would be to avoid the disaster of a nuclear response.

The negotiations will be incredibly challenging. The North is almost religiously invested in its nuclear program, and North Korea's foreign minister recently said Pyongyang will never negotiate away its [strategic option](#) (of about 30-60 nuclear weapons) to protect the country. The North's missile capabilities appear considerably more sophisticated than believed even as late as last year, rendering the possibility of a nuclear strike on Japan or the West Coast horribly plausible.

That might restrain the United States from a full-throated assault into the North itself, wary of triggering a suicidal response from a regime about to topple — and with the generals aware of the danger of prompting a response from China. Beijing might not like Pyongyang, but U.S. troops crossing the DMZ would prompt powerful memories of the Korean War and trigger China's fears of "encirclement." However, the United States would move the entire world to ban almost all trade and aid with North Korea immediately to force the regime to cooperate and possibly accept an unconditional surrender.

But with South Korean and U.S. forces focused on eliminating artillery and naval and air assets, North Korean light infantry would likely begin probing attacks along the DMZ and the South Korean east and west coasts to test U.S. and South Korean readiness and conduct feints to shift focus away from those countries' main military effort. While chaos rages around Seoul, North Korea could use [submarines](#), as it has in the past, to slip into South Korea special forces capable of conducting guerrilla operations and disrupting U.S. and South Korean war plans.

North Korean special forces and regular troops could also enter the South through several underground tunnels across the DMZ. The North has made digging tunnels a priority, and, since 1974, South Korea has been discovering infiltration routes into its territory. Although just four tunnels are known to the public, more than 20 [tunnels](#) are estimated to have been dug, from as close to the surface as just a meter to 100 meters underground. In some of the more [elaborate tunnels](#), mechanical fans provided ventilation, electric lines were wired throughout, and

mining carts could ferry materials back and forth.

Some figures suggest that up to [8,000 troops](#) per tunnel could move into South Korea every hour, amassing a formidable North Korean force within the space of a few hours to march south. The United States would have several options to counter the North Korean underground movements, given years of fighting experience against insurgents in Afghanistan; its main weapon would likely be bunker-buster bombs to destroy the tunnels and anything in them. The April 2017 MOAB ("Mother of All Bombs") strike in Afghanistan was a clear example of the United States' strength in shutting down underground systems in mountainous terrain.

This undated photo released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on August 26, 2017 shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un presiding over a target strike exercise conducted by the special operation forces of the Korean People's Army (KPA) at an undisclosed location. (STR/AFP/Getty Images)

A bloody, pyrrhic victory

But North Korean forces are already — more figuratively — underground in the South. The [guerrilla tactics](#) adopted by the North Korean forces

in South Korea include assassinating key South Korean leaders, sabotaging military and paramilitary efforts, and intimidating citizens to side with North Korea. All of these have long been part of the North's playbook. North Korea could also target South Korea's military reservists, who are especially vulnerable.

As South Korea summons its reserve forces, it will have to establish new bases and camps to train and organize them. The actual makeshift war bases are unknown, but the massive Olympic Stadium could be selected as one of the bases due to its cultural significance and vast facilities. This would offer the opportunity for the North Korean forces to carry out a massive attack, perhaps with an improvised explosive device, from inside the stadium. Amid the confusion of mustering, it would be easy for North Korean special forces to blend into the reservists and place military-grade, or ammonium nitrate, explosives under the bleachers, where excited soccer fans once enthusiastically cheered "*Daehan minguk!*" in an otherwise normal world. The North Koreans would be aided by their shared ethnic and linguistic heritage with their southern neighbors. Although the North's dialects have now diverged from the South's — with Russian and Korean terms substituted for English ones and a distinctly

different accent — it doesn't take a particularly proficient actor to sound like a South Korean.

At an opportune time, North Korean special forces in the stadium could detonate explosives and quickly follow up with an attack to target fleeing reservists and first responders. Snipers positioned a few hundred yards away would have a great vantage point across the parking lot and into the stadium. The ensuing commotion would be played on loop in North Korea, showing how the heroic North Korean forces were winning the war and would soon return home victorious.

But the clock will eventually run out for the North's assault. South Korean and U.S. commitment is likely only to be deepened by the use of unconventional weapons and the terrible casualties. As with Pearl Harbor, the North's attack would be perceived as both treacherous and sadistic. The deaths of thousands of U.S. forces would commit the United States to avenging them. Even the most successful possible attack will fizzle as the North's logistics fail and the jaws of American power close.

After all the North Korean strikes and allied counterstrikes, South Korea and the United States will eventually prevail in toppling the Kim regime after a bloody, pyrrhic

war. Even a couple of weeks of fighting will leave behind sights more suited to Stalingrad than Seoul, a ruined city marked by small-arms fire, annihilating missiles, and unexploded ordnance. Sites such as the Blue House and the U.S. Embassy will be destroyed, neighborhoods will be razed, and thousands of military and paramilitary forces will blanket the South. Corpses will litter the streets, and many people will lose their entire families.

The Kim dynasty will be expunged, leaving North Koreans to face a far more difficult situation than the famine in the 1990s. China will face a humanitarian crisis on its border as North Koreans migrate north in search of food and water. The United States, Japan, and other developed countries will be under significant pressure to adopt tens of thousands of refugees from both sides. The death toll due to the hostilities could total in the [hundreds of thousands](#), but the humanitarian crisis on the peninsula will result in far more through disease and malnutrition and could take decades to heal.

Top image credit: JUNG YEON-JE/AFP/Getty Images

Chetan Peddada is a former officer in the U.S. Army.

POLITICO Why North Korea is a black hole for American spies

By JAQUELINE KLIMAS

8-10 minutes

U.S. efforts to penetrate reclusive North Korea have been so confounding for so long that the military likely doesn't have enough accurate intelligence to take out its nuclear and missile facilities even if President Donald Trump ordered it.

Trump on Thursday declared anew that "military action would certainly be an option," one that would be "a very sad day for North Korea."

Story Continued Below

"Is it inevitable? Nothing's inevitable," he said at a White House news conference, adding that he "would prefer not going the route of the military, but it's something certainly that could happen. Our military has never been stronger."

But because the so called Hermit Kingdom has long been one of the most impenetrable intelligence targets — the top U.S. spy earlier this year called it "one of the

hardest, if not the hardest" — there is low confidence airstrikes or other means of attack would successfully thwart its nuclear and missile ambitions without leaving significant elements of its arsenal for Pyongyang to retaliate with.

"You don't want to stir the hornet's nest and the hornets are still there when you're done," said Douglas Paal, vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a former National Security Council staffer for former President George H.W. Bush. "If you're giving options to the president ... one of the very first things we have to say is we can strike what we can see, but we don't know what we can't see."

"Generally speaking, I don't think it's overstating to say we're still groping in the dark," he added.

The difficulty collecting and interpreting intelligence on North Korea is one reason why different spy agencies often reach different conclusions about North Korea's capabilities — and have been caught off guard repeatedly, including reportedly by the test

earlier this week of a thermonuclear bomb.

In 2013, for example, the Defense Intelligence Agency [said](#) it had "moderate confidence" that North Korea had developed a nuclear warhead that could be launched atop a ballistic missile. Shortly after, then-Director of National Intelligence James Clapper walked that back and said that the finding was not the consensus of the whole intelligence community.

But this summer, a military intelligence analysis of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs had to be [revised](#), concluding Pyongyang could place an atomic bomb atop an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the United States by the end of 2018 — two years sooner than previous estimates.

Weeks later, other U.S. intelligence agencies [concluded](#) that North Korea has begun building missile-ready warheads.

And on Sunday, North Korea's underground detonation of a nuclear weapon in the remote

northeast of the country literally shook the region with what experts now say was a 140 kiloton blast — [more powerful](#) than its previous five tests combined.

The U.S. collects intelligence on foreign nations and terrorist groups primarily using human spies, electronic eavesdropping, cyber espionage and spy satellites. And each is especially difficult in North Korea for various reasons, say those with direct experience.

One is the lack of diplomatic or commercial relationships, said Bruce Klingner, who spent 20 years at the CIA and DIA before joining the Heritage Foundation.

"We obviously don't blend well into North Korea, and even South Korea has difficulty running agents, because of differences in dialect and pronunciation," Klingner said. "Any strangers stand out, so in a country where people will report on their families and neighbors, certainly any stranger will get reported."

That means any human intelligence comes from North Korean defectors. There have been some

but not many, and more often than not they have been individuals lacking direct knowledge of the regime's most sensitive inner workings.

Paal said defectors also will typically embellish the information they share to get better treatment and are often not reliable.

And even the limited opportunities there are for human intelligence collection — considered crucial to gauging intent — are often unsatisfying.

"North Korea is probably the most restrictive human environment in the world. It's far more restrictive certainly than pre-war Syria or Iran, more restrictive than China or Burma," said Andrew Peek, a former Army intelligence officer and fellow at the Clements Center for National Security, a nonpartisan research center at the University of Texas at Austin. "I think we have less granularity on North Korea than we do on Syria or Iran. There's very little osmosis in or out."

Gathering intelligence through electronic means — in military parlance, signals intelligence — is

also restricted because of the limited technology, internet access and cellphone use inside North Korea. And those who do use computer networks in North Korea, including government officials, use strong encryption.

"Their broadband is extremely limited," Dan Coats, director of national intelligence, told a Senate panel in May. "So using that as an access to collection is — we get very limited results."

The same goes for other intelligence gathering tools, he said. "We get very limited results. We do not have constant, consistent [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] capabilities and so there are gaps, and the North Koreans know about these," Coats told the Armed Services Committee. "So it is — it becomes a difficult challenge relative to a society as closed and as isolated as North Korea is ..."

Using satellites to take photos is the most successful intelligence collection tactic in North Korea, experts say. But even that has limits.



Morell : North Korea may already be able to launch a nuclear attack on the U.S.

Morell

By Michael

5-6 minutes

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, second from right. (Korean Central News Agency/Korea News Service via Associated Press)

By Michael Morell September 6

Michael Morell was acting director and deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 2010 to 2013.

It is conventional wisdom that North Korea is not yet able to put a U.S. city at risk of nuclear attack. Air Force Gen. Paul Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the country's No. 2 military officer, captured this view in a statement last week [to Bloomberg News](#). Selva said: "It is clear North Korea has the capability to build a missile that can range the distance to the United States, but North Korea has yet to demonstrate it has the requisite technology and capability to actually target and strike the United States with a nuclear weapon." Many other U.S. officials, as well as outside experts, have made similar comments.

I think the conventional wisdom may be wrong. I believe that North Korea

may have the capability today to successfully conduct a nuclear attack on the United States. I believe that the conventional wisdom may be based on a fundamental mistake of logic: Just because North Korea has not yet demonstrated a capability does not mean it does not have it.

What is the case for concluding that North Korea may already have the capability? There are three key pieces. First, North Korea's first unambiguously successful nuclear test was in 2009. (North Korea's first test, in 2006, most likely failed.) The 2009 test showed that North Korea could generate a nuclear yield from a device. And that test has been followed by four other successful nuclear tests — the latest being [this past weekend](#). The explosive yields of the tests have grown over time.

Politics newsletter

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Second, in December 2012, North Korea successfully put a satellite in orbit with a rocket that, had it been a missile, could have ranged to at least Alaska and, if more work had been done, could have hit the contiguous United States. In addition to the range, the satellite

While imagery can help track military movements or analyze activity or test preparations at nuclear or missile sites, it provides an incomplete picture, Klingner said.

Surveillance images are also difficult to collect because many North Korean military and storage facilities are located underground, both for security reasons and because the mountainous country lacks large open spaces.

Such terrain can also make it difficult to get multiple images of a facility from different vantage points, he said.

A reminder of the difficulty tracking North Korea's secret military activities was the recent underground test of what North Korea claimed was a hydrogen bomb, which caught many observers by surprise.

"The hardest part is confirming what they have done on the nuclear test side," said Jon Wolfsthal, who served as the senior director for arms control and nonproliferation on the National Security Council until January. "Are they bluffing or not? That is because we don't have great

links inside their nuclear test program, and they have gotten good at ensuring nothing leaks from their test site."

Others agreed that the fact so many of North Korea's missile and nuclear assets are underground in caves or tunnels shuts off many options that might otherwise be available to military planners.

"I think the X factor to me is how much they have developed these underground complexes, and I would suspect deeply. We just have no sense of that," said Peek.

It all adds up to a relative blind spot for American and allied intelligence agencies.

"If you look at the satellite picture of the lights at night from the satellite," Coats said in May, "there's one dark area with no lights on, and that's North Korea."

Bryan Bender contributed to this report.

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launch demonstrated that North Korea can successfully separate a payload from a rocket or missile. North Korea, of course, has since demonstrated, with [two intercontinental ballistic missile tests this summer](#), that it has missiles capable of ranging as far east as Chicago.

Third, and this addresses the pieces of the puzzle that we have not seen, I believe that North Korea has the technical capability and has had the time necessary to make a nuclear weapon small enough to fit on a long-range missile and to ensure that the warhead can survive the vibrations, pressures and heat of reentry. If you can build a nuclear weapon, you can make the rest of the pieces work.

I am not the only one to express the view that North Korea might already have the capability to put a U.S. city at risk. At an October 2016 [Council on Foreign Relations event](#), then-Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper Jr. told Charlie Rose, "We ascribe to them the capability to launch a missile that has a weapon on it that could reach parts of the United States, certainly including Alaska and Hawaii." In response to a follow-up question, Clapper added, "We've assessed ... for years that they could do it."

A year earlier — at an Atlantic Council event in October 2015 — [Adm. William Gortney](#), then-commander of U.S. Northern Command, said, "I agree with the intel community that we assess that they have the ability, they have the weapons, and they have the ability to miniaturize those weapons, and they have the ability to put them on a rocket that can range the homelands." As commander of Northcom, Gortney was responsible for protecting the country from a missile attack.

Why is this such an important issue? Because, if you believe, as Selva and others apparently do, that North Korea cannot yet attack the homeland with a nuclear weapon, it follows that the United States can take preemptive military action against North Korea without risking a retaliatory nuclear strike by Pyongyang. You can take such action without putting the United States at risk.

However, if you believe, as I do, that North Korea might be capable of striking us today, it follows that a preemptive U.S. military strike against Pyongyang could bring about the very thing that we are working to avoid — the nuclear annihilation of a U.S. city and the deaths of millions of Americans. If

this darkest of scenarios were to play out, the assumption and

assessment that North Korea cannot yet threaten us would be a

strategic mistake of historic proportions.



Lee : Why won't the U.S. use its full sanction power against North Korea?

Sung-Yoon Lee

7-9 minutes

North Korea isn't stopping. Whether the powerful nuclear device it detonated Sunday really is compatible with an intercontinental ballistic missile matters far less than the fact that the Kim Jong Un regime now stands on the verge of nuclear breakout. Simply put, Kim is ever closer to being able to kill millions of people outside North Korea, not least Americans.

Which is precisely the message behind Pyongyang's repeated missile tests — with more threatened for as early as this weekend — and Kim's bluster barrage over the last several months.

Kim is driven by a systemic need to overturn the unfavorable equation on the Korean peninsula: The backward totalitarian North versus a prosperous and pleasant South. South Korea's mere existence poses an existential threat to Pyongyang. Kim's ultimate goal is to evict U.S. troops from the South through nuclear blackmail, then, through graduated escalation, isolate and bully risk-averse Seoul. Pyongyang's latest actions take it a leap closer to achieving this goal.

The dangerous situation we're facing was entirely predictable. For more than 20 years, policymakers of various political colors on both sides of the Pacific have treated North Korea's growing nuclear and missile threat with condescension buttressed by

dithery diplomacy. Seoul and Washington have alternated between halfhearted sanctions and sending billions of dollars of aid into Pyongyang's coffers, at times even simultaneously sanctioning North Korea and subsidizing it. The effect has been wildly successful — for North Korea. Pyongyang has yet to see any advantage in giving up its carrot-and-stick nuclear posturing.

Full-throttled financial sanctions are America's best and only option.

Yet not all is lost. As U.S. Ambassador to the [United Nations](#) Nikki Haley said this week at the Security Council, the "incremental approach" and "half measures" of the past must be replaced with the "strongest sanctions." However, if the sanctions are strong only on paper, nothing will change. The U.S. and its allies have to invest time and resources to enforce them. Violators must be met with biting financial consequences. The U.S. is uniquely positioned to punish violators, thanks to the strength of the dollar.

The baffling fact is that the United States has never exerted the full force of its sanction power against Pyongyang. Until 2016, U.S. sanctions against North Korea were weaker in kind and degree than those against Sudan, Zimbabwe, Cuba and the Democratic Republic of Congo — states that pose no national security threat to the U.S. They were also far weaker than sanctions against Russia, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Balkan states.

Even since 2016, Washington has held back from doing all it could do

against North Korea. Self-deterred by exaggerated fears of more North Korean provocation and Chinese economic retaliation, the U.S. has yet to fine the largest of the Chinese banks and state companies that are in blatant violation of U.S. laws and U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding Pyongyang.

And yet money talks, as we saw in the curtailing of Iran's nuclear ambitions. As the United States fined international companies and banks that continued to do prohibited business with Iran, Tehran — increasingly isolated — made the decision to return to negotiations. In just one example, the U.S. fined France's largest bank, BNP Paribas, \$8.9 billion for violating Iran sanctions (and those against Sudan and Cuba as well). The bank pleaded guilty, accepted the fine and withdrew from its Iran ties rather than be blocked out of the U.S. dollar system. In June, the U.S. put pressure on the Bank of Dandong, a small Chinese bank that serves as a dollar conduit for North Korean activities, but no fine or threatened block of the magnitude of the BNP Paribas action has been imposed on Chinese entities.

Through serious and sustained financial constriction, Washington could compel Kim to modify his behavior — freeze his nuclear and missile programs, open up his country and dismantle his gulags. Full denuclearization would not happen until Kim, under financial stress, could no longer placate his generals and faced the specter of regime collapse. Throughout the

process, Washington must communicate to Kim and his cronies that there is a way out. Reform or abdicate. (Posh exile isn't what Kim Jong Un deserves, but it would be a small price to pay for liberating the Korean peninsula.)

Pyongyang, although far from suicidal, needs to menace Washington if it has any hope of prevailing over Seoul. If the U.S. were to cave in and abandon South Korea, nothing would be resolved and the risk of another war started by the North would only increase. (The last time the U.S. withdrew troops from South Korea, in 1949, there was war the next year; it claimed tens of thousands of American lives. This time, nuclear weapons could be in play.)

Full-throttled financial sanctions — in the face of obfuscation, evasion, provocations and disingenuous negotiations — are America's best and only option, short of military action. Temporary deals followed by premature relaxation of sanctions would only bring fake peace to the Korean peninsula and buy Pyongyang time and money. Give real peace — and an end to the Kim regime — a chance.

Sung-Yoon Lee is the Kim Koo-Korea Foundation professor of Korean studies and an assistant professor at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.



Chafets : Israel Has a Playbook for Dealing With North Korea

by Zev Chafets
More stories by

Zev Chafets

9-12 minutes

War

Saddam and Assad both tried to build the ultimate threat. The Israelis made sure it didn't happen.

September 7, 2017, 12:41 PM EDT

Saddam's nuclear dream ended in ashes.

Photographer: Ramzi Haidar/AFP/Getty Images

Israel and North Korea are on opposite sides of the Asian landmass, separated by 5,000 miles as the ICBM flies. But Israelis feels close to the nuclear standoff between Washington and Pyongyang. They have faced this sort of crisis before, and may again.

Some history: In the mid-1970s, it became clear to Israel that Iraq's Saddam Hussein was working on acquiring nuclear weapons and missiles to deliver them. Saddam had already demonstrated an uninhibited brutality in dealing with his internal enemies and his neighbors. He aspired to be the leader of the Arab world. Defeating Israel was at the top of his to-do list.

After coming to office in 1977, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin tried to convince the U.S. and Europe that Saddam was a clear and present danger to the Jewish state, and that action had to be taken. Begin was not taken seriously.

But Begin was serious, and in 1981 he decided that Israel would have to stop the Iraqi dictator all by itself. His political opponents, led by the estimable Shimon Peres, considered this to be dangerous folly. Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, the legendary former military chief of staff, voted against unilateral action on the grounds that it would hurt Israel's international standing. Defense Minister Ezer

Weizmann, the former head of the air force (and Dayan's brother-in-law) was also against a military option. He thought the mission would be unacceptably risky.

Begin had no military expertise. But his family had been wiped out in the Holocaust. He looked at Saddam, who was openly threatening Israel, and saw Hitler. To Begin, sitting around hoping for the best was not a strategy; it was an invitation to aggression. If there was going to be a cost -- political, diplomatic, military -- better to pay before, not after, the Iraqis had the bomb.

In the summer of 1981, Begin gave the order. The Israeli air force destroyed the Osirak reactor. The

United Nations Security Council condemned the attack. The Europeans went bonkers. The New York Times called it "[inexcusable.](#)" But the Israeli prime minister wasn't looking to be excused by the Times or the Europeans or even the usually friendly Ronald Reagan administration. He enunciated a simple rationale that would come to be known as the Begin Doctrine: Israel will not allow its avowed enemies to obtain the means of its destruction.

The wisdom of this doctrine became clear a decade later, during the Gulf War, when Saddam Hussein made good on his threat to fire Russian-made SCUD missiles at Israeli cities. The SCUDs landed, and caused some damage and a fair amount of panic, but they were not armed with unconventional warheads. Israel had taken that option off the table.

Similarly, in 2007, Israel confirmed what it had suspected for five years: Syria, with North Korean help, was trying to build a nuclear reactor. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, a Begin disciple, sent Mossad chief Meir Dagan to Washington, to ask for American intervention. The CIA chief, Michael Hayden, agreed with Israel's contention that Damascus (with Iranian financing) was constructing the reactor. But Hayden convinced President George W. Bush that bombing the site would result in all-out war, and who wants that?

Acting on its own, Israel destroyed the Syrian site (reportedly killing a group of North Korean experts in the process). Hayden was [wrong](#) about how Syria would react, as he later admitted. If Israel had been reasonable and listened to the CIA, Bashar al-Assad

would have nuclear weapons right now.

A few years later, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak spent billions of dollars preparing and training to take out the Iranian nuclear program. Barak, not a member of Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party, explained: "There are instances where it appears it is not necessary to attack now, but you know that you won't be able to attack later." In such cases, he said, the "consequences of inaction are grave, and you have to act."

Israel was prevented from kinetic action by the Barack Obama administration, which along with five other powers cut a deal with Iran in 2015 -- over Israel's vociferous objections. Netanyahu warned that the deal was full of loopholes; it would allow Iran to hide its nuclear program and continue building new means of delivery. This was confirmed in 2016 when Iran tested a new missile. "The reason we designed our missiles with a range of 2000 kilometers," said Iranian Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, "is to be able to hit our enemy the Zionist regime from a safe distance."

Since then, Iran has stepped up its aggressive enmity toward the Zionist Entity. It has not only continued its [nuclear cooperation](#) with North Korea, it has also copied Pyongyang's tactic of creating a huge artillery threat against civilian populations (through its proxy force Hezbollah in Lebanon and now Syria). This conventional threat to Seoul is what has convinced a great many American commentators that any attack on North Korea would lead to an "unthinkable" number of casualties.

Ruling out harsh thoughts is a luxury Israel doesn't have. It has installed an efficient missile defense system (something not beyond the means of the South Koreans and the U.S.). It is also training to neutralize the threat of a bombardment. The IDF is currently conducting its biggest military exercise in 19 years. The announced goal is to prepare for war with Hezbollah. Israel does not intend to allow itself to be held hostage by an Iranian threat to its civilian population, or to have its hands tied by the theory of unthinkability.

This week, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem published a [condemnation of North Korea](#): "Only a determined international response will prevent other states from behaving in the same way." Clearly, "other states" was a reference to Iran. It was also a message to the U.S.

Israel, by long experience, knows there is no such thing as an "international" community when it comes to security. What is happening now in East Asia is an American production. The Donald Trump administration has been very clear, not to say belligerent, in demanding that North Korea forgo its nuclear weapons and ambitions.

This was also the policy of previous American administrations -- but Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama didn't really mean it. They let things slide, drew imaginary lines, held talks that went no place and hoped for the best.

The best didn't happen. It almost never does. North Korea is now truly dangerous -- unlike Iraq and Syria, it *already* has nuclear weapons -- and it won't get less so

as time goes on. Trump has said this in no uncertain terms. But so far it is just words. The president may mean it. He also may not. Perhaps he will come to regret tangling with Kim. Maybe he will see it as a beginner's mistake. He may be tempted to reverse course and try to save face with make-believe sanctions, empty United Nations resolutions or fruitless negotiations. I'm not judging him. I haven't been in his shoes, and I wouldn't want to be.

But if the American president does back down, if Kim Jong Un stays in power, keeps his nuclear warheads and ballistic weapons, and gets away with threatening the U.S. and its allies with nuclear destruction, every friend and foe of Washington will be revisiting its strategic playbook. For Israel, so far away from Korea yet so close to Iranian aggression, that book begins with the Begin Doctrine.

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Zev Chafets is a journalist and author of 14 books. He was a senior aide to Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and the founding managing editor of the Jerusalem Report Magazine.



In Syria, New Conflict Looms as ISIS Loses Ground

Yaroslav Trofimov

6-7 minutes

Sept. 7, 2017 5:30 a.m. ET

The Syrian regime's successful offensive in Deir Ezzour this week pushed it ahead in the race against America's Kurdish-led allies over who will inherit Islamic State's remaining Syrian real estate.

With the [extremist group losing ground fast](#), President Bashar al-Assad has emerged in his strongest position since the Syrian uprising began in 2011. Yet large parts of the country remain outside his reach, including [an American-protected zone run by the Kurds](#) in

northeastern Syria and a smaller Turkish occupation zone nearby.

The question now is where precisely the line between regime and Kurdish areas will be drawn after Islamic State's defeat and whether it will solidify into a semi-permanent partition of the country or spark a new bout of violence that could force the U.S. to make difficult choices.

American military planning calls for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, currently finishing [the battle to take Raqqa from Islamic State](#), to push further south down the Euphrates River and to seize the extremist group's remaining cities of Mayadeen and then al-Bukamal on the Iraqi border. That contested swath of Syria also holds most of its oil and gas reserves.

[This week's blitz by the Syrian army](#) and its Shiite militia allies to relieve a besieged garrison in Deir Ezzour could within days cut off the way for such SDF advances. Large parts of the city [remain under Islamic State control](#).

"It was a race but once the regime takes Deir Ezzour, it's game over for the U.S.-led coalition. They will have to stop," said Monzer Akbik, a leader of the mostly Arab Tayyar al-Ghad party that is loosely allied with the SDF. "After Deir Ezzour, the regime will be able to go to al-Bukamal, and once al-Bukamal is taken, the Iranians will have achieved an uninterrupted land route from Tehran to Baghdad to Damascus to Hezbollah in Beirut."

The regime and SDF aren't enemies, so far. They both share a

hostility to Turkey and Turkey's Syrian proxies, who occupy an area northeast of Aleppo. Despite isolated skirmishes over the past year, regime-held enclaves operate inside Kurdish territory in the northeastern cities of Hasakah and Qamishli, while the large Kurdish enclave of Afrin in western Syria enjoys Russian protection from Turkey and is connected to the rest of the world through regime territory.

"The SDF and the regime generally did not fight each other until now. We will see soon whether this will still hold true," said Andrew Tabler, a Syria expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"The idea in U.S. policy circles is that we will now have a soft partition of Syria along the Euphrates, as it

was along the Elbe [in Germany] at the end of the Second World War, except that the Americans are now coming from the east and the Russians from the west. But the regime and the Iranians are not interested in a soft partition. What they are after is a military victory.”

Indeed, Mr. Assad has repeatedly rejected the idea of maintaining Kurdish autonomy in northern Syria. Safwan Akkash, one of the leaders of the moderate and predominantly Sunni Arab Syrian opposition, predicted that the regime will eventually attack America’s Kurdish allies.

“The regime will not tolerate a Kurdish autonomous region,” he said. “Everything will be temporary in the sharing of influence between the Russians and the Americans. The current conflict will be followed by another conflict.”

That may not happen immediately, in part because the U.S. and Russia are loath to see a full-out war between the regime and the SDF. The regime also has more immediate priorities, such as [rebel-dominated Idlib province in the northwest](#), which is increasingly controlled by jihadists allied with al Qaeda.

But such a conflict appears imminent and should it erupt, it would confront Washington with an unpalatable choice of either abandoning its Kurdish allies or taking [direct military action against the Assad regime](#), said Robert Ford, the U.S. ambassador to Syria under the Obama administration who is now a fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington.

“Sooner or later, the government in Damascus will try to reimpose its authority. Will they move in six

months, a year, 18 months?” Mr. Ford said. “That will be a big decision for the Trump administration: Should they use American armed forces to protect the Syrian Kurdish autonomous region? If they do, it would be against international law, and I don’t think there is any country in the region that would support it.”

One hope of avoiding such a scenario—which would, among other things, strain even further the already fraught U.S. relationship with Russia—lies in the United Nations-sponsored peace process in Geneva.

There, however, the Kurdish movement—now in control of the second-largest territory after the regime—isn’t even represented because of Turkish objections. And the beleaguered Sunni Arab opposition, which was making major

advances until Russia’s intervention two years ago reversed the course of the war, holds increasingly weak cards.

This means that, for Mr. Assad, there are few reasons to be flexible in the peace process now, said Kamal Alam, a visiting fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London who frequently travels to Damascus.

“The government has the upper hand, and they are far stronger than they have ever been” since the war began, Mr. Alam said. “They will still go to the talks, but they no longer have the pressure to give up too much.”

Write to Yaroslav Trofimov at yaroslav.trofimov@wsi.com



No Relief for Islamic State Convoy Blocked in Syria

Rod Nordland
6-7 minutes

Members of the Islamic State and their families in a bus in Syria last week as they were transported to Deir al-Zour Province. Louai Beshara/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The Islamic State convoy stranded in the middle of the Syrian desert has whittled down in size as the American military and Syrian government allies traded accusations on whether food and water were reaching the hundreds of beleaguered bus passengers.

The Lebanese-based [Hezbollah militia](#), which guaranteed safe passage to more than 600 Islamic State armed fighters and their family members claimed that American warplanes were not only [blocking the convoy](#) from reaching its destination on the Iraq border in eastern [Syria](#), but were also preventing the resupply of food and water, [according to the website](#) of the [Hezbollah](#)-controlled television station Al Manar.

Hezbollah accuses the U.S. of putting lives at stake by hounding ISIS convoy Iranian Press TV, Video by New 24/7

A spokesman for the American-led coalition fighting in Syria, Col. Ryan Dillon, said the convoy had been resupplied with food and water as recently as Tuesday night. “We are not helping with that, nor are we hindering that from getting there,” he said.

Coalition warplanes continued to monitor the convoy and were ready to bomb any Islamic State units that try to reach it, which the coalition has done repeatedly, although not in the past 48 hours, he said on Thursday from coalition headquarters in Baghdad.

Ten days after the 17-bus convoy [set off from the Lebanese border](#), bound for Abu Kamal in Deir al-Zour Province, close to the Iraq border, it remains stuck in the desert near Sukhna, protected by escorts from Hezbollah, nearly 150 miles from its destination. Eleven buses remain while six have turned back since Sunday.

Hezbollah, fighting on behalf of the Syrian government, is normally a bitter opponent of the Islamic State. In this case, though, it has seemed determined to honor a deal it made in exchange for the bodies of Lebanese, Iranian and Hezbollah prisoners killed by the Islamic State, also known as [ISIS](#).

Under the deal, which included the Lebanese Army and the Syrian Army, a group of ISIS fighters that was surrounded on the Lebanese-Syrian border would be able to return to another area the group controls, and keep their weapons.

ISIS Syria Convoy Splits In Two Reuters News Agency video of convoy

The plight of the convoy is just one of many indications of the [Islamic State's declining fortunes](#). Hezbollah has proved unusually solicitous of the welfare of the militants and their family members.

“The U.S.-led warplanes are besieging the convoy in the heart of the desert, and preventing any aid of the convoy which include sick and wounded people as well as elders,” Al Manar said. “If this situation continues, the imminent death will be the fate of these families, including pregnant women.”

The convoy stalled just as the Syrian Army was pressing an offensive to retake the city of Deir al-Zour, the provincial capital, which the Syrian government said fell on Wednesday, [according to the official SANA news agency](#).

If confirmed, it would be the first time in three years that government forces had controlled the city, where 90,000 people have remained. On Thursday, SANA said government aid convoys had reached Deir al-Zour city, [Reuters reported](#).

Perhaps coincidentally, the route that the ISIS convoy had tried to take, through the town of Sukhna, was also the route used by the Syrian Army to retake Deir al-Zour over the past week, according to official accounts.

The American military, along with its Iraqi allies, denounced the deal made by Hezbollah and declared that it would not let the convoy reach Deir al-Zour, but would not bomb it if that threatened the safety of family members on board.

“Coalition leaders have communicated a course of action to the Russians, providing the Syrian regime an opportunity to remove the women and children from this situation,” the coalition said [in a statement dated Tuesday](#). “The

Syrian regime is letting women and children suffer in the desert. This situation is completely on them,” said Lt. Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, the departing coalition commander.

Colonel Dillon said the coalition watched as six of the buses turned back to territory dominated by the Syrian government, toward Palmyra.

When supplies were delivered Tuesday, Colonel Dillon said, “We saw some ISIS fighters break out in fisticuffs, which we assess to be their frustration at being stuck in the middle of nowhere.” He added that the coalition had not “seen any traction” on its proposal to the Russians to separate women and children from the convoy.

There were unconfirmed reports in local media that some of the buses had managed to find alternative routes to reach the Iraqi border, which American officials denied.

“Many false reports on ISIS terrorist convoy,” wrote Brett McGurk, the American presidential envoy to the anti-ISIS coalition, in a [Twitter message](#) Wednesday. “It has not reached Iraq and will not reach Iraq. Buses still in open desert, with food/water.”

Although official Syrian media made little or no mention of the convoy’s situation, it was a popular topic on social media in the country. One much-shared joke referred to a Lebanese kebab chain, Kababji, and featured an ISIS militant telephoning Hezbollah and ordering food [from Kababji](#) as well as a fresh supply of disposable diapers.



Israel Has Launched Its Largest Military Exercise in Almost 20 Years

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

4-5 minutes

The Israeli military is in the midst of its largest military exercise in nearly two decades, focusing on a potential war with Hezbollah.

Held in the north of the country, the roughly two-week drill – dubbed “The Light of Grain” – comes amid rising tension along the Lebanese-Israeli border, where Hezbollah, the Lebanese political party and militia, has maintained a presence for decades.

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The drill will simulate “scenarios we’ll be facing in the next confrontation with Hezbollah,” an Israeli defense source told [Agence France-Presse](#).

Tens of thousands of soldiers from

multiple branches of the Israeli Defense Forces – including the air force, navy, ground units, intelligence, and cyber command – are set to participate.

On Thursday, senior Hezbollah leader Sheikh Mohammad Yazbek, the head of Hezbollah’s governing Sharia Council, dismissed the operation. “The maneuvers that [Israel] is conducting on the border are part of coercions after the triumphs that [Hezbollah] has made against terrorism,” he said, according to the [Daily Star](#).

The line of demarcation between the two countries has been relatively peaceful since the last war in 2006. However, tensions between Israel and Hezbollah have increased steadily over the last several months due at least in part to Israeli actions on the border and Hezbollah’s deep involvement in the Syrian war.

Israel has often targeted Hezbollah units in Syria in an attempt to limit the transfer of strategic weapons to the group, and Hezbollah has rearmed and reinforced its positions along the so-called “Blue Line” dividing Israel and Lebanon.

According to Robert Danin, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and a former senior State Department official, the recent exercise – though planned long in advance – fits into that general pattern of tit-for-tat escalation, but with a new strategic element.

“Now that the [Syrian] war has moved into a new phase with the impending defeat of ISIS, the Israelis are concerned that the Iranians and Hezbollah will exploit the subsequent vacuum,” Danin told Foreign Policy.

Danin said that the Israeli drills served the dual purpose of both demonstrating the Israel Defense Forces’ combat effectiveness, and sending a signal to Hezbollah, Iran, and the Syrian government. “This is largely about messaging,” Danin said. “Given that Israel has historically communicated with Syria and various Lebanese parties through the language of deterrence and military signaling, I see it in that context.”

Israeli military and political leaders have said that the IDF’s strategy in a future conflict could be dramatically different from those in

the past. Among other changes, some Israeli politicians, including the head of the right-wing Jewish Home Party Naftali Bennet, have controversially argued for expanding the scope of future operations to targeting the Lebanese government, as well as broader Lebanese national infrastructure.

In an op-ed published in the [Times of Israel](#) in April, Bennet outlined potential shifts. “Unlike last time [2006], if we defend ourselves against a future Lebanese attack we will not use tweezers to search for a needle in a haystack: We will neutralize the haystack.”

According to Danin, it’s not clear whether either side wants a war of this catastrophic magnitude.

After the 2006 conflict, both sides are proceeding cautiously. “There’s a lot of deconfliction [that has to take place]. There’s a lot of room for error,” Danin said. “This adds to the volatility of the situation.”

Photo credit: Jalaa Marey/Getty Images



Israeli airstrike targets Syrian military site as tensions rise

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

7-8 minutes

An Israeli Merkava tank takes part in a military maneuver simulating an armed conflict with Iranian-back Hezbollah at an unspecified location near the Israeli-Syrian border on Sept. 6, 2017. (Atef Safadi/European Pressphoto Agency)

BEIRUT — Syria accused Israel on Thursday of bombing a military site that has been linked to the production of chemical weapons, as well as missiles bound for the Hezbollah militant group, marking an escalation of cross-border incursions by Israeli jets.

Syria’s army command said the attack occurred at 2:42 a.m. near the western town of Masyaf, which military analysts say hosts a branch of the government agency responsible for developing and producing unconventional weapons and precision missiles. Syria said two soldiers were killed when missiles were fired from Lebanese airspace. It warned of “serious repercussions of such acts of

aggression on the security and stability of the region.”

Israel has previously struck weapons convoys it has suspected of carrying arms to Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiite militia that is fighting in Syria in support of the government of President Bashar al-Assad. Israel has said repeatedly that it sees the transfer to Hezbollah of advanced weaponry such as guided rockets as a red line.

But tensions along Israel’s northern borders with Lebanon and Syria have significantly sharpened in recent weeks, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accused Iran, Hezbollah’s main backer, of building facilities in Syria and Lebanon to produce precision-guided missiles. He has said that Israel cannot accept such activity.

[\[Netanyahu accidentally reveals Israel carried out ‘dozens’ of raids in Syria\]](#)

Israel has watched nervously in recent years as the tide of the Syrian civil war has shifted in favor of Assad and as Iran and Hezbollah have become increasingly entrenched on the other side of the border.

In a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin last month,

Netanyahu said Israel was prepared to act alone to curb Iranian expansion in Syria. Israel has stoutly opposed a cease-fire in parts of Syria, brokered by the United States and Russia, on grounds that the pact does not do enough to keep Iran and its proxies away from Israel’s borders.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitoring group, said that a military storage camp next to the research center near Masyaf was used to store surface-to-surface rockets and that personnel from Iran and Hezbollah had been seen there more than once.

Maj. Gen. Yaakov Amidror, a former national security adviser to Netanyahu, said Hezbollah had received rockets from the production facility in the past.

“It’s another level of interference,” he said in a conference call, saying it was the first time that Israel had targeted a research-and-development facility. Israel has carried out nearly 100 strikes in Syria since the beginning of the civil war there, the Israeli air force chief told local media last month.

An Israel Defense Forces spokesman declined to comment on the latest strike.

A U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the situation freely, confirmed that the Israelis carried out the strike. The United States had no involvement in it and was assessing the situation, the official said.

[\[Syria fires missiles at Israeli warplanes making bombing run\]](#)

Israel estimates that Hezbollah has a stockpile of more than 150,000 rockets, but it is concerned that Iran will help boost the group’s capacity to build more-accurate precision missiles.

In 2006, Israel fought a bloody month-long war with Hezbollah, whose founding mission is to fight Israel. In that conflict, Hezbollah fired more than 4,000 rockets into Israel, and Israeli jets devastated areas of southern Lebanon.

The attack Thursday may be a signal to Russia and the United States that Israel wants its security interests taken into account, Amos Harel, an Israeli defense analyst, wrote in the newspaper Haaretz. Amid deep disgruntlement over the cease-fire in Syria, Israel is saying that “we’re capable of disrupting the

process of a future settlement in Syria if you insist on leaving us out of the picture," he wrote.

As tensions on its northern border rise, Israel is carrying out its biggest military exercises in nearly two decades, involving about 30,000 troops who are simulating a ground invasion against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

[\[Israel describes its aid work in Syria\]](#)

Amidror said that the strike at the Syrian research center could lead to

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

3 minutes

Sept. 7, 2017 7:22 p.m. ET

Israel launched airstrikes on a military compound in Syria on Thursday, and the bombing should alert the Trump Administration as much as the Syrians. They carry a warning about the next war in the Middle East that could draw in the U.S.

Israel doesn't confirm or deny its military strikes, but former officials said they were aimed at a base for training and a warehouse for short- and midrange missiles. The strikes

an escalation and that Israel's armed forces should be "prepared." Analysts say that although it is unlikely that either Hezbollah or Israel wants an all-out war, a conflagration could develop as Israel tries to limit Iran's and Hezbollah's expansion in Syria.

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"Now it's important to keep the escalation in check and to prepare for a Syrian-Iranian-Hezbollah response and even opposition from

also hit a facility that the U.S. cited this year for involvement in making chemical weapons.

The larger context is the confrontation that is building between Israel and Iran as the war against Islamic State moves to a conclusion in Syria and Iraq. Iran is using Syria's civil war, and the battle against ISIS, as cause to gain a permanent military foothold in Syria that can threaten Israel either directly or via its proxies in Syria and Lebanon.

Tehran has helped Hezbollah stockpile tens of thousands of missiles that will be launched against Israel in the next inevitable conflict. If it can also dominate southern Syria, Iran can establish a

Russia," Amos Yadlin, executive director of Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies and a former Israeli military intelligence chief, wrote on Twitter. He described the facility as a "military-scientific center" that develops precision missiles, "among other things."

In April, the [U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions](#) on 271 employees of the Syrian government agency responsible for chemical weapons production, weeks after a nerve agent was used

second front on the border near the Golan Heights that would further stretch Israel's ability to defend itself.

Israel may have to make more such strikes in Syria because Iran isn't likely to give up on this strategic opening. Iran's Revolutionary Guards know they have Russia's backing in Syria, and the U.S. is signaling that it is loathe to do anything to change that once Islamic State is routed from Raqqa.

"As far as Syria is concerned, we have very little to do with Syria other than killing ISIS," President Trump said Thursday at a White House press conference with the emir of Kuwait. "What we do is we kill ISIS. And we have succeeded in that

to kill 83 people and injure dozens in the opposition-held town of Khan Sheikhoun.

On Wednesday, U.N. investigators formally accused the Syrian government of involvement in that attack and 20 others, most of them targeting civilians.

Morris reported from Jerusalem. Dan Lamothe in Washington contributed to this report.

respect. We have done better in eight months of my Presidency than the previous eight years against ISIS."

Great, but the problem is that the end of ISIS won't bring stability to Syria, and American interests in the Middle East don't end with ISIS. The danger of a proxy war or even a direct war between Iran and Israel is growing, and it will increase as Iran's presence builds in Syria. Mr. Trump may not like it, but he needs a strategy for post-ISIS Syria that contains Iran if he doesn't want the U.S. to be pulled back into another Middle East war.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Editorial : Former Turkey Minister Charged in Iran Sanctions Case

Maria Armental
3-4 minutes

Sept. 7, 2017 2:54 p.m. ET

A former Turkish minister and three others were charged by federal prosecutors in an alleged scheme involving hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of financial transactions to help the Iranian government evade U.S. sanctions.

In an indictment filed Wednesday in a Manhattan federal court, prosecutors accuse Mehmet Zafer Caglayan of directing others, including officers at a Turkish state-owned bank, to handle and conceal a series of transactions prohibited under U.S. sanctions, which sought to restrain Iran's nuclear-weapons program. The alleged actions date to at least 2010 and continued through 2015, according to the indictment.

Mr. Caglayan served as Turkey's

economy minister from 2011 to 2013. Before that, he had served as foreign trade minister.

Mr. Caglayan declined comment through his lawyer.

On Thursday, Turkey's current economy minister, Nihat Zeybekci, defended Mr. Caglayan.

"The ones who make these allegations have to prove them," Mr. Zeybekci said.

The charges stem from a [high-profile case against Reza Zarrab](#), a Turkish-Iranian gold trader who owned companies in Turkey and the United Arab Emirates and whose [legal defense team](#) includes former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and former U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey.

Mr. Zarrab and Mehmet Hakan Atilla, who was a deputy general manager at Halkbank, one of the largest state-owned banks in Turkey, have been accused of conspiracy to evade U.S. sanctions

against Iran. They have pleaded not guilty and remain in U.S. custody awaiting trial.

Wednesday's indictment charged Mr. Caglayan and three others on charges including conspiracy to defraud the U.S. and to violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, and committing bank fraud and money laundering.

Prosecutors say Mr. Caglayan was involved with Mr. Zarrab in the alleged conspiracy to evade sanctions. Mr. Zarrab, they say, arranged meetings in Turkey that included Mr. Caglayan as well as Iranian government banking and oil officials in which they discussed some of the alleged transactions.

Some of the alleged transactions, according to the indictment, were disguised as food and medicine purchases by Iran, which would have been exempt from U.S. sanctions. Prosecutors said Mr. Caglayan used his position to protect the alleged scheme from

competitors and scrutiny. In exchange, he was paid tens of millions of dollars' worth of bribes in cash and jewelry while he was economy minister, according to the complaint.

In a statement, Halkbank said "our bank has repeatedly stated in detail that it has complied with all national and international regulations in all of its transactions."

Wednesday's indictment also charged Suleyman Aslan, a former general manager at Halkbank; Levent Balkan, who was assistant deputy manager at Halkbank; and Abdullah Happani, a business associate of Mr. Zarrab's. Their lawyers couldn't be reached for comment.

—Yeliz Candemir and Erdem Aydin contributed to this article.

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New York
Times**

Editorial : Myanmar Intensifies Its Abuse of Rohingya

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

Rohingya refugees from Myanmar after crossing the border illegally near Amtoli, Bangladesh, in late August. Adam Dean for The New York Times

"We know very well, more than most, what it means to be deprived of human rights and democratic protection."

There is truth and gall in these [words from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi](#), the de facto leader of Myanmar, whose military kept her under house arrest for years until freeing her for good in 2010. Her defiant fight for democracy won her the world's admiration and a Nobel Peace Prize.

But as the Buddhist nation's persecution of the Muslim Rohingya minority in Rakhine State has reached a peak in the past two weeks, with more than 100,000 people fleeing to Bangladesh, villages burning and untold numbers killed and raped, her acceptance of ethnic cleansing, and her [smearing of its critics](#), has dashed hope for a just solution.

Her statement above, made in a phone call to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, was meant as an expression of sincere concern, but was really a rendition of, "Who are you going to believe, me or your lying eyes?"

Myanmar's military has intensified scorched-earth tactics that were of such "devastating cruelty" last year and early this year that the [United Nations](#) said they most likely constituted "crimes against humanity." The Rohingya are denied basic rights, including citizenship in the country of their birth. Their persecution has been so egregious that hundreds of thousands have fled or languish in camps.

Troops began driving out desperate Rohingya after [attacks](#) by the insurgent Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on Aug. 25. Since then, Myanmar's military reports that nearly [400 people](#) have been killed, mostly insurgents, but Rohingya reaching Bangladesh report widespread [atrocities](#) by the military, including deliberate killings

of civilians. The insurgents said they were [reacting](#) to abuses by the military, which reportedly moved [a battalion](#) into the region about a month ago, prompting concern from the United Nations about the Rohingya's fate.

The International Crisis Group [warned](#) in December that the root causes of the Rohingya insurgency were the crushing persecution and the cruelty of the military. The solution, the group emphasized, is to work to end discrimination against the Rohingya and to moderate the military's response, precisely the opposite of what is happening now.

The continuing persecution of the Rohingya represents a colossal moral failure on the part of Myanmar's democratically elected government, led by Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi. The military retains considerable power, and she must tread carefully. But that is no excuse for her [ridiculous accusation](#) that international aid groups were supporting the insurgency, a charge that puts both aid workers and the

people who depend on them in danger. The United Nations' human rights envoy for Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, said she was "[astonished](#)" by the strict limitations Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's government placed on her July visit to the country. The government also [denied visas](#) to United Nations investigators looking into abuses by the military against Rohingya civilians, blocking independent monitors from assessing allegations of serious human rights violations.

Meanwhile, the United Nations has appealed to Bangladesh not to [turn away](#) desperate Rohingya reaching its border. India can help by abandoning a merciless [plan to deport](#) Rohingya who have taken refuge there. Last week, Pope Francis, who is scheduled to visit Myanmar in November, made a [plea](#) for "men and women of good will" to help the Rohingya and "give them their full rights." The first among these people of good will should be Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi.

This editorial was updated from an earlier version.



Ignatius : Tillerson is working with China and Russia — very, very quietly

<https://www.facebook.com/davidignatiusbooks>

6-7 minutes

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. (Brendan Smialowski/Agence France-Presse via Getty Images)

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has often been the silent man in the Trump foreign policy team. But out of the spotlight, he appears to be crafting a broad strategy aimed at working with China to resolve the North Korea crisis and with Russia to stabilize Syria and Ukraine.

The Tillerson approach focuses on personal diplomacy, in direct contacts with Chinese and Russian leaders, and through private channels to North Korea. His core strategic assumption is that if the United States can subtly manage its relations with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin — and allow those leaders to take credit for successes — complex regional problems can be solved effectively.

Tillerson appears unfazed by criticism that he has been a poor communicator and by recent talk of discord with President Trump. His attitude isn't exactly "take this job and shove it," but as a former ExxonMobil chief executive, he doesn't need to make money or Washington friends — and he

clearly thinks he has more urgent obligations than dealing with the press.

Act Four newsletter

The intersection of culture and politics.

Tillerson appears to have preserved a working relationship with Trump despite [pointedly separating himself](#) from the president's controversial comments after the Charlottesville unrest. Although Trump didn't initially like Tillerson's statement, it's said he was ultimately comfortable with it.

The North Korea crisis is the best example of Tillerson's diplomacy. For all the bombast of Trump's tweets, the core of U.S. policy has been an effort to work jointly with China to reverse the North Korean nuclear buildup through negotiations. Tillerson has signaled that the United States is ready for direct talks with Kim Jong Un's regime — perhaps soon, if Kim shows restraint. Tillerson wants China standing behind Kim at the negotiating table, with its hands figuratively at Kim's throat.

Despite Pyongyang's hyperbelligerent rhetoric, its representatives have conveyed interest in negotiations, querying details of U.S. positions. But Kim's actions have been erratic and confusing: When it appeared that

the North Koreans wanted credit for not launching missiles toward Guam, Tillerson [offered](#) such a public statement. Bizarrely, North Korea followed with three more weapons tests, in a reckless rebuff.

Some analysts see North Korea's race to test missiles and bombs as an effort to prepare the strongest possible bargaining position before negotiations. Tillerson seems to be betting that China can force such talks by imposing an oil embargo against Pyongyang. U.S. officials hope Xi will make this move unilaterally, demonstrating strong leadership publicly, rather than waiting for the United States to insert the embargo proposal in a new U.N. Security Council resolution.

Tillerson signaled his seriousness about Korea talks during a March visit to the Demilitarized Zone. He pointed to a table at a U.N. office there and remarked, "Maybe we'll use this again," if negotiations begin.

The Sino-American strategic dialogue about North Korea has been far more extensive than either country acknowledges. They've discussed joint efforts to stabilize the Korean Peninsula, including Chinese actions to secure nuclear weapons if the regime collapses.

The big idea driving Tillerson's China policy is that the

fundamentals of the relationship have changed as China has grown more powerful and assertive. The message to Beijing is that Xi's actions in defusing the North Korea crisis will shape U.S.-China relations for the next half-century.

Tillerson continues to work the Russia file, even amid [new Russia sanctions](#). He has known Putin since 1999 and views him as a predictable, if sometimes bullying, leader. Even with the relationship in the dumps, Tillerson believes he's making some quiet progress on Ukraine and Syria.

On Ukraine, Tillerson supports [Russia's proposal](#) to send U.N. peacekeepers to police what Putin claims are Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's assaults on Russian-backed forces in eastern Ukraine. The addition of U.N. monitors would help implement the Minsk agreement, even if Putin gets the credit and Poroshenko the blame.

On Syria, Tillerson has warned Putin that the real danger to Russian interests is increasing Iranian power there, especially as Bashar al-Assad's regime [regains control](#) of Deir al-Zour in eastern Syria. To counter the Iranians, Tillerson supports a quick move by the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces to capture the lower Euphrates Valley.

Trump's boisterous, sometimes belligerent manner and Tillerson's reticence are an unlikely combination, and many observers have doubted the relationship can

last. But Tillerson seems to roll with the punches — and tweets. When Trump makes a disruptive comment, Tillerson seems to treat it as part of the policy landscape —

and ponder how to use it to advantage.

Tillerson may be the least public chief diplomat in modern U.S.

history, but that's apparently by choice. By Washington standards, he's strangely uninterested in taking the credit.

ETATS-UNIS

The
New York
Times

The Fake Americans Russia Created to Influence the Election (UNE)

Scott Shane

21-26 minutes

Facebook's European headquarters in Dublin, above. On Facebook and Twitter, Russian fingerprints are on hundreds or thousands of fake accounts that posted anti-Hillary Clinton messages. Chris Ratcliffe/Bloomberg

Sometimes an international offensive begins with a few shots that draw little notice. So it was last year when Melvin Redick of Harrisburg, Pa., a friendly-looking American with a backward baseball cap and a young daughter, posted on [Facebook](#) a link to a brand-new website.

"These guys show hidden truth about [Hillary Clinton](#), George Soros and other leaders of the US," he wrote on June 8, 2016. "Visit #DCLeaks website. It's really interesting!"

Mr. Redick turned out to be a remarkably elusive character. No Melvin Redick appears in Pennsylvania records, and his photos seem to be borrowed from an unsuspecting Brazilian. But this fictional concoction has earned a small spot in history: The Redick posts that morning were among the first public signs of an unprecedented foreign intervention in American democracy.

A Facebook post, by someone claiming to be Melvin Redick, promoting a website linked to the Russian military intelligence agency G.R.U. The New York Times

The DCLeaks site had gone live a few days earlier, posting the first samples of material, stolen from prominent Americans by Russian hackers, that would reverberate through the presidential election campaign and into the Trump presidency. The site's phony promoters were in the vanguard of a cyberarmy of counterfeit Facebook and [Twitter](#) accounts, a legion of Russian-controlled impostors whose operations are still being unraveled.

The Russian information attack on the election did not stop with the hacking and leaking of Democratic

emails or the fire hose of stories, true, false and in between, that battered Mrs. Clinton on Russian outlets like RT and Sputnik. Far less splashy, and far more difficult to trace, was Russia's experimentation on Facebook and Twitter, the American companies that essentially invented the tools of social media and, in this case, did not stop them from being turned into engines of deception and propaganda.

An investigation by The New York Times, and new research from the cybersecurity firm FireEye, reveals some of the mechanisms by which suspected Russian operators used Twitter and Facebook to spread anti-Clinton messages and promote the hacked material they had leaked. On Wednesday, [Facebook officials](#) disclosed that they had shut down several hundred accounts that they believe were created by a Russian company linked to the Kremlin and used to buy \$100,000 in ads pushing divisive issues during and after the American election campaign.

On Twitter, as on Facebook, Russian fingerprints are on hundreds or thousands of fake accounts that regularly posted anti-Clinton messages. Many were automated Twitter accounts, called bots, that sometimes fired off identical messages seconds apart — and in the exact alphabetical order of their made-up names, according to the FireEye researchers. On Election Day, for instance, they found that one group of Twitter bots sent out the hashtag #WarAgainstDemocrats more than 1,700 times.

The Russian efforts were sometimes crude or off-key, with a trial-and-error feel, and many of the suspect posts were not widely shared. The fakery may have added only modestly to the din of genuine American voices in the pre-election melee, but it helped fuel a fire of anger and suspicion in a polarized country.

Given the powerful role of social media in political contests, understanding the Russian efforts will be crucial in preventing or blunting similar, or more

sophisticated, attacks in the 2018 congressional races and the 2020 presidential election. Multiple government agencies have investigated the Russian attack, though it remains unclear whether any agency is focused specifically on tracking foreign intervention in social media. Both Facebook and Twitter say they are studying the 2016 experience and how to defend against such meddling.

"We know we have to stay vigilant to keep ahead of people who try to misuse our platform," Alex Stamos, Facebook's chief security officer, [wrote on Wednesday in a post](#) about the Russia-linked fake accounts and ads. "We believe in protecting the integrity of civic discourse."

Critics say that because shareholders judge the companies partly based on a crucial data point — "monthly active users" — they are reluctant to police their sites too aggressively for fear of reducing that number. The companies use technical tools and teams of analysts to detect bogus accounts, but the scale of the sites — 328 million users on Twitter, nearly two billion on Facebook — means they often remove impostors only in response to complaints.

Though both companies have been slow to grapple with the problem of manipulation, they have stepped up efforts to purge fake accounts. Facebook says it takes down a million accounts a day — including some that were related to the recent French election and upcoming German voting — but struggles to keep up with the illicit activity. Still, the company says the abuse affects only a small fraction of the social network; Facebook officials [estimated](#) that of all the "civic content" posted on the site in connection with the United States election, less than one-tenth of one percent resulted from "information operations" like the Russian campaign.

Twitter, unlike Facebook, does not require the use of a real name and does not prohibit automated accounts, arguing that it seeks to be a forum for open debate. But it constantly updates a "trends" list of

most-discussed topics or hashtags, and it says it tries to foil attempts to use bots to create fake trends. However, FireEye found that the suspected Russian bots sometimes managed to do just that, in one case causing the hashtag #HillaryDown to be listed as a trend.

Clinton Watts, a former F.B.I. agent who has closely tracked Russian activity online, said that Facebook and Twitter suffered from a "bot cancer eroding trust on their platforms." But he added that while Facebook "has begun cutting out the tumors by deleting false accounts and fighting fake news," Twitter has done little and as a result, "bots have only spread since the election."

Asked to comment, Twitter referred to a blog post in June in which it said it was "doubling down" on efforts to prevent manipulation but could not reveal details for fear of tipping off those trying to evade the company's measures. But it declared that Twitter's "open and real-time nature is a powerful antidote" to falsehoods.

"This is important because we cannot distinguish whether every single Tweet from every person is truthful or not," the statement said. "We, as a company, should not be the arbiter of truth."

Leaks and Counterfeit Profiles

Russia has been quite open about playing its hacking card. In February last year, at a conference in Moscow, a top cyberintelligence adviser to President [Vladimir V. Putin](#) hinted that Russia was about to unleash a devastating information attack on the United States.

"We are living in 1948," said the adviser, Andrey Krutskikh, referring to the eve of the first Soviet atomic bomb test, in [a speech](#) reported by The Washington Post. "I'm warning you: We are at the verge of having something in the information arena that will allow to us to talk to the Americans as equals."

Mr. Putin's denials of Russian meddling have been coy. [In June, he allowed](#) that "free-spirited" hackers might have awakened in a good mood one day and

spontaneously decided to contribute to “the fight against those who say bad things about Russia.” [Speaking to NBC News](#), he rejected the idea that evidence pointed to Russia — while showing a striking familiarity with how cyberattackers might cover their tracks.

“IP addresses can be simply made up,” Mr. Putin said, referring to Internet protocol addresses, which can identify particular computers. “There are such IT specialists in the world today, and they can arrange anything and then blame it on whomever. This is no proof.”

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia in June. His denials of Russian meddling have been coy, though he said that “free-spirited” hackers might have spontaneously contributed to “the fight against those who say bad things about Russia.” Sputnik, via Reuters

Mr. Putin had a point. Especially in the social media realm, attributing fake accounts — to Russia or to any other source — is always challenging. [In January, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Security Agency concluded](#) “with high confidence” that Mr. Putin had ordered an influence operation to damage Mrs. Clinton’s campaign and eventually aid [Donald J. Trump’s](#). In April, Facebook published a [public report on information operations](#) using fake accounts. It shied away from naming Russia as the culprit until Wednesday, when the company said it had removed 470 “inauthentic” accounts and pages that were “likely operated out of Russia.” Facebook officials fingered a St. Petersburg company with Kremlin ties called [the Internet Research Agency](#).

Russia deliberately blurs its role in influence operations, American intelligence officials say. Even skilled investigators often cannot be sure if a particular Facebook post or Twitter bot came from Russian intelligence employees, paid “trolls” in Eastern Europe or hackers from Russia’s vast criminal underground. A Russian site called [buyaccs.com](#) (“Buy Bulk Accounts at Best Prices”) offers for sale a huge array of pre-existing social media accounts, including on Facebook and Twitter; like wine, the older accounts cost more, because their history makes chicanery harder to spot.

The trail that leads from the Russian operation to the bogus Melvin Redick, however, is fairly clear. United States intelligence concluded that [DCLeaks.com](#) was created in June 2016 by the Russian military intelligence agency G.R.U. The site began publishing

an eclectic collection of hacked emails, notably from George Soros, the financier and Democratic donor, as well as a former NATO commander and some Democratic and Republican staffers. Some of the website’s language — calling Mrs. Clinton “President of the Democratic Party” and referring to her “electional staff” — seemed to belie its pose as a forum run by American activists.

DCLeaks would soon be followed by a blog called Guccifer 2.0, which would leave even more clues of its Russian origin. Those sites’ posts, however, would then be dwarfed by those from [WikiLeaks](#), which American officials believe got thousands of Democratic emails from Russian intelligence hackers through an intermediary. At each stage, a chorus of dubious Facebook and Twitter accounts — alongside many legitimate ones — would applaud the leaks.

During its first weeks online, DCLeaks drew no media attention. But The Times found that some Facebook users somehow discovered the new site quickly and began promoting it on June 8. One was the Redick account, which posted about DCLeaks to the Facebook groups “World News Headlines” and “Breaking News — World.”

The Redick profile lists Central High School in Philadelphia and Indiana University of Pennsylvania as his alma maters; neither has any record of his attendance. In one of his photos, this purported Pennsylvania lifer is sitting in a restaurant in Brazil — and in another, his daughter’s bedroom appears to have a Brazilian-style electrical outlet. His posts were never personal, just news articles reflecting a pro-Russian worldview.

Melvin Redick’s Facebook Profile

Inconsistencies in the contents of Mr. Redick’s Facebook profile suggest that the identity was fabricated. 1 2 3

1. Neither Central High School nor Indiana University of Pennsylvania has any record of Mr. Redick attending.
2. According to his profile, Mr. Redick was born and raised in Pennsylvania, but one image shows him seated in a restaurant in Brazil, and another shows a Brazilian-style electrical outlet in his daughter’s bedroom.
3. Mr. Redick’s posts were never of a personal nature. He shared only

news articles reflecting a pro-Russian worldview.

The same morning, “Katherine Fulton” also began promoting DCLeaks in the same awkward English Mr. Redick used. “Hey truth seekers!” she wrote. “Who can tell me who are #DCLeaks? Some kind of Wikileaks? You should visit their website, it contains confidential information about our leaders such as Hillary Clinton, and others [http://dcleaks.com/](#).”

So did “Alice Donovan,” who pointed to documents from Mr. Soros’s Open Society Foundations that she said showed its pro-American tilt and — in rather formal language for Facebook — “describe eventual means and plans of supporting opposition movements, groups or individuals in various countries.”

Might Mr. Redick, Ms. Fulton, Ms. Donovan and others be real Americans who just happened to notice DCLeaks the same day? No. The Times asked Facebook about these and a half-dozen other accounts that appeared to be Russian creations. The company carried out its standard challenge procedure by asking the users to establish their bona fides. All the suspect accounts failed and were removed from Facebook.

Mobilizing a ‘Bot’ Army

On Twitter, meanwhile, hundreds of accounts were busy posting anti-Clinton messages and promoting the leaked material obtained by Russian hackers. Investigators for FireEye spent months reviewing Twitter accounts associated with certain online personas, posing as activists, that seemed to show the Russian hand: DCLeaks, Guccifer 2.0, Anonymous Poland and several others. FireEye concluded that they were associated with one another and with Russian hacking groups, including APT28 or Fancy Bear, which American intelligence blames for the hacking and leaking of Democratic emails.

Some accounts, the researchers found, showed clear signs of intermittent human control. But most displayed the rote behavior of automated Twitter bots, which send out tweets according to built-in instructions.

The researchers discovered long lists of bot accounts that sent out identical messages within seconds or minutes of one another, firing in alphabetical order. The researchers coined the term “warlist” for them. On Election Day, one such list cited leaks from Anonymous Poland in more than 1,700 tweets. Snippets of them provide a sample of the sequence:

@edanur01
#WarAgainstDemocrats 17:54

@efekinoks
#WarAgainstDemocrats 17:54

@elyashayk
#WarAgainstDemocrats 17:54

@emrecanbalc
#WarAgainstDemocrats 17:55

@emrullahtac
#WarAgainstDemocrats 17:55

Lee Foster, who leads the FireEye team examining information operations, said some of the warlist Twitter accounts had previously been used for illicit marketing, suggesting that they may have been purchased on the black market. Some were genuine accounts that had been hijacked. Rachel Usedom, a young American engineer in California, tweeted mostly about her sorority before losing interest in 2014. In November 2016, her account was taken over, [renamed #ClintonCorruption](#), and used to promote the Russian leaks.

Rachel Usedom’s Twitter account was taken over and used to post political leaks.

Ms. Usedom had no idea that her account had been commandeered by anti-Clinton propagandists. “I was shocked and slightly confused when I found out,” she said.

Notably, the warlist tweets often included the Twitter handles of users whose attention the senders wanted to catch — news organizations, journalists, government agencies and politicians, including [@realDonaldTrump](#). By targeting such opinion-shapers, Mr. Foster said, the creators of the warlists clearly wanted to stir up conversation about the leaked material.

J. M. Berger, a researcher in Cambridge, Mass., helped build a [public web “dashboard”](#) for the Washington-based Alliance for Securing Democracy to track hundreds of Twitter accounts that were suspected of links to Russia or that spread Russian propaganda. During the campaign, he said, he often saw the accounts post replies to Mr. Trump’s tweets.

Mr. Trump “received more direct replies than anyone else,” Mr. Berger said. “Clearly this was an effort to influence Donald Trump. They know he reads tweets.”

The suspected Russian operators at times lacked sophistication. “They are not always Americanophiles who know every nuance of U.S. politics,” said Mr. Foster, the FireEye researcher.

For instance, last October, hundreds of Anonymous Poland Twitter accounts posted a forged letter on the stationery of the conservative Bradley Foundation, based in Milwaukee, purporting to show that it had donated \$150 million to the Clinton campaign. The foundation denied any such contribution, which would have been illegal and, given its political leaning, highly unlikely.

'A Battle of Information'

Only a small fraction of all the suspect social media accounts active during the election have been studied by investigators. But there is ample reason to suspect that the Russian meddling may have been far more widespread.

Several activists who ran Facebook pages for [Bernie Sanders](#), for instance, noticed a suspicious flood of hostile comments about Mrs. Clinton after Mr. Sanders had already ended his campaign and endorsed her.

John Mattes, who ran the "San Diego for Bernie Sanders" page, said he saw a shift from familiar local commenters to newcomers, some with Eastern European names — including four different accounts using the name "Oliver Mitov."

"Those who voted for Bernie, will not vote for corrupt Hillary!" one of the Mitovs wrote on Oct. 7. "The Revolution must continue! #NeverHillary"

While he was concerned about being seen as a "crazy cold warrior," Mr. Mattes said he came to believe that Russia was the likely source of the anti-Clinton comments. "The magnitude and viciousness of it — I would suggest that their fingerprints were on it and no one else had that agenda," he said.

Both on the left and the pro-Trump right, though, some skeptics complain that Moscow has become the automatic boogeyman, accused of misdeeds with little proof. Even those who track Russian online activity admit that in the election it was not always easy to sort out who was who.

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"Yes, the Russians were involved. Yes, there's a lot of organic support for Trump," said Andrew Weisburd, an Illinois online researcher who has written frequently about Russian influence on social media.

"Trying to disaggregate the two was difficult, to put it mildly."

Mr. Weisburd said he had labeled some Twitter accounts "Kremlin trolls" based simply on their pro-Russia tweets and with no proof of Russian government ties. The Times contacted several such users, who insisted that they had come by their anti-American, pro-Russian views honestly, without payment or instructions from Moscow.

"Hillary's a warmonger," said Marilyn Justice, 66, who lives in Nova Scotia and tweets as [@mkj1951](#). Of Mr. Putin, she said in an interview, "I think he's very patient in the face of provocations."

Ms. Justice said she had first taken an interest in Russia during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, while looking for hockey coverage and finding what she considered a snide anti-Russia bias in the Western media. She said she did get a lot of news from Sputnik and RT but laughed at the notion that she could have Kremlin connections.

Another of the so-called Kremlin trolls, [Marcel Sardo](#), 48, a web producer in Zurich, describes himself bluntly on his Twitter bio as a "Pro-Russia Media-Sniper." He said he shared notes daily via

Skype and Twitter with online acquaintances, including Ms. Justice, on disputes between Russia and the West over who shot down the Malaysian airliner hit by a missile over Ukraine and who used sarin gas in Syria.

"It's a battle of information, and I and my peers have decided to take sides," said Mr. Sardo, who constantly cites Russian sources and bashed Mrs. Clinton daily during the campaign. But he denied he had any links to the Russian government.

If that's so, his prolific posts are a victory for Russia's information war — that admirers of the Kremlin spread what American officials consider to be Russian disinformation on election hacking, Syria, Ukraine and more.

But if Russian officials are gleeful at their success, in last year's election and beyond, they rarely let the mask slip. In [an interview with Bloomberg](#) before the election, Mr. Putin suggested that reporters were worrying too much about who exactly stole the material.

"Listen, does it even matter who hacked this data?" he said, in a point that Mr. Trump has sometimes echoed. "The important thing is the content that was given to the public."



Trump Jr. Says He Wanted Russian Dirt to Determine Clinton's 'Fitness' for Office (UNE)

Nicholas Fandos and Maggie Haberman

8-10 minutes

Donald Trump Jr. was interviewed by the Senate Judiciary Committee in Washington on Thursday. Carlos Barria/Reuters

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump Jr. told Senate investigators on Thursday that he set up [a June 2016 meeting with a Russian lawyer](#) because he was intrigued that she might have damaging information about Hillary Clinton, saying it was important to learn about Mrs. Clinton's "fitness" to be president.

But nothing came of the Trump Tower meeting, he said, and he was adamant that he never colluded with the Russian government's campaign to disrupt last year's presidential election.

During five hours of questioning, investigators for the Senate Judiciary Committee pressed Mr. Trump on numerous topics related to the meeting with the Russian lawyer, including how the

president's aides this summer drafted a statement aboard [Air Force One](#) in response to queries from The New York Times about the meeting.

Mr. Trump said he did not speak to his father about the draft statement because he did not want to involve him in something he "knew nothing about," according to one person briefed about parts of his testimony. Lawmakers have wanted to know what, if anything, President Trump knew about the June 2016 meeting and whether he was involved in preparing the draft statement to The Times.

In his prepared remarks on Thursday to Congress, the younger Mr. Trump said he was initially conflicted when he heard that the Russian lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, might have damaging information about Mrs. Clinton. Despite his interest, he said, he always intended to consult with his lawyers about the propriety of using any information that Ms. Veselnitskaya, who has links to the Kremlin, gave him at the meeting.

A copy of Mr. Trump's statement was obtained by The New York Times.

The acknowledgment by the president's eldest son that he intended to seek legal counsel after the meeting suggests that he knew, or at least suspected, that accepting potentially damaging information about a rival campaign from a foreign country raised thorny legal issues.

"To the extent they had information concerning the fitness, character or qualifications of a presidential candidate, I believed that I should at least hear them out," he said. "Depending on what, if any, information they had, I could then consult with counsel to make an informed decision as to whether to give it further consideration."

Mr. Trump's lengthy interview took place in the basement of the Capitol, with Mr. Trump successfully evading reporters as he left and returned for bathroom breaks. The interview was conducted by committee staff, with Democratic and Republican teams of investigators taking turns

questioning Mr. Trump in one-hour blocks. A handful of senators also attended portions of the meeting.

The June 2016 meeting was arranged after the younger Mr. Trump received an email from a family associate saying that potentially damaging information was being provided as part of the Russian government's support for his father. But in his statement on Thursday, he described his decision to agree to the meeting as the byproduct of the chaotic, seat-of-the-pants campaign assembled by his father, rather than any attempt to collude with Russia.

Mr. Trump has given differing accounts of his contacts last year with Russians. He told The Times in March that he never met with Russians on behalf of the campaign, a statement his lawyer has since said was meant to refer to Russian government officials. [In July, he described](#) the Trump Tower meeting as primarily focused on the issue of Russian adoptions, before eventually acknowledging that he took the meeting because he was told Ms. Veselnitskaya had

damaging information about Mrs. Clinton.

But intentionally misspeaking to Congress is a crime, giving his statement on Thursday added weight. If there were any doubt about the stakes, the office of Senator Chris Coons, Democrat of Delaware and a member of the panel, made them clear in an email to reporters on Thursday afternoon that included the text of the so-called False Statements statute.

Mr. Trump told investigators that working for his father's campaign consumed his life. "I had never worked on a campaign before, and it was an exhausting, all-encompassing, life-changing experience. Every single day I fielded dozens, if not hundreds, of emails and phone calls."

He is the second person connected to the Trump campaign to tell congressional investigators that the campaign was, essentially, too inexperienced and too unfamiliar with politics to pull off a master strategy — let alone coordinate with the Russian government. Mr. Trump's brother-in-law, Jared Kushner, painted a similar picture during an interview with the Senate Intelligence Committee.

In his statement, Mr. Trump said he had some reservations about the June 2016 proposal from the meeting's facilitator, Rob Goldstone, whom he described as a "colorful" music promoter he had come to know through the son of a Russian oligarch. Mr. Goldstone asked Mr. Trump to take a meeting that would include potentially damaging information about Mrs. Clinton.

"Since I had no additional information to validate what Rob was saying, I did not quite know what to make of his email," he said. "I had no way to gauge the reliability, credibility or accuracy of any of the things he was saying."

"As it later turned out, my skepticism was justified," Mr. Trump added. "The meeting provided no meaningful information and turned out not to be about what had been represented."

In an email response to Mr. Goldstone, Mr. Trump wrote that if the promised information about Mrs. Clinton was as advertised, "I love it."

"As much as some have made of my using the phrase 'I love it,' it was simply a colloquial way of saying that I appreciated Rob's gesture,"

he said in his statement on Thursday.

When asked why, shortly after the Trump Tower meeting was set up, his father promised to deliver a "major speech" about Mrs. Clinton's "corrupt dealings," Mr. Trump said that that was merely the way his father speaks, according to a person familiar with the interview.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is one of three congressional panels investigating aspects of President Trump's links to Russia and related matters. The committee, which has oversight of the Justice Department, is particularly interested in the circumstances surrounding President Trump's abrupt [firing in May of James B. Comey](#) as F.B.I. director.

Democrats have repeatedly said that they still expect Donald Trump Jr. to appear at a public committee hearing and were careful to cast the Thursday sit-down as a staff-driven interview, where senators breezed in and out merely to observe. It was unclear if Mr. Trump had agreed to such testimony, and the committee's chairman, Charles E. Grassley, did not say one way or another whether there would be a hearing.

Spokesmen for Mr. Grassley and Senator Dianne Feinstein of California, the committee's top Democrat, declined to comment on the interview after it concluded. Committee members who did not attend are expected to be briefed on its contents in the coming days.

Senator Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut, said the mood behind closed doors was "cordial" and that investigators were asking primarily factual questions.

He said that what he had heard from Mr. Trump made him only more certain that the committee needed to hear from other attendees of the Trump Tower meeting, including Mr. Kushner and Paul J. Manafort, who was the Trump campaign chairman at the time. Mr. Blumenthal said that the committee needs to look further into how Mr. Trump's initial statements to the news media about that meeting were put together.

"We covered a good deal of ground," Mr. Blumenthal said. "There is still a lot of questioning to be covered."



The Senate's Russia Investigators Need to Slow Down

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

10-12 minutes

Last week, [Politico reported](#) that congressional investigations are ramping up "as lawmakers return from the August recess amid fresh revelations about contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia." The news comes shortly after the Chairman of the committee undertaking the most serious investigative effort made a surprising statement — one that got a bit lost amid the steady drumbeat of revelations of contacts between the Trump campaign and Russian.

Richard Burr, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI), told the [New York Times](#) he was "hopeful that we can bring finality to [the investigation] by the end of the year, but I also can't anticipate anything new that might come up that we don't know today that would extend it by a month or two months."

Trending Articles

Trump needs to focus on reassuring U.S. allies, engage with North Korea, and stop doing Pyongyang favors.

Wrap the Russia investigation up by the end of the year? Is Burr serious about that?

If Burr is really contemplating an investigation that issues its report within the next four to six months, it might mean he's way ahead of where we — and a lot of other people — have assumed he was. But remember that the SSCI is undertaking an investigation of enormous complexity, and it's pursuing that investigation with lean staffing that is an example of either a laudable Republican commitment to efficiency in government or, well, under-resourcing of what should be an important congressional priority. Given these handicaps,

Burr's comments likely indicate that the investigation has been scoped too narrowly.

Burr's comments likely indicate that the investigation has been scoped too narrowly. The other possibility, of course, is that Burr is deluding himself and that the investigation is reasonably scoped but far less advanced than he imagines and that it will, as a consequence, take far longer.

Whichever is the case, with the investigation's chairman laying out an ambitious timeline to complete the investigation, now is a good time to ask what the American

public should expect the SSCI investigation to produce. That is, what are the questions we want Burr and his committee to answer? What is the work we're expecting this report to do?

The congressional investigations are proceeding in parallel to the executive branch's investigation, now overseen by Robert Mueller, and they serve different purposes. The purpose of the executive branch investigation is to determine whether crimes were committed and to identify national security threats that need to be remediated. By contrast, the job of the congressional investigations is to develop facts on which to base legislative actions and, just as importantly, to inform the public about what happened during the 2016 election. It is also, in a classic oversight sense, to satisfy itself that the executive branch is doing its job in countering foreign efforts to interfere with the American electoral process.

In order to accomplish these tasks, it will not suffice for the SSCI report simply to rehash the intelligence community's assessment of Russian interference in the election, which was released in December of 2016. That document already concluded, after all, that the interference did happen, that it was

an effort to both injure Hillary Clinton's electoral chances and advantage Donald Trump's campaign, and that it was a state action by the Russian government. The committee report should affirm those findings, assuming the committee concurs with them, but those are not the central questions Congress was tasked with addressing.

In [announcing the bipartisan investigation](#), Burr and Vice Chairman Mark Warner promised more. They set forth to conduct an inquiry that would "include, but [not be] limited to":

- A review of the intelligence that informed the Intelligence Community Assessment "Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections;"
- Counterintelligence concerns related to Russia and the 2016 U.S. election, including any intelligence regarding links between Russia and individuals associated with political campaigns;
- Russian cyber activity and other "active measures" directed

against the U.S., both as it regards the 2016 election and more broadly.

In other words, even as originally scoped, the investigation contemplated addressing the relationship between Trump's campaign and this set of Russian operations. It was the very promise of answers on that score that the Republican leadership used to stave off calls for a bipartisan commission or a select committee.

For the committee now to fail authoritatively to address that relationship should be unthinkable for its chairman.

For the committee now to fail authoritatively to address that relationship should be unthinkable for its chairman. At a minimum, the SSCI will not have done its job if it leaves significant open questions concerning the broad set of questions discussed under the rubric of "collusion."

The trouble is that, even addressing those original issues won't be good enough. Because as Burr acknowledged in his *Times* interview, the "investigation ha[s] expanded beyond its original scope based on new evidence." The most obvious example of this is the committee's delving into the circumstances of Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey. Having taken the former FBI director's public testimony that Trump dismissed him because of the Russian investigation, it just is not credible for the SSCI to release a report that does not substantively address the circumstances of the firing of the person charged with investigating the matters it is looking at. There are other issues too that have arisen since the original jurisdiction was established. A report that does not address them will not be credible either. One that addresses them seriously, however, likely poses a serious challenge to the ambitious timeline Burr is promising.

In our view, a satisfactory congressional report needs to address, at a

minimum, the following issues, in addition to those described in the original document. Some of these issues are reasonably understood as specific questions encompassed by the broad issues described in that report. Others, however, are not. Unless and until these questions are addressed, however, *L'Affaire Russe* will not die but will keep coming back. A report, in other words, needs to, at a minimum, contain:

- A specific accounting of the allegations of coordination between the Russians and any individuals affiliated with Trump campaign — including Paul Manafort, Carter Page, and Michael Flynn. This needs to include a complete accounting of any financial dealings between these individuals and Russian government and Russian entities.
- A granular account of any financial relationships between the Trump organization, the Trump campaign, or related individuals, and the Russian government or Russian entities.
- A complete explanation of the meeting at Trump Tower between Donald Trump Jr., Manafort, and Jared Kushner with Russian citizens purporting to promise Russian government opposition research on Hillary Clinton and support of the Trump campaign.
- A full explanation of Kushner's effort to create a back channel means of communication between the Trump transition and the Russian government for one or more meetings.
- A full account of the substance of the interaction between Flynn

and then-Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in the telephone calls between them — along with what and when President Trump and others in the White House learned about those interactions.

- A complete account of any other meetings that may have taken place with, or about which the campaign was contacted by, Russian officials or representatives.
- A complete account of any coordination between Russian representatives and Republican operatives not directly affiliated with the Trump campaign — including the efforts by the late Peter Smith to negotiate the production of Hillary Clinton's missing emails by people purporting to be Russian hackers.
- An accounting of the Trump Organization's ties to Russia and Russian interests over time — and a rigorous assessment of the extent to which such ties give rise to security vulnerabilities.
- A full account of any disinformation campaigns directed by foreign government and whether any US persons or companies supported such efforts by providing assistance or data for better targeting.
- An assessment of whether any substantial quantity of foreign money played a role in the 2016 campaign.
- An assessment of the origins and the validity of the so-called "unmasking" issue — and an authoritative resolution for congressional purposes of the question of whether

President Trump was subjected to any improper surveillance, as he has alleged.

- An assessment of whether Comey was fired in an attempt to impede or prevent proper investigation of any of these issues — and whether Trump's interactions with him while in office and with other senior intelligence and law enforcement officials were improper efforts to influence the investigation.
- An account of whether any Russian operations are ongoing or expected in the context of future U.S. election and what steps needs to take place to secure the U.S. electoral process against foreign interference.

This is a lot of work to wrap up in a few months. And if the committee were to issue a partial report with the intention of updating it in the future, that could well cause more harm than good.

If Burr thinks the SSCI staff, as currently constituted, is up to the complete job in the time frame he describes, so be it. We look forward to a timely report. Our own sense, however, is that the investigation could use more staff and will almost certainly need more time that Burr has imagined. If that's the case, better to face that fact now, rather than to rush a report that is not responsive to the public questions that will, without answers, continue to hang like an albatross around the administration's neck.

Photo credit: Aaron P. Bernstein/Getty Images



New FBI head says he's not seen 'any whiff' of White House interference in the Russia investigation

<https://www.facebook.com/ellennak.ashimapost/>

4-5 minutes

FBI Director nominee Christopher Wray testifies on Capitol Hill in July 2017, at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary

Committee. (Pablo Martinez Monsivais/AP)

FBI Director Christopher A. Wray, in his first public remarks as the bureau's new head, said he has seen no interference from the White House in the ongoing investigation into potential collusion between

Moscow and Trump associates in last year's election.

"I can say very confidently that I have not detected any whiff of interference with that investigation," said Wray, referring to his five weeks on the job in the wake of President Trump's firing of James B. Comey.

He noted that special counsel Robert S. Mueller III is running the investigation and that the bureau has agents working on the probe, which expanded earlier this year to include looking at whether Trump attempted to obstruct justice leading up to the firing of Comey. He said he has "enormous respect" for Mueller, whom he knew when

Mueller ran the FBI in the early 2000s and Wray was a senior Justice Department official.

Wray, whose name is often paired with adjectives such as “understated” and “low-key,” is a departure in style from his predecessor, Comey, who reveled in engaging in public debate and whose firing stunned the bureau.

“He is calm and collected,” said Charlie Allen, a former longtime senior intelligence official who heard Wray at an Intelligence and National Security Summit on Thursday. “He has a clear mind. He’s very independent.”

During his confirmation hearing in July, Wray, who is 50, pledged he would resign rather than give in to pressure from the president to drop an investigation.

“No one should mistake my low-key demeanor as a lack of resolve, as some kind of willingness to compromise on principle,” he said.

President Trump has publicly expressed doubts about the intelligence community’s conclusion that Russia intervened in the election in part to help him win. Wray in July said he had no reason to second-guess the spy agencies’ assessment, and that hasn’t changed now that he has seen the classified report on the subject, he said.

Wray also noted that the FBI, in its counterintelligence mission, is working at preventing Russian interference in future elections. “So there’s overlap of mission there” with Mueller’s probe, and “I’m impressed with the strides that we’ve made on that front.”

Trump has not hidden his displeasure with what he sees as politically motivated leaks coming from government officials with respect to the Russia probe. He has repeatedly called on the Justice Department, of which the FBI is a part, to catch and punish leakers.

Wray, who was part of a panel of five intelligence officials, acknowledged leaks were “of deep concern to all of us on this stage.” He also gave a nod to “the important role the free press plays in a society.” He said those with access to classified information should respect the “shared sense of accountability and responsibility for the information we’re all entrusted with.”

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

Wray urged Congress to renew a surveillance law known informally as “Section 702” for the portion of the statute it falls under. It helped detect an Islamic State proponent who was recruiting online via social media and who advocated the killing of U.S. military members, he said.

The ISIS member, Shawn Parson, who was from Trinidad and Tobago, was killed in Syria in 2015.

He said a big challenge for the bureau is on the technology front.

Adversaries’ advances in technology are “exceeding our ability to keep up,” he said. Without private sector collaboration here, he said, “we’ve got a very, very scary road ahead of us.”

The Washington Post Nunn and Moniz : Deep U.S.-Russia malaise calls for a liaison between Trump and Congress

By Sam Nunn and Ernest J. Moniz
6-7 minutes

President Trump meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin at July’s Group of 20 summit in Hamburg. (Evan Vucci/AP)

By Sam Nunn and Ernest J. Moniz
September 6

Sam Nunn, a Democrat from Georgia, was a member of the U.S. Senate from 1972 to 1997. Ernest J. Moniz was U.S. energy secretary from 2013 to 2017. They are co-chairmen of the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

As Congress returns from its August recess, U.S.-Russia relations are in a deep ditch. This is a serious challenge for our governments and a danger to the people of both nations and indeed the world. Getting to safer ground requires urgent action to establish close cooperation between the Trump administration and Congress — by creating a new bipartisan liaison group modeled on one established in the 1980s.

Congress has legislated its outrage over Russia’s interference in our election and its actions in Ukraine. Congress has also made clear its distrust of the president’s handling of relations with Moscow. Legislation [passed overwhelmingly](#) in both houses (and [reluctantly signed](#) by President Trump) codifies existing sanctions, enacts new ones, and prevents the president from altering or removing the sanctions without congressional review and — for all intents and

purposes — approval. This creates a joint responsibility between the executive and legislative branches. The challenge is to make it work to avoid a further downward spiral in U.S.-Russia relations.

Congress must assume responsibility for the authority it has asserted. This starts with the recognition that adjusting sanctions must not become such a difficult procedure that it hamstringing our foreign policy in dealing with Russia — which, as the other nuclear superpower, shares with us responsibility for reducing the risk of a nuclear weapon being used by nations or terrorists. If Russia concludes that economic sanctions are essentially permanent, its incentives for adjusting to a more positive course will be greatly diminished. Moreover, most Russian sanctions have been [jointly adopted](#) and implemented in close cooperation with our European allies — who may balk if faced with a congressional process that casts doubt on the prospects for sanctions to be lifted or modified.

Evening Edition newsletter

The day’s most important stories.

With both the White House and Congress having a hand on the steering wheel for Russia policy, perspective at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue is crucial. Congress must organize itself to be a constructive player, and the Trump administration must acknowledge this reality by reaching out.

A liaison group, which could include the chairs and ranking minority-

party members of key committees from both houses of Congress, should be appointed by congressional leadership to work closely with the administration to receive briefings and offer constructive feedback. The closest Cold War parallel is the [Senate Arms Control Observer Group](#) established by Sens. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) and Bob Dole (R-Kan.) to communicate regularly with Secretary of State George Shultz and the arms control negotiators during the Reagan era. It worked, thanks to sustained focus by members of Congress and unprecedented cooperation with the State Department and the White House.

The group coordinated continuously and carefully, and the treaties that were eventually submitted received widespread support and helped manage and eventually end the Cold War. Today, we need to create a similar framework so Congress can maintain effective oversight and accountability while providing political space and support for the administration to pursue meaningful U.S.-Russia discussions on vital interests — and adjust course, if warranted.

Reestablishing a workable consensus on Russia policy between Congress and the Trump administration is also essential to maintaining cohesion and close coordination with our European allies. At a time when Europe is receiving mixed messages from [the president](#) and [Congress](#) on the direction of Russia policy, the liaison group could help underscore to European governments that

Washington — both Congress and the president — understands and supports not only Europe’s essential role in implementing sanctions, but also our shared interest in improving security in the European Atlantic region.

Finally, Washington and Moscow must recognize that despite their deep differences, there is an urgent need to address areas of common interest, chief among them reducing nuclear and other military risks and preventing catastrophic terrorist attacks. We had ongoing dialogue about nuclear risks during the Cold War, and the lack of it today is dangerous. These are discussions the liaison group could constructively shape and support, displaying U.S. governmental unity. Over the longer term, the liaison group could also provide a foundation for dialogue with parliamentary counterparts in Russia.

One thing is certain: Inaction and continued dysfunction between the executive and congressional branches of our government will make it even more difficult to put out the intense fires we now face in many parts of the globe. Reestablishing close cooperation between the White House and Congress through a liaison group is an essential prerequisite to renewing cohesion with NATO and our European partners — and effective communication between Washington and Moscow on our vital mutual-security interests. It is imperative that we address the U.S.-Russia relationship on critical nuclear-security issues to avoid miscalculation that could escalate

into existential threats to both countries.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Strassel : Comey's Secret Power

Kimberley A. Strassel

5-7 minutes

Sept. 7, 2017 7:11 p.m. ET

J. Edgar Hoover's abuse of power as FBI director led Congress and the Justice Department to put new checks on that most powerful and secretive of offices. By the time Congress finishes investigating James Comey's role in the 2016 presidential election, those safeguards may be due for an update.

Powerful as Hoover was, even he never simultaneously investigated both major-party candidates for the presidency. Mr. Comey did, and Americans are now getting a glimpse of how much he influenced political events.

Mr. Comey's actions in the Hillary Clinton email probe are concerning enough. He made himself investigator, judge and jury, breaking the Justice Department's chain of command. He publicly confirmed the investigation, violating the department's principles. He announced he would not recommend prosecuting Mrs. Clinton, even as he publicly excoriated her—an extraordinary abuse of his megaphone. Then he rekindled the case only 11 days before the election.

An inquiry by the Senate Judiciary Committee has now shown that Mr.

Comey's investigation was a charade. He wrote a draft statement exonerating Mrs. Clinton in May, long before he bothered to interview her or her staff. This at least finally explains the probe's lackluster nature: the absence of a grand jury, the failure to follow up on likely perjury, the unorthodox immunity deals made with Clinton aides.

But the big development this week is a new look at how Mr. Comey may have similarly juked the probe into Donald Trump's purported ties to Russia. The House Intelligence Committee's investigation took a sharp and notable turn on Tuesday, as news broke that it had subpoenaed the FBI and the Justice Department for information relating to the infamous Trump "dossier." That dossier, whose allegations appear to have been fabricated, was commissioned by the opposition-research firm Fusion GPS and then developed by a former British spook named Christopher Steele.

But the FBI had its own part in this dossier, and investigators are finally drilling down into how big a role it played, and why. The bureau has furiously resisted answering questions. It ignored the initial requests for documents and has refused to comply with the House committee's subpoenas, which were first issued Aug. 24. Republicans are frustrated enough that this week they sent orders compelling FBI Director Christopher Wray and Attorney General Jeff Sessions to

appear before the committee to explain the obstruction.

One explanation is that the documents might show the FBI played a central role in ginning up the fake dossier on Mr. Trump. To this day, we do not know who hired Fusion GPS to gather the dirt. The [New York Times](#) early this year reported, citing an anonymous source, that a wealthy anti-Trumper initially hired Fusion to dig into Mr. Trump's business dealings, but the contract was later taken over by a Clinton-allied group. That's when Fusion shifted its focus to Russia and hired Mr. Steele.

The question is when the FBI got in on the act. The Washington Post in February reported that Mr. Steele "was familiar" to the FBI, since he'd worked for the bureau before. The newspaper said Mr. Steele had reached out to a "friend" at the FBI about his Trump work as far back as July 2016. The Post even reported that Mr. Steele "reached an agreement with the FBI a few weeks before the election for the bureau to pay him to continue his work."

Who was Mr. Steele's friend at the FBI? Did the bureau influence the direction of the Trump dossier? Did it give Mr. Steele material support from the start? The timing matters because it could answer the vital question of why the FBI wanted the dossier. Here's one thought: warrants.

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which oversees spying activities, is usually generous in approving warrants, on the presumption law-enforcement agencies are acting in good faith. When a warrant is rejected, though, law enforcement isn't pleased.

Perhaps the FBI wanted to conduct surveillance on someone connected to a presidential campaign (Carter Page?) but couldn't hit what was—and ought to be—a supremely high bar for getting such a potentially explosive warrant. A dossier of nefarious allegations might well prove handy in finally convincing the FISA court to sign off. The FBI might have had a real motive to support Mr. Steele's effort. It might have even justified the unjustifiable: working with a partisan oppo-research firm and a former spook to engineer a Kremlin-planted dossier that has roiled Mr. Trump's entire presidency.

Now that's power.

Mr. Comey's meddling has never seemed to stem from some hidden partisan impulse, but rather from an overweening self-righteousness. But power can be misused as much in the hands of the sanctimonious as the corrupt. And it's overdue for congressional investigators to get to the bottom of precisely how much power Mr. Comey was exercising.

Write to kim@wsj.com.

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The New York Times

Hurricane Irma Devastates Caribbean and Heads Toward Florida (UNE)

Frances Robles, Kirk Semple and

Vivian Yee

10-13 minutes

'We Have Nothing Left': Islanders Survey Irma's Destruction

Two residents from St. Martin island's two nations, the French St. Martin and the Dutch St. Maarten, describe Irma's destruction.

By BARBARA MARCOLINI on September 7, 2017. Photo by Netherlands Ministry of Defence, via Reuters. [Watch in Times Video »](#)

SAN JUAN, P.R. — One of the most powerful Atlantic hurricanes ever recorded crescendoed over the Caribbean on Thursday, crumpling islands better known as beach paradises into half-habitable emergency zones and sideswiping

Puerto Rico before churning north. It is expected to hit the Florida Keys and South Florida by Saturday night.

More than 60 percent of households in Puerto Rico were without power. On St. Martin, an official said 95 percent of the island was destroyed. The Haitian government called for all agencies, stores and banks to shut down as the storm hit. Prime Minister Gaston Browne of [Antigua and Barbuda](#) said that [half of Barbuda had been left homeless](#).

Watching Hurricane Irma maraud across [Barbuda](#) and Anguilla, residents of Florida and others who found themselves on the wrong side of the forecast were hastening to get out of the way. Government officials in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina pleaded for people to evacuate vulnerable areas, triggering a scramble for the essentials — gasoline, water,

sandbags — that, even for hurricane-hardened Floridians, was laced with dread and punctuated with dire warnings from every direction.

A shortage of gasoline and bottled water, always a headache in the days before hurricanes, grew more acute in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, as the production of Houston oil refineries shrank and fuel and water were diverted to Texas. Pump lines in South Florida sprawled for blocks as fleeing residents sucked up what gas they could, and some drivers chased after tankers they had spied on the roads.

Gov. Rick Scott of Florida urged extreme caution in the face of a powerful storm that could quickly change course. "Every Florida family must prepare to evacuate regardless of the coast you live on," he said.

By the time Rosi Edreira and her husband got the order to leave their home in Cutler Bay, part of the second evacuation zone in Miami-Dade County, they had already made plans to seek shelter in Charlotte, N.C. Into the car would go photo albums, birth certificates, nearly 400 Christmas ornaments collected over a quarter-century and their two dogs, JJ and Coco Puff, and cat, Dicky.

Felipe Martinez removed fallen branches in San Juan, P.R., on Thursday. Erika P. Rodriguez for The New York Times

"I did Andrew," said Ms. Edreira, 49, recalling the massive Category 5 hurricane that ripped off her roof 25 years ago last month. "I'm not doing that again."

By Thursday night, Irma's 175-mile-an-hour winds and pelting rains had already serially ransacked the

islands of the eastern Caribbean, leaving at least seven dead and whole communities flattened.

Not all the news was awful. Despite the loss of power to most of the island, damage and loss of life on Puerto Rico was far less than feared. Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which share the island of Hispaniola, were also spared direct hits.

But the terror of the storm left people grasping for superlatives.

"There are shipwrecks everywhere, destroyed houses everywhere, torn-off roofs everywhere," the president of the French territorial council on St. Martin, Daniel Gibbs, [told Radio Caraïbes International](#).

"It's just unbelievable," he added. "It's indescribable."

In Puerto Rico — among Irma's less unfortunate casualties — the lights were out. In many places, so was running water.

Though the hurricane barely brushed the island, it managed to knock out its aging electrical system. More than a million customers were without power on Thursday, and a little more than half of the hospitals were functional. Even before a single raindrop fell, the head of the company, which is effectively bankrupt, had predicted that if the storm packed a wallop, it could take four to six months to completely re-establish service. His prediction infuriated Puerto Ricans, who see the latest development as yet another shameful indignity in the island's yearslong economic decline.

Buildings were damaged by Hurricane Irma on the French side of the island of St. Martin on Thursday. Lionel Chamoiseau/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

How is it possible, they wanted to know, that a hurricane that had passed at a safe distance and hardly claimed a shingle could leave so many in the dark?

Puerto Rico's plunge into darkness has been long coming. In July, the huge, government-owned power authority defaulted on a deal to restructure \$9 billion in debt, effectively [declaring bankruptcy](#).

It has neither modernized nor kept up with maintenance. Trees have gone untrimmed, poles unattended. (The electric company did not respond to repeated requests for comment.)

Gov. Ricardo A. Rosselló said the authorities could not estimate how long it would take to get the power back until officials were able to survey the damage.

Thursday afternoon he said service had been restored to 144,000 households — which still left nearly a million out.

Still, he said, things could have been much worse.

"We would like to start out thanking the almighty," Mr. Rosselló said. "Our prayers were answered."

Residents in Port St. Lucie, Fla., prepared for Hurricane Irma's approach at Home Depot. Jason Henry for The New York Times

On other islands, the reckoning was far more stark.

On St. Martin, a part-French, part-Dutch possession where at least four people died as a result of the storm, aerial footage taken by the military showed streets inundated with water and homes devastated by winds. The second wave of destruction, for businesses at least, was man-made: looters were picking through the remains, sometimes in view of police officers who stood idly by, "as if they were buying groceries," said Maeva-Myriam Ponet, a correspondent for a television network based in Guadeloupe, another French Overseas Territory in the Caribbean.

St. Martin remained mostly isolated from the outside world on Thursday, lacking power and most cellphone service.

Ms. Ponet, who reports for the Guadeloupe 1ère network, said the residents of St. Martin felt utterly neglected. "Help will arrive tonight," she said, "but for the moment, they don't have anything."

The nearby island of St. Barthélemy, another French territory, was also hard hit, as was Barbuda, where half of the island's residents were [reportedly](#) left homeless.

The network's correspondent in St. Barthélemy, Eric Rayapin, described a "spectacle of desolation," with the island all but severed from the outside world. There had been little or no phone service, water or electricity since Tuesday night.

Buildings have been "ravaged," he said, and many roads have been destroyed.

"The population here is suffering enormously," Mr. Rayapin reported. "Some of them have lost their houses, the cars have been flipped over in the middle of the street, and all vegetation has been destroyed."

Rue Kindred hung hurricane shutters on his home in White City, Fla., on Thursday. Jason Henry for The New York Times

He added: "It's a very hard blow."

John McKendrick, Anguilla's attorney general, said that the island, a British possession, had suffered "huge devastation" from the hurricane.

Most of the island's homes had been damaged, fallen trees had blocked many roads, cellphone service was interrupted and electrical service was cut. The entire island was still without power midday Thursday, and the ports and the airport remained closed. One person in Anguilla died, Mr. Kendrick said, though he did not know the circumstances.

"It's been bad," Mr. McKendrick said in a telephone interview from London, where he had been traveling when the hurricane struck

the island. "A lot of people are exhausted and a lot of homes are damaged."

He said the authorities were still trying to assess the full scope of the destruction.

In Haiti, the government called for all institutions to be shut down from noon on Thursday until further notice. President Jovenel Moïse urged people to get to a safe place.

"The hurricane is not a game," he said.

The danger was not only of drownings and injuries from the storm. Officials worried that a surge of cholera could follow, as it did last year after Hurricane Matthew devastated the country's southwest. Government reports show that the cholera that broke out in Haiti starting in 2010 has killed 104 people to date. In an effort to avert another flare-up, Haiti's minister of public health urged people to add bleach to their drinking and bathing water and to assemble first-aid kits at home.

Among the deepest concerns of Mr. McKendrick, the Anguilla attorney general, was the approach of Hurricane Jose, declared a Category 3 storm on Thursday, which is expected to make its way through this same part of the Caribbean on Saturday. A Hurricane Watch was in effect for Antigua and Barbuda and a Tropical Storm watch was issued for Anguilla, Montserrat, St. Kitts, Nevis, Saba and St. Eustatius.

"A 137-mile-per-hour storm is on the way," he said. "I'm not sure how the island can respond to that."

In Miami, Elizabeth Chifari, 66, was determined to stay home with her white alley cat, Friday, and ride out the storm.

She would have gone to stay with her son, Andrew. But he lives in Houston.

"If they lived anywhere else," she said, "I would've considered it."

The New York Times Hurricane Irma to Test New Codes Put in Place After Andrew

Arian Campo-Flores, Cameron McWhirter and Peter Grant

6-8 minutes

Sept. 7, 2017 12:46 p.m. ET

MIAMI—After Hurricane Andrew pummeled Florida 25 years ago and leveled entire blocks of homes, local and state officials responded by creating some of the strictest

building codes in the U.S., hailed by many as a model.

Florida adopted a new statewide building code in 2002 that included a host of new requirements, including the use of stronger roof fasteners, nails instead of staples and impact-resistant windows in certain areas. It increased the amount of wind pressure homes must withstand and added more-detailed and rigorous inspections of building plans.

With Hurricane Irma—among the strongest Atlantic storms in history—closing in on South Florida, those regulations could face their toughest test yet.

More is at risk than when Andrew hit in 1992—Florida's population has grown more than 50% to 20.6 million and real-estate development has boomed. Housing units in Miami-Dade County increased 30% from 1990 to nearly 1 million in 2015 according to data from the

U.S. Census Bureau. The county's population has swelled in tandem, to 2.65 million in 2015 from 1.94 million in 1990—a 37% increase.

A hurricane like Irma "is something we have been fearing for a long time," said Ned Murray, associate director of the Metropolitan Center at Florida International University.

[CoreLogic](#) Inc., a financial and property data analytics company, calculates that there are more than 2.7 million homes at risk along

1,350 miles of Florida's coast, according to a 2017 report. The metropolitan area encompassing Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach had the greatest number of homes at risk of any of the 15 regions CoreLogic analyzed. The coastal area of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania ranks second.

Andrew was the largest storm to hit South Florida directly in recent decades. The Category 5 storm came ashore south of Miami, crossing Biscayne Bay. Andrew killed 61 people in the U.S., and caused more than \$26 billion in damage, in 1992 dollars—the costliest storm in U.S. history until Hurricane Katrina in 2005. It destroyed more than 25,500 homes and damaged more than 101,000 others, according to a National Hurricane Center assessment.

In the aftermath, many blamed shoddy home construction for the broad destruction, resulting in pressure to create more exacting building codes which promoted the statewide push to strengthen the building code.

A study by the Institute for Business and Home Safety of the effects of Hurricane Charley, which hit Charlotte County, Fla., in 2004, found that the changes made a difference. Homes built after the new code was implemented had

fewer and less-severe insurance claims than those built before, according to the report.

Groups like the International Code Council, which develops model building codes, have hailed Florida's regulations as some of the strongest in the country and said they make the state more resilient in the event of a major storm.

But the new building code hasn't been tested by a storm comparable to Andrew until possibly Irma, said Peter Zalewski, principal at Cranespotters, which tracks new construction in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.

"South Florida will be a laboratory for the new building code," he said.

Among Miami's requirements is one that any material on the outside of a building—glass, metal, assemblages—has to pass a ballistic test to make sure it won't be shattered by flying debris, said Lloyd Sigal, a principal of architecture firm Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates. His firm is designing a new project for downtown Miami, called One Bayfront Plaza, which will rise 1,000 feet to be one of Miami's tallest towers.

"What they test for is flying two-by-fours at certain velocities," Mr. Sigal said. He said glass in Miami towers also must be laminated all the way

to the top of the building, whereas previously it was only required for about 30 feet to 40 feet, he said.

To stand up to high winds, building cores and other bracing must use more concrete than comparable structures in areas that aren't prone to hurricanes. "They're designed for very aggressive loads," he said.

Still, the code can only do so much to mitigate damage. The region is beset by poor drainage and lacks a comprehensive system to clear out water like other metropolitan areas have, Florida International University's Mr. Murray said.

Inland areas of Miami-Dade and Broward counties, which are close to sea level, could experience severe flooding from a major storm, he said.

"If we even get half the rain that Houston got, those areas would be really inundated," he said.

Moreover, the breakneck pace of growth in the region has burdened the area's roads and other infrastructure with more people and traffic, he said. And poorer neighborhoods in Miami, such as Liberty City and Little Haiti, are still full of homes that were never upgraded to the stricter building rules.

Homestead, a city south of Miami that was devastated by a direct hit

from Andrew, highlights the state's expansion in the subsequent 25 years.

When the storm struck, then-city manager Alex Muxo emerged from city hall to find only three or four buildings left standing in the area. Where a shopping center once sat across the street, "there wasn't one brick left," he said.

After years of rebuilding fueled by federal, state and private investment, Homestead has bounced back. The once quiet agricultural town has a new city hall, a recently restored art deco theater and a proliferation of strip malls and housing tracts. Homestead's population grew to nearly 68,000 in 2016 from about 28,500 in 1990, according to census data.

It was "a tremendous challenge," said Mr. Muxo, now a vice president for Huizenga Holdings Inc., an investment company with commercial and residential investments around Florida. "It took 15 or 20 years, but you can take a snapshot today and it's a big difference."

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Thousands Flee as Irma Churns Toward U.S.

Jon Kamp, Scott Calvert and Arian Campo-Flores

6-8 minutes

Updated Sept. 8, 2017 6:23 a.m. ET

MIAMI—Authorities on Thursday ordered more than 650,000 people to evacuate the Miami area as [Hurricane Irma](#) churned toward a possible collision with the mainland U.S. and killed at least 11 people in the Caribbean.

"These are areas that may experience life-threatening storm surge," said Carlos Gimenez, mayor of Miami-Dade County. "I cannot stress this enough: don't wait to evacuate."

Irma—[one of the most powerful storms](#) ever recorded over the Atlantic—weakened to a Category 4 storm early Friday, according to the National Hurricane Center.

The storm was heading through the southeastern Bahamas on Friday with maximum-sustained winds of 155 miles an hour, after battering the Turks and Caicos Islands. The [current forecast track](#) calls for the

storm to approach south Florida on Saturday, with Miami squarely in its potential track.

Hurricane and storm-surge warnings were officially issued for south Florida including the Florida Keys. Gov. Rick Scott on Thursday expressed worry about the breadth of the storm and flooding potential as he implored residents to heed evacuation orders.

"Look at the size of this storm, it's huge. It's wider than our entire state and could cause major and life-threatening impacts on both coasts," Mr. Scott said Thursday.

The National Hurricane Center forecast the storm surge in parts of south Florida [could reach 5 to 10 feet above ground](#), if the peak surge coincides with high tide. "We could see houses covered," Mr. Scott said.

Miami-Dade County's Mr. Gimenez said officials are preparing shelters to accommodate as many as 100,000 people. He urged residents to stay with friends who live in safe areas in the county, rather than drive away.

"Look, if 600,000 people decide they want to leave Miami-Dade

tomorrow, that's going to be a mess," he said. "We need our neighbors and co-workers, et cetera, to take some folks in."

Evacuees were clogging highways and backing up traffic on Thursday amid worries about [gasoline shortages in the state](#).

Gina Sneiderman sat in bumper-to-bumper traffic on I-75 somewhere between Ocala, Fla., and the Georgia state line, recounting the fear she had when Hurricane Wilma rattled her house in Boca Raton back in 2005, causing significant damage.

Looking at Irma, Ms. Sneiderman and her husband, Mike, decided to get out of town. They secured the house and packed up a week's worth of clothes, five cases of water and important papers, like insurance policies, and began heading north on the Florida Turnpike.

"This storm is crazy and we weren't going to risk it," she said.

But traffic was tough, with long lines of vehicles backed up. At one toll crossing, Ms. Sneiderman said, all but two lanes had been closed,

causing an 8-mile jam that took about an hour to clear.

"We're now in bumper-to-bumper traffic between 10 and 15 miles an hour," she said.

Briana Beaty of North Palm Beach won't have to contend with highway congestion when she and family members leave South Florida on Friday.

A private plane offered by a family friend will ferry her and her three daughters ages 1, 3 and 6, along with their nanny and her mother-in-law, to a resort in the north Georgia mountains where she said she booked the last three rooms.

Her husband, who owns 30 rental properties in the area, will stay behind in their 3-year-old home, satellite phone at the ready, she said.

Ms. Beaty, 36, said she might have considered staying put if not for the children. "I just don't think it's an option with little babies and the potential to not have water and power for a while," she said.

Irma also poses a rising threat to other states in the Southeast, with forecasts predicting the storm could

potentially reach the Carolinas by early next week. The governors of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina declared states of emergency for all or part of their states on Wednesday.

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal on Thursday [ordered a mandatory evacuation](#) for all areas east of Interstate 95 starting Saturday, including Savannah, home to about 147,000 people. In South Carolina, Gov. Henry McMaster said he may issue a mandatory evacuation order effective Saturday morning, and that there would be lane reversals on I-26 that runs north from Charleston.

Mr. McMaster also ordered the evacuation of health-care facilities including hospitals and nursing homes in certain coastal counties.



Hurricane Jose looms for Barbuda and other Irma-damaged islands

<https://www.facebook.com/lindseybever>

9-12 minutes

Gaston Browne, the prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, toured the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Irma on Sept. 6. Gaston Browne, the prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, toured the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Irma on Sept. 6. (ABS TV Antigua)

Gaston Browne, the prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, toured the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Irma on Sept. 6. (ABS TV Antigua)

As Hurricane Irma left Antigua and Barbuda's usually pristine reef-ringed beaches with the pink and white sand, islanders struggled to grasp the destruction to Barbuda's schools, churches and the homes that many had used their life savings to build.

Irma somehow spared Antigua, which was open for business by Thursday morning. But on Barbuda, the smaller of the two islands with an area of 62 square miles, the ferocious and historic Category 5 hurricane had turned the typically gentle Caribbean winds into violent gusts that decimated Codrington, its sole town.

"Barbuda right now is literally a rubble," Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne said.

Browne said nearly all of the government and personal property on Barbuda was damaged — including the hospital and the airport, which he said had its roof completely blown away. At least one person, a young child, was

He warned there could be a burden on South Carolina highways because of residents fleeing Florida and Georgia, and I-95 was already congested on Thursday as people drive north. "If you can leave now, go ahead," the governor said.

Puerto Rico, with a population of about 3.4 million, appeared to have been spared the ferocious assault that Irma delivered to other Caribbean islands, but the extent of damage remained unclear and the U.S. territory was contending with widespread power outages and the threat of continued flooding. A woman died in Arecibo, on the northern coast, after she fell while walking to an emergency shelter, according to Ernesto Morales, a National Weather Service meteorologist in San Juan.

killed on the island — one of numerous deaths reported across the Caribbean in Irma's horrific aftermath.

Now, these victims face yet another threat — a second hurricane, Jose, which appears to be coming for the same islands that are trying to dig out from Irma's devastation.

The National Hurricane Center [released an ominous bulletin](#) Thursday about the new menace looming in the Atlantic: "...JOSE BECOMES 3RD MAJOR HURRICANE OF THE 2017 ATLANTIC SEASON..." By late afternoon, Jose had gained [Category 3](#) strength, and Antigua and Barbuda remained in hurricane watch status.

"We are very worried about Hurricane Jose," Browne said Thursday in a phone interview with The Washington Post, adding that Irma left about 60 percent of Barbuda's nearly 2,000 residents homeless and destroyed or damaged 95 percent of its property.

Browne will make a determination by Thursday night about whether to order a mandatory evacuation ahead of Jose's potential landfall, but added that those who want to leave Barbuda now are being ferried to nearby Antigua.

[\[Irma more likely to make landfall in South Florida as a 'dangerous major hurricane'\]](#)

As Irma continues its merciless churn toward the U.S. mainland, the first islanders left in its wake are only beginning to decipher the scope of the storm's ravages.

Deaths have been reported throughout the Leeward Islands, a vulnerable, isolated chain arcing southeast from Puerto Rico, which

Gov. Ricardo Rosselló on Thursday said 68% of the customers of Puerto Rico's electric utility lacked power, with outages affecting hospitals, forcing many to rely on generators and requiring the relocation of some patients. Before Irma's arrival, an executive with the utility company had said it could take months to restore electricity to many residents.

President Donald Trump approved on Thursday a major disaster declaration for the U.S. Virgin Islands. There are reports that 25 buildings in St. Thomas lost roofs and two shelters flooded, Mr. Morales said.

With hurricane season still at its peak, Irma isn't the only threat on the horizon. Hurricane Jose

reported at least three deaths of its own.

Officials throughout the Caribbean expect the body count to rise.

After first making landfall in Barbuda, then strafing several other Leeward Islands, Irma raked the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, leaving nearly 1 million people [without any electricity](#). The Dominican Republic, Haiti and the Turks and Caicos Islands are next in its path. Closer to Florida's southern tip, the Bahamas remain in danger, and mass evacuations are underway.

The United Nations has said that Irma could affect as many as 37 million people. The majority are on the U.S. mainland, but the residents of tiny islands in the Eastern Caribbean were hit first — and hardest.

Browne [told local media](#) that Barbuda was left "barely habitable."

Aerial footage showed homes with walls blown out and roofs ripped away.

"It was emotionally painful," he told The Post. "It was sad to see such beautiful country being destroyed over a couple of hours."

It is, he said, "one of the most significant disasters anywhere in the world" on a per capita basis: Browne said it would take an estimated \$100 million to rebuild — a "monumental challenge" for a small island government.

When Craig Ryan, a 29-year-old tourism entrepreneur who lives in Antigua, reached Barbuda by boat Thursday morning, residents lined the beach waiting for rescue. "It's such a level of devastation," he told The Post, "that you can't even see structures standing."

strengthened to a Category 3 storm in the Atlantic on Thursday and triggered a hurricane watch in Antigua and Barbuda. A third storm, Hurricane Katia, is threatening Mexico.

—Erin Ailworth contributed to this article.

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Appeared in the September 8, 2017, print edition as 'Irma Hits Caribbean, Takes Aim at Florida.'

Ryan's family business, Tropical Adventures Antigua, dispatched a 75-foot motorboat to make the 90-minute passage between islands to ferry people off Barbuda before Jose's potential arrival. Some residents remain stuck in isolated areas blocked by impassable roads, he said by telephone as he loaded up water and other supplies at a dock in Antigua.

"We really are in a rush against time," Ryan said.

[\[Tropical triple threat: Hurricanes Jose and Katia could join Irma striking land this weekend\]](#)

Ghastly images from St. Martin and St. Barthelemy (also known as St. Barts) showed cars and trucks almost completely submerged in the storm surge, and several buildings in ruin.

Witnesses on other islands described horrific destruction and a breakdown in public order: no running water, no emergency services, no police to stop looters — and a never ending tide of newly homeless people wandering the streets amid the devastation.

"It's like someone with a lawn mower from the sky has gone over the island," Marilou Rohan, a Dutch vacationer in St. Maarten, which is part of the Kingdom of Netherlands, told the Dutch NOS news service. "Houses are destroyed. Some are razed to the ground. I am lucky that I was in a sturdy house, but we had to bolster the door, the wind was so hard."

There was little sense that authorities had the situation under control, she said.

Supermarkets were being looted and no police were visible in the streets. Occasionally, soldiers have

passed by, but they were doing little to impose order, she said.

"People feel powerless. They do not know what to do. You see the fear in their eyes," she said.

Paul de Windt, the editor of the Daily Herald of Sint Maarten, told the Paradise FM radio station in Curaçao that "Many people are wandering the streets. They no longer have homes, they don't know what to do." An image released Wednesday shows severe flooding in St. Martin. (AFP)

In Anguilla, part of the British West Indies, the local government is "overwhelmed" and desperate for help, Anguilla Attorney General John McKendrick told The Post late Wednesday. Officials were barely able to communicate among one another and with emergency response teams, he said. With most phone lines down, they were dependent on instant messaging.

It appears that at least one person died in Anguilla, he said.

"Roads blocked, hospital damaged. Power down. Communications badly impaired. Help needed," McKendrick wrote in one message. In another, he said, "More people might die without further help, especially as another hurricane threatens us so soon."

The Dutch government said that it was sending two military ships carrying smaller emergency boats, ambulances and emergency equipment to St. Maarten.

French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb said 100,000 rations — or about four days' worth of food — are en route to the victims to St. Barts and St. Martin, which could experience tropical storm conditions from Jose on Saturday, according to the National Hurricane Center. The tropical storm watch also applies to St. Maarten, Anguilla, Montserrat, St. Kitts, Nevis, Saba and St. Eustatius.

"It's a tragedy, we'll need to rebuild both islands," Collomb told reporters Thursday, according to the Associated Press. "Most of the schools have been destroyed."

British Prime Minister Theresa May [said the government is allocating](#) more than \$41 million (U.S. dollars) for hurricane relief efforts.

Britain's international development secretary, Priti Patel, [announced Wednesday](#) that the British navy, along with several Royal Marines and a contingent of military engineers, had been dispatched to the Caribbean with makeshift shelters and water purification systems. While some in England [criticized the response](#), McKendrick told The Post that he's worried that they, too, will quickly become overwhelmed by the amount of work that must be done to restore a sense of normalcy.

Elsewhere on Anguilla, some informal reports were less bleak. The [Facebook page for Roy's Bayside Grill](#), for instance, remained active as Irma passed.

Around 7:30 a.m., the page broadcast [a brief live video](#) of the storm captured from inside an unidentified building. With rain pelting the windows and wind whipping the treetops, a narrator

calmly described the scene outside. "Can't see very far at all," he said. "We've got whitecaps on the pool. Water is spilling out. And it's quite a ride. But thought I'd check in and let everyone know we're still good."

Phone lines to the restaurant appeared to be down by the afternoon, and messages left with the Facebook page's administrator were not immediately returned.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

About 1 p.m. Wednesday, the restaurant [posted](#) a panoramic photo on Facebook that appeared to show several buildings. The decking on one appeared to be ripped apart, and debris was scattered about the beach. One industrial building had a hole in its roof, but by and large everything was still standing.

"We made it through," the caption read, "but there is a lot of work to be done."

The Washington Post Hurricane Irma tears through Caribbean islands, forces evacuations in South Florida (online)

<https://www.facebook.com/markberman>

13-16 minutes

The Capital Weather Gang's Jason Samenow tells you what to expect from Hurricane Irma as it continues to barrel toward the U.S. mainland on Wednesday, Sept. 6. The Capital Weather Gang's Jason Samenow tells you what to expect from Hurricane Irma as it continues to barrel toward the U.S. mainland on Wednesday, Sept. 6. (Monica Akhtar/The Washington Post)

The Capital Weather Gang's Jason Samenow tells you what to expect from Hurricane Irma as it continues to barrel toward the U.S. mainland on Wednesday, Sept. 6. (Monica Akhtar/The Washington Post)

- [Hurricane Irma is battering Caribbean islands, causing widespread destruction, as it barrels toward the United States mainland.](#)
- [South Florida, home to more than 6 million people, has begun issuing mandatory evacuation orders.](#)
- [The storm has been blamed for at least](#)

[10 deaths, a toll expected to increase.](#)

MIAMI — Caribbean islands [pummeled by Hurricane Irma](#) began to grapple with the monster storm's toll on Thursday, while nervous residents of South Florida packed highways seeking safer ground amid forecasts warning that Irma posed an increasing threat to the region.

The National Hurricane Center on Thursday [issued a hurricane](#) watch for the southernmost part of Florida, the first such alert Irma has prompted in the United States. A storm surge watch, which warned of potentially life-threatening levels of water, was also issued for the southern part of the state, an area that includes the Florida Keys, which a day earlier had begun evacuations.

Irma's Category 5 force pinwheeled through the Caribbean, leaving a wake of leveled neighborhoods, ravaged seaforts and at least 10 dead, according to government officials and news reports. The storm is grinding onward toward the Bahamas with winds hitting 180 mph and higher gusts registered, according to the hurricane center, which warned of storm surges capable of swallowing huge sections of the coast.

After the Bahamas, Irma's expected path takes aim at Florida, including the ribbon of cities, dense suburbs and swampland that are home to more than 6 million people from Palm Beach to Miami-Dade counties.

Miami Beach residents brace for Hurricane Irma as the powerful category 5 storm barrels towards southern Florida. Miami Beach residents brace for Hurricane Irma as the powerful category 5 storm barrels towards southern Florida. (Zoeann Murphy, Dalton Bennett/The Washington Post)

Miami Beach residents brace for Hurricane Irma as the powerful category 5 storm barrels towards southern Florida. (Zoeann Murphy, Dalton Bennett/The Washington Post)

[\[Tracking Irma's possible paths\]](#)

"Look at the size of this storm," said Florida Gov. Rick Scott (R). "It's powerful and deadly."

He said evacuations in the state may stretch "coast to coast" from the Atlantic to the Gulf of Mexico. With potentially millions of people hitting the road to escape, Scott said emergency efforts were underway to keep fuel shipments moving to gas stations.

Increasing evacuations were getting underway across South Florida. On

Thursday, Broward County began to evacuate people from the area along the Atlantic. Miami-Dade County, which had announced evacuations on Wednesday, expanded the order on Thursday to [include more people](#) across the coastal portion of the county.

In Naples, Fla., a Best Buy opened on Thursday morning to about two dozen shoppers waiting outside. Mike Ducheneau, the manager, said that the store had gotten about 20 or 30 cellphone chargers delivered the previous night. The shoppers waiting in line flooded to the cellphone section, snatching up the chargers that remained.

"They're always in stock," Ducheneau said. "This was an anomaly."

[\[Live updates on Irma's devastating path\]](#)

By Thursday morning, as Irma's eye was moving north off the island of Hispaniola, aid workers in Haiti — a vulnerable nation already devastated by a major earthquake in 2010 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016 — were preparing for yet another potential disaster.

Concern centered on Haiti's flood-prone north. Haiti raised its hurricane alert level to red, its highest, and the north coast remained under a hurricane watch

as the central coast faced the threat of tropical storm winds and rain.

Nevertheless, aid groups said the national hurricane response appeared to be slow. Many evacuations in the north were set to unfold as rains rapidly approached and low-quality shelters were still being finished.

School was canceled across the country as national warnings went out through social media, radio and television. In some remote towns, word to take shelter was being spread largely via local officials with bullhorns. Though Irma's eye was on track to pass offshore, even a glancing blow could flood roads and bridges, bring mudslides and topple rickety housing, dealing yet another setback to the hemisphere's poorest nation.

One major concern was the spread of a cholera outbreak already plaguing Haiti. In one sense, Haiti's series of major disasters gave the nation at least one benefit: an already large presence of international aid groups. Many groups said they were poised with teams and vehicles to help bring in medical and food aid.

[\[Extreme Category 5 Irma crashes into Caribbean, sets sights on Florida and Southeast U.S.\]](#)

With Irma skirting north of Haiti, aid agencies were hoping that a normally unlucky nation could possibly catch a break, perhaps averting the worst of the storm.

"We might get lucky, but the preparations to cope with it have been late," said Javier Alvarez, head of emergency response for the humanitarian organization Mercy Corps. "We're still worried."

Irma's strong winds and torrential rains pummeled the Dominican Republic on Thursday, damaging homes and inundating streets in the beach towns on the north coast, according to local media reports.

Among the towns pounded by the storm were Cabarete and Sosua, part of the Puerto Plata region popular with foreign tourists. More than 5,500 people in the country were evacuated in the run-up to the storm, officials said.

As Irma has churned onward, it left behind a string of once-lush islands scoured clean by the storm's force. Aerial images released by the Dutch Defense Ministry on the island of St. Martin showed scores of homes with roofs sheared away and palm trees stripped bare.

[\[Everything you need to know about Hurricane Irma\]](#)

The president of the territorial council, Daniel Gibbs, told Radio

Caraibes International that St. Martin is "95 percent destroyed." On the islands of Barbuda and Anguilla, meanwhile, at least one death was reported on each. On Puerto Rico, at least three deaths were blamed on the hurricane, said a statement from Gov. Ricardo Rosselló Nevares.

The death toll fluctuated Thursday as officials released, then revised, the number of fatalities. And with places in the Caribbean taking direct hits from Irma, the toll was expected to rise when officials are able to communicate with people on the devastated islands.

Gaston Browne, the prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, toured the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Irma on Sept. 6. Gaston Browne, the prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, toured the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Irma on Sept. 6. (ABS TV Antigua)

Gaston Browne, the prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, toured the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Irma on Sept. 6. (ABS TV Antigua)

Irma's sustained winds — which hit 185 mph on Thursday — were the strongest recorded for an Atlantic hurricane making landfall, tied with the 1935 Florida Keys hurricane. The Florida Keys are particularly vulnerable to Irma, and Monroe County, home to the Keys, began mandatory evacuations of tourists and residents alike on Wednesday.

The National Hurricane Center in Miami was remarkably calm and hushed on Thursday, considering the storm that is fast approaching. The center on the campus of Florida International University, a location that puts it much further from the coast than the old headquarters in Coral Gables, which was badly damaged during Hurricane Andrew a quarter-century ago.

The forecasters here are giving regular updates on Hurricane Irma and taking turns giving TV interviews. The place will get busier in the next few days, and on Saturday night will go into lockdown, with metal shutters enclosing the doors and everyone in for the night until the storm passes.

While forecasts have warned that South Florida could take a painful hit, what unclear is precisely where the center of the storm, and the destructive winds of the eye wall, will be when it approaches and passes through the area.

"The wild card here is the turn," Mark DeMaria, acting deputy director of the hurricane center, said as his colleagues stared at screens

showing the approaching Category 5 storm. "Anytime a hurricane makes a turn it introduces uncertainty."

He said the models have been consistent, and changes day to day haven't been dramatic, only on the order of 50 miles this way or that.

"But 50 miles onshore versus right of the coast makes a huge difference in impact," he said.

[\[On the Caribbean's tiny islands, death and devastation left by Irma\]](#)

Florida's geography, its population density pattern and the track of the storm are particularly unfortunate.

"This is a large storm coming from the south. It hits the entire population of South Florida," said Dennis Feltgen, spokesman for the hurricane center. "That's the worst case scenario because it takes in the entire Gold Coast population and you have the greatest impact from storm surge from that direction."

A day earlier, Brian McNoldy, a senior research associate at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science and a contributor to The Washington Post's Capital Weather Gang, had said a potential track for the storm could send it churning up the Gold Coast.

That track could send it right to McNoldy's cubicle and on up the Gold Coast, as if the storm were trying to grind away a century of urbanization.

"That's extremely bad," McNoldy said. "That's basically every East Coast Florida city. This could easily be the most expensive U.S. storm if this happens." Sophia Johnson, 6, talks to her mom, Kace Johnson, after they finished filling 10 sandbags with dirt provided by Sarasota County at the Newtown Estates Recreation Center on Wednesday, in Sarasota, Fla. (Mike Lang/Sarasota Herald-Tribune via AP)

Just last month, Florida marked the 25th anniversary of Hurricane Andrew, which made landfall as a Category 5 monster and tore through a stretch of what is now known as Miami-Dade County. That storm, along with the recent devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey in Texas, has lingered in the background of the urgent warnings issued by Florida officials.

"This storm is bigger, faster and stronger than Hurricane Andrew," Scott, the Florida governor, said Wednesday, emphasizing that even with Irma's uncertain trajectory, officials were preparing for a direct impact.

"Do not sit and wait for the storm to come," he said. "It is extremely dangerous and deadly and will cause devastation. Get prepared right now."

Scott has declared a statewide emergency and warned that in addition to potentially forcing large-scale evacuations, Irma could batter areas that last year were flooded by Hurricane Matthew. States of emergency were also declared in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. On Thursday, Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal (R) expanded his declaration from six coastal counties to 30 total counties, issuing [a mandatory evacuation](#) for some areas.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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

Officials across Florida responded to the alarming forecasts by slowly shutting down the contours of daily life. Schools closed across the state, including the University of Central Florida in Orlando, which could face punishing weather if Irma crawls up the coastline. The University of Florida, located inland in Gainesville, announced that it was [canceling a football game](#) scheduled for Saturday and would then close its campus on Sunday and Monday.

The NFL postponed the Miami Dolphins' season opener scheduled for Sunday, while the University of Miami — the Hurricanes — scrapped a football game set for Saturday in Arkansas so the team doesn't have to travel.

People across Florida who planned to ride out the storm were clearing store shelves of water, food and supplies, and people trying to drive north had to search for gas — and hotel rooms. Many streamed to South Florida's airports, but found some flights canceled and many others had exorbitant ticket prices.

Meanwhile, in the Gulf of Mexico, Hurricane Katia has prompted a hurricane warning in Mexico's Veracruz state. The National Hurricane Center said little overall motion on the storm was expected though late Thursday.

Berman reported from Washington. Anthony Faiola in Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Lindsay de Feliz in Moncion, Dominican Republic; Daniel Cassidy in San Juan, Puerto Rico; Francisco Alvarado in Key West, Fla.; Patricia Sullivan in Naples, Fla.; and Angela Fritz, Jason Samenow, Sandhya Somashekhar, Brian Murphy and Steven Mufson in Washington contributed to this

'This storm has the potential to catastrophically devastate our state' (UNE)

https://www.facebook.com/markberman

12-15 minutes

Miami Beach residents brace for Hurricane Irma as the powerful category 5 storm barrels towards southern Florida. Miami Beach residents brace for Hurricane Irma as the powerful category 5 storm barrels towards southern Florida. (Zoeann Murphy, Dalton Bennett/The Washington Post)

Miami Beach residents brace for Hurricane Irma as the powerful category 5 storm barrels towards southern Florida. (Zoeann Murphy, Dalton Bennett/The Washington Post)

MIAMI — Florida officials urged residents in flood-prone coastal communities to get out while they can, ordering evacuations in the face of oncoming Hurricane Irma, which could make landfall Sunday and inflict massive destruction not seen in the state since Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

Hurricanes have lashed South Florida many times, but officials here at the National Hurricane Center said this is shaping up as a once-in-a-generation storm. Forecasters adjusted their advisory late Thursday, projecting Irma to hit the tip of the peninsula, slamming the population centers of South Florida before grinding northward. Hurricane warnings were issued Thursday night for South Florida, with the hurricane center warning that "severe hurricane conditions are expected over portions of the Florida peninsula and the Florida Keys beginning late Saturday."

"This storm has the potential to catastrophically devastate our state," Gov. Rick Scott (R) said in a late-day news briefing. Earlier, he implored people to evacuate. "If you live in any evacuation zones and you're still at home, leave."

[\[Category 5 Irma stays on perilous path toward Florida\]](#)

The state's highways were jammed, gas was scarce, airports were packed and mandatory evacuations began to roll out as the first official hurricane watches were issued for the region. Irma, which has been ravaging the Caribbean islands as it sweeps across the Atlantic, is expected to hit the Florida peninsula with massive storm surges and crippling winds that could affect

nearly every metropolitan area in South Florida.

The hurricane center said Thursday afternoon that should Irma's eye move through the center of the state, extreme winds and heavy rains could strafe an area that has millions of residents, from Miami in the east to Naples on the Gulf Coast. Because the eastern side of the storm is the most powerful, numerous cities along the east coast could face extreme conditions.

What's in the path of Hurricane Irma

Miami-Dade County ordered some mandatory evacuations, including for Key Biscayne and Miami Beach, as well as for areas in the southern half of the county that are not protected by barrier islands.

"EVACUATE Miami Beach!" Miami Beach Mayor Philip Levine tweeted, later noting in a news release that once winds top 40 mph, first responders will no longer be dispatched on rescue missions here.

Broward County Mayor Barbara Sharief said evacuations in coastal areas were slated for Thursday. Lee County, on the Gulf Coast, announced Thursday afternoon that all the barrier islands — Sanibel, Captiva, Pine Island, Bonita Beach and Fort Myers Beach — will be under mandatory evacuation orders Friday.

Scott on Thursday night ordered that all state offices, public schools, state colleges and state universities be shut down from Friday through Monday "to ensure we have every space available for sheltering and staging."

Scott has declared a statewide emergency and warned that in addition to potentially forcing large-scale evacuations, Irma could batter areas that last year were flooded by Hurricane Matthew. States of emergency also were declared in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. On Thursday, Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal (R) expanded his declaration from six coastal counties to 30 total counties, issuing a mandatory evacuation for some areas.

[\[Live updates: Hurricane Irma\]](#)

Residents in Savannah, Ga., and Charleston, S.C., began to barricade their homes and flee the coast Thursday. Gov. Henry McMaster (R) warned South

Carolinians that a mandatory evacuation of the state's coastline will probably come Saturday morning at 10 a.m. Such an evacuation would come with a reversal of all eastbound lanes of four major roadways, including Interstate 26, which would be converted for a westbound escape from Charleston to Columbia.

Irma on Thursday remained a Category 5 storm, with 175 mph sustained maximum winds, and it is a big storm, with hurricane-force winds extending 60 miles from its center. If the eye does not make landfall, many of the people who haven't evacuated from South Florida could find themselves in hurricane conditions anyway, forecasters say. A line of vehicles waits to dump trimmed trees and other refuse in a West Miami-Dade County disposal area near Miami on Thursday. Weak tree limbs, patio furniture and other large objects likely to be driven by the wind are being removed as Hurricane Irma is predicted to arrive Sunday. (Andrew Innerarity/For The Washington Post)

Residents are closely watching "the spaghetti" — the dozens of computer models showing possible storm tracks, which vary widely. Computer models say that by Sunday, Irma will make a hard right turn, heading due north into Florida.

The timing of that turn will make all the difference.

If sooner, the storm's center could stay offshore, between Miami and the Bahamas. If later, it could blow through the Florida Keys and come up the southwest side of Florida. Or it could find a middle path straight up through the Everglades and the central spine of the peninsula.

"The wild card here is the turn. Anytime a hurricane makes a turn, it introduces uncertainty," Mark DeMaria, acting deputy director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami, told The Washington Post in the center's headquarters in west Miami-Dade County. DeMaria noted that the computer models have fluctuated modestly, with adjustments in the consensus track of 50 miles or so every day. "But 50 miles onshore versus right of the coast makes a huge difference in impact," he said.

The combination of Florida's geography, the pattern of urban settlement in narrow bands along the coasts and the projected

northerly path of the hurricane presents a particularly ominous picture.

"This is a large storm coming from the south," said Dennis Feltgen, spokesman for the hurricane center. "That's the worst-case scenario, because it takes in the entire Gold Coast population, and you have the greatest impact from storm surge from that direction."

Irma's sustained winds were the strongest recorded for an Atlantic hurricane making landfall, tied with the 1935 Florida Keys hurricane.

"Look at the size of this storm," Scott said. "It's powerful and deadly."

Many Floridians were heeding warnings to escape but found themselves sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic in an effort to reach points north.

A little after 10 a.m. at the National Hotel on Miami Beach, a manager announced in four languages — English, Spanish, Portuguese and French — that guests needed to evacuate because of a city order. At the front desk, guests were given a sheet listing the locations of emergency shelters, none of which were likely to be as nice as the beachfront Art Deco hotel, which was restored a few years ago.

"This morning as I walked to work, I could see the things that could become projectiles," said Natalya Garus, 35, lead concierge at the National. "Street signs. Coconuts. All the trash cans. Smoking stations. All the decorations."

As she spoke, workers used a ladder to dismantle a decorative light fixture hanging over the hotel entrance.

Ruben Vandebosch, 28, and Wim Marten, 26, both of Belgium, and Jim Van Es, 24, of the Netherlands, said their plan is to drive to Atlanta.

"Atlanta has a nice ring to it," Vandebosch said. "It sounds cool."

Among those evacuating: Forty dogs from the Miami-Dade County animal shelter. They're being flown to New York on a private plane owned by a dog lover named Georgina Bloomberg, according to Lauree Simmons, president and founder of the Big Dog Rescue shelter in Loxahatchee, Fla.

Big Dog staff went to Houston after Hurricane Harvey, rescuing 60 dogs from the floodwaters. Those dogs

are awaiting adoption at the no-kill shelter. Simmons's 33-acre rescue center has 457 dogs and puppies living in air-conditioned bunkhouses. Staff members were working frenetically Thursday packing up the contents of offices trailers. The dog bunkhouses, meanwhile, are fitted with hurricane impact glass built to withstand 200-mile-an-hour winds, Simmons said.

"The dogs will be very comfortable," she said. "We'll stay here with them through the storm and just keep hoping for the best."

Lauren Jackowiec, adoptions manager for the Jacksonville, Fla., Humane Society, loads crates of cats into the Humane Society's van for an evacuation trip to Sarasota, Fla., on Thursday. (Bob Self/Florida Times Union via AP)

Popular shopping and dining areas of Fort Lauderdale, north of Miami, were nearly completely empty, the businesses buttoned up with metal curtains and new plywood protecting their front windows.

At the Coral Ridge Yacht Club on the Intracoastal Waterway, General Manager Jay Wallace and Greg Bennett, the

club's president, were walking up and down its docks making sure all the vessels, including some 90- and 100-footers valued at \$2 million or more, were securely tied down. The club decided Tuesday to cease regular operations — meetings, lunch, dinner and a popular Wednesday happy hour — so that many employees would have time to evacuate.

"Just making sure everything is okay," Wallace said. "We're hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst. You have to."

Less than a mile away, Fort Lauderdale's mostly spotless sandy beaches were virtually deserted, despite the green flags attached to all its lifeguard stands indicating "low hazard" for anyone wanting to take a dip in the ocean. The water was dead calm, not a wave in sight, and the shimmering sand was desolate on a postcard 90-degree day.

In Orlando, four Stetson University students prepared to fly out of town on cheap tickets bought Monday, before prices skyrocketed and seats vanished. One of the students, Draven Shean, is a freshman who has been at school for three weeks

and is heading home to Houston, where his family had evacuated in advance of Hurricane Harvey.

"I keep making this joke that God keeps sending hurricanes after me," said Shean, who was wearing a long-sleeved gray shirt with black block letters that said "EVAC." He picked it up two days ago at a thrift store. "I thought it was appropriate."

Others were preparing to ride out the storm. Some were fully prepared, others seemed to have only a vague plan, or none at all. Shelves that once held bottled water are empty as the city prepares for approaching Hurricane Irma. (Mark Wilson/Getty Images)

At a Costco in Naples, in southwest Florida, almost every morning shopper left the store with a flat or two of bottled water. At Costco's gas station, vehicles jammed the six lanes for fuel. Several customers said the 24 cars waiting at 11 a.m. were nothing compared with the lines during the past two days. Some customers were on their third or fourth gas station seeking to fill up.

"As soon as they said you should consider evacuating, things got way worse," said Michelle Anderson,

who was waiting for gas in her Volvo. "I'm from Southern California, where earthquakes get you at random, so the fact that you have the ability to prepare for this is pretty awesome."

Vicki Sargent, a Florida resident since 2003, lives in an RV park in Venice and had driven miles in search of gas Thursday. She said she has to ride out the storm because she takes care of about 70 units owned by people gone for the summer. She won't stay in her own trailer, though.

"Only a fool would do that," she said, saying she'll stay with a friend. "I'm more worried about flooding than the hurricane. We have had rain and were about at saturation point."

Tatiana Wood, 33, a waitress at a restaurant in Miami Beach's Lincoln Road Mall, said she has a friend of a friend who lives in Oklahoma, but she was unclear of the distance or whether she would try to get there.

"If you try to escape, you may lose money," Wood said. "If you stay, you might lose your life."



Deadly Irma Heads for Miami as Caribbean Islands Are Wrecked

@WeatherSullivan
n More stories by

thousands homeless across the Caribbean.

Source: NOAA via AP Photo

Florida Peninsula on Sunday morning.

Brian K Sullivan

6-8 minutes

By and

September 7, 2017, 8:15 PM EDT
September 8, 2017, 8:39 AM EDT

- Storm weakens to Category 4, remains 'extremely dangerous'
- Killer hurricane seen slamming into Florida coast on Sunday

Hurricane Irma remained on a collision course with southern Florida after [devastating](#) a chain of Caribbean islands, triggering the largest-ever evacuation in Miami-Dade County and threatening to become the most expensive storm in U.S. history.

The hurricane weakened slightly to Category 4 with top winds of 150 miles an hour, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said in an [advisory](#) at 8 a.m. New York time. Still, the storm remains "extremely dangerous," the NHC said. The deadly system was projected to maintain its strength until it hits Florida on Sunday, having already left at least [11 people dead](#) and

"Irma is likely to make landfall in southern Florida as a dangerous major hurricane," the NHC said. Much of the state will experience a "life-threatening storm surge and wind impacts" beginning on Saturday night.

[Mandatory evacuations](#) were issued for the Florida Keys and other areas. Around 650,000 people [were told](#) to leave Miami-Dade, the largest evacuation ever attempted in the county. President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate was [ordered to be evacuated](#) along with the rest of the exclusive town of Palm Beach following forecasts of catastrophic winds and a powerful storm surge.

Irma is one of [three hurricanes](#) churning in the Atlantic Basin. Jose, which was following Irma's path in the Atlantic, became the third major hurricane of the 2017 Atlantic season. In the Gulf, Katia strengthened as it moved slowly toward the coast of Mexico, forecast to come ashore early Saturday. The country was also struck by a [powerful earthquake](#) on Friday, shaking buildings in the capital and triggering a tsunami warning.

Hurricane Irma approaches Anguilla on Sept. 6.

Insurers including [XL Group Ltd.](#) and [Everest Re Group Ltd](#) extended declines Thursday. The storm is also threatening to knock out power to more [than](#) 3 million homes and businesses, curb natural gas demand in one of the largest U.S. markets and threaten \$1.2 billion worth of crops in Florida -- the nation's top grower of fresh tomatoes, oranges, green beans, cucumbers, squash and sugarcane.

That prospect has roiled markets and [Barclays Plc](#) estimated insured losses of \$130 billion in a worst-case scenario. Uninsured losses would add to that. Total losses from Katrina reached \$160 billion in 2017 dollars after it slammed into New Orleans in 2005.

Forecast Path

A man applies wood to the windows of the Miami City Ballet on Sept. 7.

Photographer: Marta Lavandier/AP Photo

On the current forecast path, the eye of Irma will continue to move between the central Bahamas and the north coast of Cuba on Friday, the NHC said. A turn toward the northwest is expected by late Saturday, bringing the storm near the Florida Keys and the southern

There's a chance Irma heads back into the Atlantic and makes a second landfall next week in Georgia, South Carolina or North Carolina, the NHC said.

The timing of Irma's turn on Saturday "will make the difference between a multibillion dollar storm for Miami and the Gold Coast, and a major, but less devastating, weather event," said Todd Crawford, lead meteorologist at The Weather Company in Andover, Massachusetts.

[Why We Expect More Havoc From Hurricanes Like Harvey: QuickTake](#)

The storm has already damaged or destroyed about 95 percent of homes on the small island of Barbuda and [battered](#) two French West Indies islands where at least [nine people](#) were killed, French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb said in a press conference.

Irma also caused severe damage on Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands. The U.K. made its [first aid drops](#) to Anguilla with more on the way to the British Virgin Islands, according to the U.K. Department for International Development.

Just two weeks ago, [Hurricane Harvey](#) smashed ashore in

Texas, knocking offline almost a quarter of U.S. oil refining capacity and causing widespread power outages and flooding. Current models show Irma veering away from gas and oil platforms off the coast of Texas and Louisiana, sparing Houston more devastation.

In other storm news:

- Orange juice futures rallied to the highest level since May.



Weakened Irma Still 'Extremely Dangerous'

VOA News

4 minutes

The National Hurricane Center says Irma is "moving through the southeastern Bahamas as an extremely dangerous category 4 hurricane."

Irma was downgraded from a category 5 hurricane early Friday. Weather forecasters say, "some fluctuations in intensity are likely during the next day or two, but Irma is forecast to remain a powerful category 4 hurricane during the next couple of days."

Irma is moving with maximum sustained winds of 250 kilometers per hour.

The Hurricane Center says hurricane conditions are expected in northwestern Bahamas Friday night and Saturday and in portions of southern Florida and the Florida Keys Saturday night or early Sunday.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center has issued hurricane warnings for



<https://www.facebook.com/lindseyb>
ever

10-13 minutes

Although the eye of Irma is on track to pass offshore Thursday, even a glancing blow could be disastrous. Haiti faces yet another potential catastrophe in Hurricane Irma (The Washington Post)

Although the eye of Irma is on track to pass offshore Thursday, even a glancing blow could be disastrous. (The Washington Post)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Apocalyptic scenes of flattened

- Airlines have canceled [thousands](#) of flights.
- Miami's financial district was [rapidly](#) emptying out before landfall.
- [Florida Power & Light](#), the state's biggest utility, said the storm may knock out power to customers for weeks in some parts of its service territory.

- The storm [threatens](#) to turn years of strong returns for hedge funds and other catastrophe-bond buyers into losses almost overnight and [may affect](#) how much money bondholders receive on their [Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority](#) bonds.
- Irma's [chemical fallout](#) could be worse than Harvey's as Florida plants

are filled with potentially explosive material.

— *With assistance by Javier Blas, Mary Schlangenstein, Crayton Harrison, Marvin G Perez, Sheela Tobben, Lily Katz, Martin Keohan, Sophie Caronello, Jonathan Levin, Ezra Fieser, Geraldine Amiel, Michelle Kaske, Hui-yong Yu, and Mark Chediak*

South Florida and the Florida Keys.

On Thursday, more than half a million people were ordered to leave South Florida as Irma approaches.

WATCH: Officials Urge Evacuations Before Hurricane Hits Southeastern US States

Prepare to evacuate

Florida Governor Rick Scott said the biggest concern right now is gasoline shortages. Police will escort fuel trucks in Florida as they make deliveries to gas stations that have run dry.

Scott said all 7,000 Florida National Guard members are being deployed Friday and thousands of power workers will be standing by, ready to go to work.

Scott said Irma "is wider than our entire state and could cause major and life-threatening impacts from coast to coast." The governor told Florida residents, "Regardless of which coast you live on, be prepared to evacuate."

Storm for the history books

U.S. Air Force Reserve weather officer Major Jeremy DeHart flew

through the eye of Irma earlier in the week. He said the storm's intensity sets it apart from other storms.

"Pictures don't do it justice," DeHart said. "Satellite images can't do it justice."

Hurricane Irma is already a storm for the history books. Experts are calling it the most powerful Atlantic storm ever recorded.

The storm tore up the island of Barbuda, leaving it "barely habitable," according to Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne.

"What I saw was heart-wrenching. I mean, absolutely devastating," he said Thursday. About 95 percent of all the buildings on the island were either destroyed or damaged.

As if Irma has not brought enough agony to Antigua and Barbuda, the islands are under a hurricane watch for Category 3 Hurricane Jose, which could affect the already devastated region by Saturday.

On the island of St. Martin, shared by France and the Netherlands, "lots of people are just wandering around aimlessly as they have no

homes anymore and don't know what to do," a newspaper reporter told the local radio station.

It could be up to six months before all power is restored on cash-strapped Puerto Rico. Witnesses say wires are either lying in the streets or dangling from the poles that managed to stay upright.

President Donald Trump has declared a state of emergency on Puerto Rico. The Federal Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the cleanup and relief.

French and Dutch relief flights are on the way to help their territories, and British Prime Minister Theresa May has sent a Royal Navy shipload of soldiers, Marines and emergency supplies to British territories in the Caribbean.

At least 10 deaths have been reported so far in the Caribbean.

Irma lashed Haiti and the Dominican Republic with fierce winds and heavy rain, but spared them a direct hit.

In Photos: Hurricane Irma Hits Haiti

Hurricane Jose looms for Barbuda, St. Martin and other Irma-ravaged islands (online)

buildings and ruined airports emerged from once-lush Caribbean islands devastated by historic Hurricane Irma, as [the deadly storm lashed vulnerable Haiti](#) and another powerful storm, Hurricane Jose, followed fast in its wake.

About 95 percent of the tiny islands of Barbuda and St. Martin sustained some damage or were outright destroyed, officials said. Ghastly photos and videos from St. Martin and St. Barthelemy, also known as St. Barts, showed buildings in ruin and cars and trucks almost submerged in the storm surge.

punishing winds hit Hispaniola and the Turks and Caicos Islands, and moved closer to a potentially disastrous assault on Cuba, the Bahamas and Florida. To the east, those islands already ripped apart by ferocious winds have little time to regroup.

At 5 a.m. Friday, the National Hurricane Center cautioned that Jose is expected to bring more damaging winds and rain to the Leeward Islands by Saturday. The Category 3 hurricane, [officials said](#), is getting "a little stronger" as it churns toward the islands.

Hurricane watches were in effect for Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, St. Barts and St. Martin.

"We are very worried about Hurricane Jose," Gaston Browne, prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, told The Washington Post during a phone interview Thursday, adding that Irma had left about 60 percent of Barbuda's nearly 2,000 residents homeless.

[\[The tiny islands ravaged by Irma are in trouble as Hurricane Jose looms\]](#)

When Craig Ryan, a 29-year-old tourism entrepreneur who lives in Antigua, reached Barbuda by boat

Thursday morning, residents lined the beach waiting for rescue. "It's such a level of devastation," he told The Post, "that you can't even see structures standing."

Ryan's family business, Tropical Adventures Antigua, dispatched a 75-foot motorboat to make the 90-minute passage between islands to ferry people off Barbuda before Jose's potential arrival. Some residents remain stuck in isolated areas blocked by impassable roads, he said by telephone as he loaded up water and other supplies at a dock in Antigua.

"We really are in a rush against time," Ryan said.

On St. Martin, there was little sense that authorities had the situation under control. Witnesses said supermarkets were being looted, with no police visible in the streets.

"It's like someone with a lawn mower from the sky has gone over the island," Marilou Rohan, a European vacationer on the Dutch side of the island, which is split with France, told The Dutch NOS news service. "Houses are destroyed. Some are razed to the ground. I am lucky that I was in a sturdy house, but we had to bolster the door, the wind was so hard."

Occasionally, soldiers have passed by, but they were doing little to impose order, Rohan said.

"People feel powerless. They do not know what to do. You see the fear in their eyes," she said.

Hurricane Irma has caused "enormous damage" to the Dutch side of the Caribbean island of Saint Martin, the Royal Netherlands Navy said Sept. 7. The Royal Netherlands Navy says Hurricane Irma caused 'enormous damage' to the Dutch side of Saint Martin Island. No reporter narration. (Reuters)

Hurricane Irma has caused "enormous damage" to the Dutch side of the Caribbean island of Saint Martin, the Royal Netherlands Navy said Sept. 7. (Reuters)

The United States and European countries scrambled to send aid to the battered Caribbean islands.

The Pentagon deployed three Navy ships, nearly two dozen aircraft and hundreds of Marines to help with recovery efforts in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, where they were needed to relocate hospital

patients and others displaced by the storm, and haul in relief supplies.

One ship, the USS Wasp, was off St. Thomas on Thursday coordinating medical evacuations. Two others, the USS Kearsarge and the USS Oak Hill, were expected to be in position by Friday.

The military will provide generators, fuel and gas, water-purification systems and tools to clear roadways choked with storm debris, according to U.S. Northern Command. The Army Corps of Engineers sent teams to both U.S. territories to help restore electricity, and National Guard personnel were activated to help with evacuations and search-and-rescue efforts.

As of Thursday night, no other countries had asked for the U.S. military's help, one official said, but Defense Department planners were preparing as though such requests may come.

"It's safe to say things may progress," John Cornelio, a spokesman for Northern Command, told The Post. "I don't want to get ahead of ourselves, but one of the things DOD can provide is capacity."

French officials said St. Martin is without electricity, fuel and drinking water. About 800 rescuers arrived Thursday and [more were on the way](#).

French Interior Minister Gérard Collomb said that "even the strongest buildings are destroyed" on the French side of St. Martin, while French Prime Minister Édouard Philippe said that four people had been found dead there and another 50 were injured.

In addition, four people were reported killed on the U.S. Virgin Islands, according to authorities there who described "catastrophic" damage. There was at least one death reported on the British island of Anguilla, another on Barbuda and one on the Dutch part of St. Martin.

[\[Richard Branson emerges from wine-cellar bunker after Irma 'utterly devastated' his private island\]](#)

In Puerto Rico, residents expressed relief that the storm did not leave a trail of death. Still, Irma knocked out nearly half of the 1,600 cellphone towers on the financially strained island, leaving many residents without service, local media reported. More than 1 million people

lost power. The island's power authority had warned before the storm that damage could leave some neighborhoods without electricity for up to six months because of precarious infrastructure.

In the Dominican Republic, which shares Hispaniola with impoverished Haiti, the civil defense director, General Rafael A. Carrasco, said at least 2,721 homes have been damaged. The government said nearly 7,000 people had been evacuated from their homes, and 7,400 tourists had been moved from beachside hotels in Bavaro, Puerto Plata and Samana to the capital, Santo Domingo.

As night began to fall Thursday, the most powerful storm ever recorded in the Atlantic Ocean was punishing the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere — Haiti, a nation still recovering from a massive 2010 earthquake and [Hurricane Matthew](#) last October. That storm, bearing Category 4 force when it made landfall Oct. 4 along Haiti's southwest coast, killed more than 500 people on the island and injured more than 400 others.

Although the nation of 11 million appeared to avoid a direct hit, authorities and aid groups warned that the storm's glancing blow was already flooding highways and bridges, bringing mudslides and toppling rickety housing.

The government ordered schools closed and warned citizens to leave work by noon to prepare for the storm. Concern centered on the flood-prone north, where Irma's torrential rain brought knee-deep water to the fishing and agricultural city of Fort Liberty. Mayor Louis Jacques Etienne said rising water had already drenched bedrooms and kitchens, and flooded fields of rice and plantains.

The ferocity of the storm, he said, sent many of the city's 37,000 residents scrambling to get to last-minute shelters set up in a Catholic church, two schools and the public library.

The evacuation effort unfolding in Haiti, critics said, was happening far too late. But Etienne as well as national officials insisted that locals would not have heeded warnings until they saw the power of Irma firsthand.

"Look, they don't believe you when you tell them there's a hurricane coming," Etienne said in a phone interview. "They need to see it for themselves."

Jerry Chandler, director of Haiti's National Protection Agency, said he was working with projections that as many as 600,000 people would be severely affected by the storm, with potentially 400,000 people facing the destruction of their homes.

"It's a slow-moving hurricane, and as it moves toward us, I'm afraid it will slow even more," Chandler said.

Even in the teeming capital of Port-au-Prince, officials warned that floods might come to some of the city's low-lying slums. Gusty winds and rain began to kick up in the late afternoon. Earlier, some residents — though not many — stocked up on powdered milk and bread at grocery stores and markets.

But many, like fruit seller Nadeige Jean, 35, said she felt helpless to do anything but struggle on with her daily routine.

"I guess we are worried, but we are already living in another hurricane, Hurricane Misery," said the mother of three, who was selling fruit at the Olympic Market. "So they say I should board up my house? With what? Wood? Who's going to pay? With what money will I buy it? Ha! I don't even have a tin roof. If the winds come, I can't do anything but hope to live."

In Haiti, Irma's toll could be felt long after the wind and rain are gone. Infrastructure could collapse, and livestock herds and crops could be wiped out. In addition, aid workers fear the potential spread of a cholera outbreak that has already killed thousands.

U.N. agencies and humanitarian groups said they were in northern Haiti, poised to distribute medical and food aid to affected communities as soon as the storm allowed.

Marc Vincent, resident coordinator for the United Nations in Haiti, said one positive sign was that the storm appeared to be tracking slightly farther north than anticipated.

"It's true that this is the biggest storm to pass here on record, and we're just hoping the impact will not be as severe as we fear," he said.

NPR : Hurricanes Are Sweeping The Atlantic. What's The Role Of Climate Change?

Christopher Joyce Twitter

5-6 minutes

In this GOES-16 geocolor image satellite image taken Thursday, Sept. 7, 2017, the eye of Hurricane

Irma (left) is just north of the island of Hispaniola, with Hurricane Jose

(right) in the Atlantic Ocean. **NOAA/AP hide caption**

toggle caption

NOAA/AP

In this GOES-16 geocolor image satellite image taken Thursday, Sept. 7, 2017, the eye of Hurricane Irma (left) is just north of the island of Hispaniola, with Hurricane Jose (right) in the Atlantic Ocean.

NOAA/AP

Hurricane Irma is hovering somewhere between being the most- and second-most powerful hurricane recorded in the Atlantic. It follows Harvey, which dumped trillions of gallons of water on South Texas. And now, Hurricane Jose is falling into step behind Irma, and gathering strength.

Is this what climate change scientists predicted?

In a word, yes. Climate scientists like [Michael Mann](#) at Penn State says, "The science is now fairly clear that climate change will make stronger storms stronger." Or wetter.

Scientists are quick to point out that Harvey and Irma would have been big storms before the atmosphere and oceans started warming dramatically about 75 years ago. But now storms are apt to grow bigger. That's because the oceans and atmosphere are, on average, warmer now than they used to be. And heat is the fuel that takes garden-variety storms and supercharges them.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted that the Atlantic hurricane season this year would be big. They said the most likely scenario would be five to nine hurricanes and three to five major hurricanes, which is above the long-term average.

Some of their reasoning is based on climate change. The eastern tropical Atlantic ocean is the fuel tank of hurricanes, if you will, and big parts of the sea surface have been between .5 and 1 degree C warmer than average this summer. Now, the Atlantic goes through normal cycles of warming and cooling that have nothing to do with climate change, such as in response the El Nino and La Nina

weather cycles. But this year neither cycle is active.

And whether or not Irma was emboldened by climate change, what's more telling are hurricane trends. Big hurricanes in the Pacific as well as the Atlantic appear to be happening more often and are packing more punch than normal.

This composite image shows hurricane Irma's path as it moved into the warm waters of the western Atlantic. Sea surface temperatures are high this year. **NASA/NOAA hide caption**

toggle caption

NASA/NOAA

This composite image shows hurricane Irma's path as it moved into the warm waters of the western Atlantic. Sea surface temperatures are high this year.

NASA/NOAA

Climate scientist [Kevin Trenberth](#) from the National Center for Atmospheric Research explains: "Previous very active (hurricane) years were 2005 and 2010," he says, and along with 2017, they

experienced warm Atlantic ocean temperatures. "So this sets the stage. So the overall trend is global warming from human activities."

It's worth noting that there are other things that made Irma big that have no clear association with climate change. Vertical wind shear in the hurricane "nursery" region of the Atlantic are weak this year. Strong wind shear at the right altitude can in essence "behead" a hurricane as it forms, so Irma has free rein to build. There's also a long-term cycle in Atlantic — the Atlantic Multi-Decadal Oscillation — that affects hurricane-forming conditions. Since 1995, the AMO is in the "on" position for good hurricane conditions, and in fact the period since then has been quite active for storms and hurricanes.

So, as with Harvey, these superstorms have always happened due to natural causes, but the underlying conditions in the oceans and atmosphere have primed the pump. You don't need much effort now to turn a trickle into a gusher.

When major news happens, stay on top of the latest developments, delivered to your inbox.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Chaney

6-8 minutes

Updated Sept. 7, 2017 4:04 p.m. ET

Hurricane Harvey will distort measures of the U.S. economy in the weeks and months ahead, making it more difficult for economists and policy makers to gauge its trajectory at a sensitive time for the Federal Reserve.

Everything from jobless claims, [which already surged in a report on Thursday](#), to gross domestic product and inflation will be knocked off course, with brief spikes across a wide range of reports, economists say. And that is before any impact from Hurricane Irma, which could devastate cities across the Southeast.

It will be hard to discern whether bad reports result from storm damage and then whether good reports owe to the effects of rebuilding. The Fed, already struggling with conflicting signals as it decides the path of rate rises, must look through even greater volatility in inflation and other reports. It could be well into 2018 before the effects of the storms have fully washed out of economic data.

How Hurricane Harvey Will Ripple Through the U.S. Economy

Josh Zumbrun and Sarah Chaney

Forecasters in The Wall Street Journal's survey of economists expect the storm to reduce the pace of job gains by about 27,000 jobs a month in the third quarter on average, followed by little change in the fourth quarter and then a boost of 13,000 in the first quarter 2018, as many [people find work rebuilding](#). Fed policy makers watch job growth closely for signs of whether the labor market is tightening.

Economists also expect the growth rate of gross domestic product, the broadest measure of goods and services produced across the economy, will fall by about 0.3 percentage points in the third quarter, followed by no effect on the fourth quarter, and a 0.2-percentage-point boost in the first quarter of 2018.

"The devastation in the surrounding Houston area, America's fourth-largest city, will be significant enough to negatively impact activity and employment nationally," said Chad Moutray, chief economist for the National Association of Manufacturers.

In the longer run, the storm isn't expected to have a lasting economic effect, with forecasts for GDP, unemployment, inflation and other major economic indicators unchanged for 2018 overall, according to the survey of 56

business, financial and academic economists from Sept. 1 to Sept. 5. In the months ahead, here is where economists say to watch for the storm's distortions.

Jobless Claims

Early evidence of the hurricane's impact on the U.S. job market came Thursday, when the Labor Department reported the largest one-week jump in initial jobless claims since the aftermath of superstorm Sandy in November 2012. It is likely only the beginning of a spike in unemployment filings.

In the weeks after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Sandy in 2012, jobless claims were highest not during the week of the storm, but two weeks after. Many who were out of work from the hurricane waited until the storm had passed to file their claims.

Compared with the week of the storm, initial jobless claims rose 23% in the second week after superstorm Sandy and 30% in the second week after Hurricane Katrina.

"Irma's right behind Harvey, so that could cause claims to spike again," said Ryan Sweet, director of real-time economics at Moody's Analytics.

Inflation

Measures of inflation will soon reflect Harvey, with gasoline prices spiking due to disruptions to oil refineries in the Houston area. The national average gas price was \$2.66 a gallon on Wednesday, according to the AAA, up from \$2.35 a month ago.

Denton Cinquegrana, chief oil analyst of Oil Price Information Service, sees gas prices peaking near \$2.75 before leveling off.

Energy prices make up 7% of the consumer-price index, with motor fuel accounting for nearly half of that. Already, the move in gas prices could raise the inflation rate, a key area of focus for Fed policy makers, by about 0.5%. With past major storms, the effect has faded within a few months. That added volatility could further sharpen the Fed's focus on core measures of inflation that exclude food and energy.

Consumer spending

With gas prices up, consumers across the country will have less cash for everything else. Every penny increase in gasoline prices reduces consumer spending by \$1 billion over the course of the year, according to Mr. Sweet of Moody's.

"Consumers are going to feel it in their pocket," Mr. Sweet said.

Consumer-spending measures may also show the impact of Houston being shuttered for so long. The city has nearly three million workers and produces about \$500 billion a year of gross domestic product.

That is "a non-negligible economic impact, assuming 25% of Houston area output was idled for seven days," said Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist of Oxford Economics.

Housing

Before the storm, Texas was on track for a 14% increase in housing starts this year, according to James

Gaines, chief economist at the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University.

In 2016, Houston alone accounted for about 4% of the nation's permitted housing. Now builders wait to assess the market as construction sites dry out—and will [compete for workers to rebuild](#) and repair the city.

Household Wealth

Destruction of homes and businesses doesn't show up in GDP figures, but it would show up in measures of household wealth. Many homeowners and businesses

swamped by the storm didn't carry flood insurance, meaning that a large share of the over \$100 billion in estimated damage could reduce household wealth.

"With so many homeowners uninsured, this is more akin to a wipeout of assets such as one would expect from a stock-market crash," said Constance Hunter, chief economist for KPMG, the accounting firm. "The effects are more negative and widespread."

But in a \$19 trillion economy with 150 million workers, many of the effects will be hard to tell apart from

the usual churning of such a large nation. Economic indicators can only measure so much of a storm's effect.

Ultimately, "the impact on individual lives will dwarf the economic dollar losses," said Lynn Reaser, a former Bank of America economist who is now a professor at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego.

—Laura Kusisto contributed to this article.

Write to Josh Zumbrun at Josh.Zumbrun@wsj.com and Sarah Chaney at sarah.chaney@wsj.com



Andelman : Hurricane victims should be Trump's wake-up call on climate change (Opinion)

David A. Andelman

6-8 minutes

Story highlights

- David A. Andelman: Back-to-back hurricanes hitting the US are a clear sign of climate change
- This should get Trump back on board with the Paris Agreement and join a December gathering in Paris, he writes

David A. Andelman, a contributor to CNN and columnist for USA Today, is the author of "[A Shattered Peace: Versailles 1919 and the Price We Pay Today](#)." He formerly served as a foreign correspondent for The New York Times and Paris correspondent for CBS News. Follow him on Twitter [@DavidAndelman](#). The views expressed in this commentary are his.

(CNN)On December 12, French President Emmanuel Macron is [gathering in Paris](#) all the world's leaders who concluded the COP21 climate agreement two years ago, when the world unanimously agreed for the first time that it was necessary to slash greenhouse gas emissions and restrain global warming if human life were to survive on Earth.

Leaders of virtually every country who signed this pact are expected to return to Paris in December -- except Donald Trump. His absence is particularly alarming as America becomes the target of two of history's most vicious

[back-to-back hurricanes](#)

, and

[two more](#)

on deck behind them, and becomes one of the world's biggest and most immediate victims of climate change. And then there are the

[wildfires](#)

burning across the far West, their smoke headed east as well -- more than 100 at last count, consuming more than 2 million acres and hundreds of homes -- attributed to tinder-dry lands and record high temperatures.

He should rethink his approach to climate change and go to the December meeting, if for nothing else, to make America great again.

The United States is getting a front-row seat this summer to what a warming Earth promises for the future of humanity -- and sadly it's just a mild foretaste. In March, Kerry Emanuel, MIT's eminent professor of meteorology and co-director of the Lorenz Center, concluded in a remarkable

[paper](#)

for the American Meteorological Society that "Climate change potentially affects the frequency, intensity, and tracks of tropical cyclones."

And, as a member of the World Meteorological Organization's expert team, Emanuel

[signed a statement](#)

on September 1 that observed, "Hurricanes in a warmer climate are likely to become more intense, and that it is more likely than not that the frequency of Category 4 hurricanes like Harvey will increase over the 21st century." And sure enough, a week later, along came Irma.

If there were any doubt about the impact of climate change on the frequency and intensity of what scientists generally call "cyclones" -- known in Asia as typhoons and

in the North Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico as hurricanes -- that doubt is easily resolved by simply looking at some of their detailed research, using real-life hurricanes and vastly complex computer modeling. As Emanuel points out in his paper, the data seems to suggest "we would expect a significant increase in extremes of storm intensification, including those that happen just before landfall."

But there's still more. In the case of many hurricanes, such as Harvey, the principal damage is from water rather than the brute force winds of Irma. Harvey, in the course of its repeated passes through the Gulf of Mexico, drew new sources of water from the warming seas of the Gulf, dumping each load over southeast Texas and southwest Louisiana.

As the WMO statement points out "the tropical atmosphere generally hold[s] more water vapor due to climate warming (about 7% more water vapor per degree Celsius sea surface temperature increase)." As the science appears to suggest, a 10 degree rise in the water's temperature could be expected to add 70% to what was available for Harvey to dump on Houston.

This phenomenon of more intense hurricanes, accompanied by more powerful and damaging rainfall, is hardly confined to North America. Last month Typhoon Hato caused more than

[\\$1 billion in](#)

damage, including severe flooding and multiple deaths.

Johnny Chan, who also signed the WMO statement, is the director of Guy Carpenter Asia Pacific Climate Impact Centre at the School of Energy and Environment, City University of Hong Kong. He

[pointed out](#)

that "global warming is going to produce more heavy rain, simply because with global warming you have more evaporation getting into the atmosphere; so there is more moisture in the atmosphere. With more moisture in the atmosphere, the rains will be heavier."

It was, therefore, hardly surprising that the climate scientists who helped draft the COP21 document in late 2015, alongside diplomats and politicians from

[175 countries](#),

were intent on doing everything within their power to limit the warming of the Earth's atmosphere -- and by direct extension, the warming of the waters that hurricanes pass over.

President Trump's withdrawal of the United States from the COP21 agreement was a global wake-up call -- which will undoubtedly intensify as links become even clearer between global warming and the catastrophes of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma -- to every nation and a host of localities. Of particular concern, however, is efforts by the Trump administration, particularly the

[Environmental Protection Agency](#)

, to undermine the clear conclusions of atmospheric scientists monitoring greenhouse gas emissions and any future research that could confirm any conclusions already reached. Such efforts could have an equally serious effect on our ability to forecast and track the patterns of future storms.

So, it was not merely a fit of political pique that led President Macron, in a live broadcast from the Elysee Palace last June, to

[invite American climate scientists to France](#)

where they would find a welcome refuge to pursue their research, with the goal, in a clear swipe at President Trump, to "make our planet great again."

French officials, who may see themselves privately as the godfathers of the COP21 process, are anxious for the December conference to begin to move the accord from a simple pledge by

each of the signatories to a binding agreement in the form of a

[treaty](#)

, the most sweeping ever concluded.

There could be no greater tribute to those who lost their lives, homes or property in Harvey and Irma, than for Trump to join Macron in this crusade and accept the fact that climate change is a dangerous and real phenomenon.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Senate Passes Bill on Storm Aid, Debt Limit and Government Spending (UNE)

Kristina Peterson, Siobhan Hughes and Janet Hook

8-10 minutes

Updated Sept. 7, 2017 7:50 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump signaled he was open to making more [deals with Democrats](#) in Congress despite anger from fellow Republicans over a bipartisan agreement that passed the Senate Thursday yoking hurricane aid to an extension of the government's ability to borrow.

For months, Mr. Trump has publicly mused about negotiating with Democrats, only to stop short. But Wednesday's agreement on \$15.25 billion in relief for Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, combined with a three-month extension of the government's funding and its borrowing limit, was followed by further outreach to Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.).

As he had Wednesday, on Thursday he singled out "Chuck and Nancy" by name when speaking to reporters, without mentioning their Republican counterparts.

Mr. Trump also announced he was open to [eliminating the need](#) for Congress to hold votes on raising the country's borrowing limit, a policy change supported by Democratic leaders and opposed by many conservatives. Later, after a phone call with Mrs. Pelosi, who had told him that young immigrants were anxious about [his decision to scrap](#) in six months an Obama-era program providing a shield from deportation, Mr. Trump tweeted that they had "nothing to worry about."

Together, the developments suggested a new interest by Mr. Trump in collaborating with Democrats—if necessary against the wishes of his own party's leadership—on areas including infrastructure, taxes, trade policy and immigration. Such agreements could help enact some of Mr. Trump's top legislative priorities.

The Harvey package, originally proposed by Democrats and approved on an 80-17 vote, now

heads to the House, which is expected to vote on it on Friday. The House approved a smaller hurricane aid bill, without anything else attached, earlier in the week. Many conservatives there are reluctant to vote to increase the debt limit without taking any other steps to curb federal spending. But most, if not all, Democrats are likely to support it, as are many Republicans from Texas, Louisiana and Florida, all states affected by or bracing for the storms.

Asked Thursday if the deal on the debt ceiling signaled more bipartisanship, Mr. Trump said, "I think it does, yes. I think we will have a different relationship than we've been watching over the last number of years." He added: "The people of the United States really want to see a coming together, at least to an extent."

But deals also carry significant potential risks for all sides, Democrats and Republicans said.

For Mr. Trump, the risk is that he may alienate conservatives and leaders of the GOP who hold a majority in both houses of Congress. Democratic leaders risk alienating their own activist supporters who are wary of any compromise with Mr. Trump. And GOP leaders could face backlash from their own members and constituents who want top Republicans to push a GOP-friendly agenda in Congress and protect the party's majority.

The most immediate test may come on tax policy, the area that GOP leaders and Mr. Trump have said is their top priority this fall. Some of Mr. Trump's campaign rhetoric on taxes lined up clearly with Democrats. He talked about reducing tax breaks for high-income households and limiting tax incentives to shift corporate jobs and profits abroad.

But his other ideas haven't been consistent with some of these themes. For instance, he wants to repeal the estate tax and also sharply reduce the rates that many wealthy individuals pay for "pass-through" income earned in businesses not subject to the corporate tax, such as law or accounting partnerships.

Both measures benefit the wealthy disproportionately and are likely to be opposed by Democrats. Still, some activist Democrats are already worried that the party might strike a deal.

"I am not confident that the Democratic party will hold and present an effective opposition on taxes as they did on health care," said Jonathan Tasini, a progressive activist who was a national surrogate for Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign.

And some already are criticizing North Dakota Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, one of Democrats' most vulnerable senators up for re-election in 2018, who has expressed openness to working on tax-overhaul legislation. She flew with Mr. Trump on Air Force One when he traveled to North Dakota for a Wednesday event to discuss tax policy, where he invited her onto the stage and called her a "good woman."

"Does she actually feel President Donald Trump coming to Bismarck is a good thing?" said Greg Hodur, former chairman of the North Dakota Democratic Party, in a letter to a local news outlet. "Don't give him a big hug to welcome him here on our behalf."

For their part, some Republicans say they wonder whether a president who sided with Democrats in crafting a three-month budget deal can be trusted as a partner on a more significant tax plan.

Trump administration officials huddled with House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) and the chairmen of the tax-writing committees on Thursday, with all sides saying they had made significant progress toward a framework. But outside the Hill, Republican strategists warned GOP lawmakers to be careful.

"He's not a conservative," said Michael Steele, the former Republican National Committee chairman, of Mr. Trump. "He's not coming to the table with a thought-out, established conservative perspective or agenda, so to go into a negotiation thinking that's how he's going to present his position is ludicrous."

Mr. Ryan had a dinner meeting with Mr. Trump on Thursday night to discuss the fall legislative agenda.

Trade policy is another area that Trump aides have long seen as ripe for cooperation with Democrats, and they talk often of seeking a "new coalition" built around emphasizing stronger enforcement of trade laws. Mr. Trump's protectionist pitch during the 2016 campaign was one of his clearest breaks with traditional Republican ideology. Mr. Trump's choice for U.S. trade representative, Robert Lighthizer, a longtime advocate of tougher trade enforcement policies, won strong Democratic praise and support, especially compared to other Trump cabinet nominees who barely squeaked by.

Clues to the limits of an alliance between Mr. Trump and Democrats may be found in a push to rebuild the U.S. transportation, water and energy infrastructure, which was early on seen as possible common ground between Mr. Trump and Democrats. The two camps remain divided about how such an effort would be structured and funded.

Early on, Mr. Schumer and Senate Democrats attempted a political equivalent of a bear-hug, endorsing Mr. Trump's goal of \$1 trillion in infrastructure spending, but insisting it come from public funds, even if that increased deficits.

That approach is anathema to congressional Republicans, as well as to members of the Trump administration, who say they are trying to devise an infrastructure plan that would shift funding responsibilities to local and state government as much as possible. The White House is encouraging states and cities to raise their own taxes, and to entice private investors to help fund projects by raising user fees and tolls—a strategy that Democrats have harshly criticized as unworkable and unfair to poor residents.

—Louise Radnofsky contributed to this article.

Corrections & Amplifications
The Senate's bill would keep the government running and its debt limit suspended until Dec. 8. An earlier version of this article

incorrectly stated Dec. 15. (Sept. 7, 2017)

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Appeared in the September 8, 2017, print edition as 'Trump's Debt Deal Moves Forward.'

Write to Kristina Peterson at

**The
New York
Times**

Energized Trump Sees Bipartisan Path, at Least for Now (UNE)

Peter Baker and
Sheryl Gay

Stolberg

9-11 minutes

President Trump told reporters that the deal with Democratic leaders in Congress may signal a new era of bipartisanship. Al Drago for The New York Times

WASHINGTON — By the time President Trump woke up on Thursday morning, he was feeling upbeat. And as he watched television news reports about his [fiscal agreement](#) with Democrats, he felt like telling someone.

He picked up the phone and called the two Democratic congressional leaders, Senator Chuck Schumer of New York and Representative [Nancy Pelosi](#) of California. "The press has been incredible," he gushed to Ms. Pelosi, according to someone briefed on their call. He was equally effusive with Mr. Schumer, boasting that even Fox News was positive.

A few hours later, Mr. Trump went on TV himself, vowing to turn a one-time spending-and-debt deal brokered out of expediency into a more enduring bipartisan alliance that could transform his presidency. He signaled openness to a Democratic proposal to eliminate the perennial showdowns over the [debt ceiling](#), and he repeated his desire to cut a deal to protect [younger illegal immigrants from deportation](#).

But even as Republicans fumed at being sidelined, many in Washington were skeptical that the moment of comity would last. Although Mr. Trump has at times preached bipartisanship, he has never made it a central part of his governing strategy. While he may have been feeling energized on Thursday by the collaboration, he is a politician driven by the latest expression of approval, given to abrupt shifts in approach and tone. He is a man of the moment, and the moment often does not last.

There are also reasons to doubt whether Democrats would sustain a partnership with Mr. Trump beyond the deal they have cut to keep the government open for three months and paying its debts. The centrifugal forces of partisanship tug from the left as well as the right, and the liberal base has put pressure on

Democratic lawmakers not to meet in the middle a president it loathes.

For one day, though, the two sides sought to put months of acrimony behind them. "I think we will have a different relationship than we've been watching over the last number of years. I hope so," Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House. "I think that's a great thing for our country. And I think that's what the people of the United States want to see. They want to see some dialogue. They want to see coming together to an extent."

One area of possible agreement could be a proposal advanced by Senator Chuck Schumer, the Democratic leader, to eliminate the requirement that Congress vote from time to time to raise the debt ceiling altogether, a perennial point of division in Washington. Pete Marovich for The New York Times

Democrats expressed a blend of optimism and caution. "We'll see," Mr. Schumer said in an interview. "I think it would be much better for the country and much better for [Donald Trump](#) if he was much more in the middle and bipartisan rather than siding with the hard right. I think he got a taste of it yesterday. We'll see if it continues. I hope it does."

One area of possible agreement could be a proposal advanced by Mr. Schumer to eliminate the requirement that Congress vote from time to time to raise the debt ceiling, a perennial point of division in Washington, and raise it automatically. "It could be discussed," Mr. Trump said. "There are a lot of good reasons to do that."

In a separate interview, Ms. Pelosi said that during their phone call, the president seemed eager to support legislation called the Dream Act preserving President [Barack Obama](#)'s program allowing 800,000 immigrants who were brought to the county illegally as minors to stay and work. Mr. Trump [canceled the program](#) this week on the grounds that Mr. Obama overstepped his authority, but he called on Congress to authorize it before it phases out in six months.

"He said, 'I want to sign it. Let's do it fast. Let's do it soon,'" Ms. Pelosi said. "And I said, 'All the better. We don't want to take six months, and we don't even want to take three months.'"

She used the opportunity to ask Mr. Trump to post a message on Twitter reassuring those in the program, called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, not to worry about deportation during the six-month wind-down period. "My members had said to me last night, 'We need more assurance that people are going to leave these dreamers alone,'" she said.

She said she also asked Mr. Trump to make certain that the Department of Homeland Security did not target the young immigrants. "He said, 'Are they doing that?'" she said. "I said, 'That is what is being reported to me, and I want to make sure that they don't.'"

"The press has been incredible," Mr. Trump told Representative Nancy Pelosi, the House Democratic leader, about the consensus. Joshua Roberts/Reuters

Whether this latest round of interaction marks a turning point in Washington, Ms. Pelosi sounded dubious. "Every day is a new day around here," she said.

Still, Mr. Trump followed through on the Twitter promise. "For all of those (DACA) that are concerned about your status during the 6 month period, you have nothing to worry about — No action!" [the president wrote](#) shortly after the phone call.

The message appeared just as Ms. Pelosi was briefing her whips about the call. Representative Debbie Dingell of Michigan spotted the tweet on her iPad and read it out loud to surprised Democrats.

As Mr. Trump reached out to Democrats, he sought to keep the lines of communication open with Republican leaders. He called Speaker Paul D. Ryan of Wisconsin and Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, and planned to host the House speaker for dinner on Thursday night.

But on Capitol Hill, Republicans were stirred up, convinced that Mr. Trump had effectively given Democrats the leverage to use the newly negotiated December deadline for government spending and the debt ceiling to win concessions.

"Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi now have most of the cards for when we get to December," said Senator Ben Sasse, Republican of Nebraska. "This is an embarrassing moment for a Republican-controlled

Congress and a Republican administration."

In the House, conservatives sounded more irritated with their own leadership than the president. At a breakfast for reporters on Thursday hosted by Bloomberg News, Representative Mark Meadows, Republican of North Carolina and the chairman of the conservative Freedom Caucus, implicitly criticized Mr. Ryan — though not by name — for failing to put forward "a conservative solution" to raising the debt limit, like linking it to spending cuts.

"Everybody's surprised," Mr. Meadows said. But, he added, "if there's not a conservative solution out there for raising the debt ceiling, why should we be surprised?"

The rapprochement between Mr. Trump and Mr. Schumer brought back together two New Yorkers who have been at odds this year, but have known each other for a long time. Mr. Trump once held a fundraiser for Mr. Schumer at Mar-a-Lago, the president's Florida retreat. But Wednesday's meeting was the first time the two had seen each other since shortly after Mr. Trump's inauguration.

On Thursday, they saw each other again, when Mr. Schumer went to the White House to talk about an issue of local interest to him: the [Gateway Program](#), a rail expansion project that calls for two new tunnels to be built under the Hudson River.

Their relations have been harsh and combative. Mr. Trump has ridiculed Mr. Schumer [on Twitter](#) as "Cryin' Chuck Schumer." When Mr. Trump convened a cabinet meeting in June, Mr. Schumer released a [parody video](#) mocking all of the secretaries praising the president.

Mr. Schumer said in the interview that he was surprised that Mr. Trump sided with Democrats on their fiscal plan. Going forward, Mr. Schumer said he could envision a scenario in which Mr. Trump worked with Democrats, bypassing Republican conservatives, on other issues. But he said "the next big test" will be whether Mr. Trump takes a leadership role in helping to pass the Dream Act.

White House officials have insisted that any immigration legislation also include elements to strengthen enforcement, presumably including money for Mr. Trump's proposed

wall on the southern border with Mexico. Mr. Schumer said money for border security might be

acceptable, but under no circumstances would Democrats support a wall.

“Democrats will not sacrifice our principles for agreement’s sake,” Mr. Schumer said. “But if he moves

in our direction, we will work with him.”

**The
Washington
Post**

Republicans jolted by, and Democrats wary of, Trump’s overtures to opposing party (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/madebonis>

10-13 minutes

Political tremors seized both major parties on Thursday in the wake of President Trump’s sudden alignment with congressional Democrats, leaving Republicans alarmed about the unraveling of their relationship with the White House and uncertain about the prospects for their policy ambitions this fall.

In the span of 48 hours, Trump cut a deal with Democrats to keep the government funded and raise the nation’s borrowing authority, advanced talks with the senior Senate Democrat on a permanent debt ceiling solution and followed the advice of the top House Democrat, who urged him to use Twitter to ease the fears of young undocumented immigrants.

The developments confounded congressional Republicans and Democrats at the Capitol, where some long-standing political norms seemed to many to be shattered. The upheaval also raised new questions about how Trump plans to approach the looming debates over tax reform, immigration, government funding and the nation’s debt — and where congressional Republicans fit in.

“Haven’t seen anything like it before,” said Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who has served in the Senate for three decades. Of Trump, McCain said: “I have no way of divining his motives. I’m a pretty intelligent guy, but I don’t understand this.”

Democrats proceeded carefully amid the escalating GOP tensions, framing Trump’s overtures as an opening to assert themselves more forcefully while acknowledging that Trump’s favor could be fleeting — and that their many intractable differences are likely to remain.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) spoke about a short-term plan to fund the government and raise its borrowing limit on the Senate floor Sept. 7. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) spoke about a short-term plan to fund the government and raise its borrowing limit on the Senate floor Sept. 7. (U.S. Senate)

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) spoke about a short-term plan to fund the government and raise its borrowing limit on the Senate floor Sept. 7. (U.S. Senate)

“There aren’t permanent alliances. There aren’t governing philosophies. There’s day by day, seat-of-the-pants management,” Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) said in an interview.

By that measure, the Democrats have enjoyed two good days working with Trump.

On Wednesday, the president agreed to support legislation [providing hurricane relief money](#) in a package that also averts an imminent shutdown of the federal government and raises its borrowing limit for three months. The deal gives Democrats leverage to play a role in negotiations over several big-ticket items at the end of the year, including efforts to pass a law allowing undocumented immigrants brought to this country as children to remain here legally.

[\[Senate approves bill doubling hurricane aid package, extending federal borrowing limit\]](#)

And on Thursday, Trump talked up the possibility of permanently removing the requirement that Congress repeatedly raise the nation’s borrowing limit. It was an idea he had discussed with Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) a day earlier, according to three people familiar with the discussion. The idea is opposed by many Republicans, including House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.), who see the imposition of a debt limit as a check on government spending.

Also Thursday, Trump tweeted that young undocumented immigrants currently protected by an Obama-era executive order known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals do not need to worry about his administration acting against them for the next six months. The tweet followed the White House’s announcement this week that the program will be rescinded in six months.

It followed a request from House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) — and was a striking move from Trump, who has largely ignored counsel of his own party’s leaders when it comes to his

controversial social media habits, and who has rarely if ever communicated with Democrats about messaging.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said on Sept. 7, she told President Trump that “people really need a reassurance” that the 6-month phase-out of DACA will not increase deportations in that time. He tweeted a similar sentiment after their conversation. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said on Sept. 7, she told President Trump that “people really need a reassurance” about DACA’s phase-out. (Reuters)

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said on Sept. 7, she told President Trump that “people really need a reassurance” that the 6-month phase-out of DACA will not increase deportations in that time. He tweeted a similar sentiment after their conversation. (Reuters)

“For all of those (DACA) that are concerned about your status during the 6 month period, you have nothing to worry about — No action!” [the president tweeted from his personal account.](#)

Said Pelosi at a subsequent news conference: “This is what I asked the president to do and, boom boom boom, the tweet appeared.”

The comity between the White House and Democrats sparked easy passage Thursday of a Hurricane Harvey relief package that allocates \$15.25 billion in disaster aid and also raises the debt ceiling and keeps the government open until Dec. 8. The Senate approved the measure 80 to 17 as part of the pact between Trump, Schumer and Pelosi, sending it back to the House for final approval.

Democrats see the dynamics in Washington as newly fluid and potentially in their favor on a host of issues. In addition to pressing for new protections for undocumented immigrants, Democrats hope to water down GOP plans for tax policy and thwart a bevy of federal budget cuts proposed by Republicans.

Even so, some suggested caution about Trump’s sudden cooperation with them. They warned that the president’s unpredictability makes him a dangerous ally.

“Take advantage of it — but do it with the full knowledge that Trump will be calling, you know, Chuck Schumer names on Twitter within the fortnight,” Murphy said.

Interviews with multiple GOP senators and aides on Thursday, meanwhile, revealed that a sense of helplessness has gripped Republicans in the upper chamber after Trump openly flouted their plans.

“It’s just been jarring,” said one GOP Senate aide. The aide said that at the start of the week, there was a sense of confidence that White House officials were on the same page as Capitol Hill Republicans on the debt ceiling and Harvey aid negotiations.

But Trump ignored the guidance of those planning conversations.

Congressional Republican leaders didn’t want to give Democrats new leverage in December and have been under pressure from conservative rank and file to avoid more than one vote on the debt ceiling before next year’s midterm elections — only to be undercut by Trump.

Numerous members and aides predicted that the bill would fail to gain support from a majority of House Republicans, though given the wide support from Democrats, none thought it would ultimately fail.

Among those complaining the loudest were Texas lawmakers, who met at a bipartisan group at a lunch Thursday, with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott calling in and urging them to support the federal aid bill. Several conservatives in the area affected by Harvey said they expected to take their first-ever vote in favor of a debt-ceiling hike to advance Harvey aid.

“My fear is we set a bad precedent here, that you just load it up with other stuff,” said Rep. Blake Farenthold (R-Tex.), who represents the area where Harvey first made landfall. “This is what’s wrong in Washington: They pile stuff together so you have to weigh the good versus the bad rather than give every issue individual consideration. That’s the part of living in the swamp I don’t like.”

The chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee objected to the agreement in a letter to Ryan, while Sen. Ben Sasse (R-

Neb.) proposed an amendment to pass relief for Harvey victims as a stand-alone bill in the upper chamber, decoupled from debates over federal spending and the debt ceiling. The amendment did not advance.

At the White House, Trump was asked by a reporter about abolishing the congressional process for raising the debt ceiling. He replied that "there are lots of good reasons" to do it.

"It could be discussed," Trump said. "For many years, people have been talking about getting rid of [the] debt ceiling altogether." He confirmed during the exchange with reporters that the issue was discussed during his meeting with congressional leaders on Wednesday.

Trump and Schumer discussed the idea Wednesday

in the Oval Office. The two, along with Pelosi, agreed to work together over the next several months to try to finalize a plan by December, which would need congressional approval.

One individual who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe a private talk described it as a "gentlemen's agreement."

The U.S. government spends more money than it brings in through taxes and fees, and it covers that gap by issuing debt to borrow money. The government can borrow money only up to a certain limit, known as the debt limit or the debt ceiling. The government routinely bumps up against this ceiling, requiring Congress to raise it again and again. These votes are often politicized and can cause panic among investors.

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Some Republicans labored to put a positive spin on what has been a politically startling couple of days for the GOP on Capitol Hill.

"In my opinion, we're not going to shut down the government. That's a plus," said Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.), a moderate who is up for reelection and whom Trump threatened to campaign against over the summer. "And we're going to take care of people in Texas — I think that's a good thing."

Other Republicans resorted to wishful thinking when it comes to Trump's hostility to Heller and other

Republicans — as well as his embrace of some vulnerable Democrats up for reelection in 2018, including Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.), whom he invited to ride with him on Air Force One on Wednesday.

"There's going to be a little bit of sparring going on," said Sen. John Cornyn (Tex.), the Senate's second-ranking Republican. "But hopefully the president will recognize it's in his best political interest to have as many Republicans in the Senate" as possible.

Ashley Parker, Kelsey Snell, Jenna Johnson, David Nakamura, Damian Paletta and Elise Viebeck contributed to this report.



Editorial : Trump's deal with the Democrats saves us from disaster — but not for long

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

11-14 minutes

[The Post's View](#)

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages). Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and President Trump. (Alex Wong/Getty Images)

By [Editorial Board](#)

[The Post's View](#)

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

September 7 at 7:28 PM

WHEN THE best that can be said is that the nation can "breathe a sigh of relief," as Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) [put it Wednesday](#), that's better than a dive over the cliff. The deal struck by President Trump and Congress to postpone until December a divisive battle

over fiscal matters is hardly an ideal solution. Nonetheless, the president's decision to reach out to Democrats to ensure against a disastrous default on the nation's debts is encouraging, both as a matter of responsible governing and for its bipartisan character.

Surprising the GOP congressional leadership, Mr. Trump quickly agreed with a proposal by Mr. Schumer and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) to extend the government's borrowing capacity until December, fund the government until then and provide [billions of dollars in hurricane relief](#). According to [The Post](#), Mr. Trump and the Democratic leaders also reached a handshake deal to pursue a plan to permanently remove the requirement that Congress vote every time the nation needs to raise the debt ceiling.

Such a long-term fix is well worth pursuing. The all-too-frequent need for Congress to authorize fresh debt has become a destructive game of chicken for both parties. Without relinquishing its constitutional prerogatives, Congress should join the president in looking for a mechanism that is less likely to

produce grandstanding — and threats to the nation's financial stability.

National News Alerts

Major national and political news as it breaks.

The deal announced Wednesday, and Senate [action](#) that followed Thursday, would — [with House concurrence](#) — put off until December an anticipated congressional fight over the 2018 budget. Mr. Trump was clearly anxious about a contentious battle over fiscal issues in the weeks ahead, fearing it would shake financial markets or interfere with providing hurricane relief aid. His decision to reach out to Democrats for the first time in his administration suggested that frustration with congressional gridlock has led him toward a welcome openness to bipartisan coalitions.

If so, Democrats should be willing to respond constructively. They proposed the three-month reprieve in hope of gaining some leverage on important issues in the months ahead, including the extension of legal rights to the immigrants known as "dreamers," whose protections

are being rescinded on Mr. Trump's orders earlier this week. This is politically clever but not very responsible in the long run. Linking immigration legislation to another extension of borrowing authority in December could trigger a game of brinkmanship.

If Mr. Trump and Congress really want Americans to breathe a sigh of relief, they should invest in genuine bipartisanship and make an early deal to tackle [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#) legislation once and for all. Mr. Trump offered a nod in that direction Thursday by issuing a tweet, reportedly requested by Ms. Pelosi, assuring dreamers that they would not suffer harm for the next six months. But what's needed is legislation affirming their rights to remain, study and work in the country.

Even better would be a serious bipartisan effort to come to grips with the nation's long and deep fiscal disorder, including a long-term solution for the debt ceiling and passage of a responsible 2018 budget. Too much to hope for? Probably. But for now, at least, the worst has been avoided.



Robinson : Trump's betrayal of the Republican leaders should surprise no one

<https://www.facebook.com/eugenerobinson.columnist>

6-8 minutes

President Trump meets with

Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress. (Kevin Lamarque/Reuters)

Chuck and Nancy and Donald and Ivanka seemed to thoroughly enjoy their meeting at the White House

the other day. Mitch and Paul, not so much.

Does it really surprise anyone that President Trump betrayed the Republican leaders who have been trying their best to carry water for him on Capitol Hill — Senate

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) — and is playing footsie with their Democratic rivals? It shouldn't.

One thing that should be blindingly obvious by now is that political

loyalty, for the president, is a one-way street. Yes, McConnell and Ryan embarrassed themselves and squandered precious political capital in a long, fruitless attempt to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. Yes, the Republican leaders have held their tongues time and again when Trump has manifested his unfitness for office. Yes, they have pretended not to notice the glaring conflicts of interest between Trump's private business affairs and his public responsibilities.

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Still, there was something brazen about the way events unfolded Wednesday. First, Ryan tells reporters that a short-term, three-month extension on [the debt ceiling](#), tied to relief funds for Hurricane Harvey — an idea supported by Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) — was “ridiculous and disgraceful.” Then, in the Oval Office meeting, Trump stuns everyone by endorsing the [Schumer-Pelosi plan](#) — and agrees to work with the Democrats on repealing the debt ceiling altogether, according to The Post. Later, on Air Force One, Trump goes on about what a productive meeting he had with “Chuck and Nancy,” not bothering to mention the GOP congressional leaders by name. Ouch.

Some shell-shocked attendees said they believed the meeting went off the rails when the president's daughter Ivanka, who has an office in the West Wing, cheerily dropped in and disrupted the conversation's focus. But this sounds to me like nothing more than a search for a scapegoat. Ryan and McConnell have no one to blame but themselves.

President Trump's decision to back Democrats' plans for raising the debt ceiling and permanently removing Congress's debt ceiling requirement is frustrating Republicans, and especially conservatives. President Trump's decision to back Democrats' plans for raising the debt ceiling and permanently removing Congress's debt ceiling requirement frustrate the GOP. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

President Trump's decision to back Democrats' plans for raising the debt ceiling and permanently removing Congress's debt ceiling requirement is frustrating Republicans, and especially conservatives. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

Trump is many things, but he is not, nor has he ever been, a committed Republican. He seized control of the party in a hostile takeover. His campaign positions on trade, health care, entitlements and other issues bore no resemblance to GOP orthodoxy. He has instincts — some of them odious, from what we can intuit about his views on race and

culture — but his worldview is transactional and situational, not ideological.

Ryan, McConnell and many of their Republican colleagues in Congress convinced themselves that Trump could be a useful instrument — that he would sign whatever legislation they sent him, and therefore they would be able to enact a conventional GOP agenda of tax and entitlement cuts.

Trump might have gone along with this scenario, at least for a while. But Ryan and McConnell utterly failed to hold up their end of the bargain.

Look at the health-care fiasco from Trump's point of view. His campaign position was that Obamacare had to be repealed, but that the replacement should be a system offering health care for “everyone.” What Ryan and the House delivered, however, was a plan that would make 23 million people lose health insurance and [cut nearly \\$800 billion from Medicaid](#).

Trump called that legislation “mean” but was so desperate for a big win that he backed it anyway. In the Senate, however, McConnell wasn't able to deliver anything at all — not even a stripped-down measure to repeal the ACA now and replace it later. Trump was humiliated and angry. “Mitch M” and “Paul R” became frequent targets of his barbed tweets.

So on Wednesday, Trump dished out a little humiliation of his own. At the White House meeting, the president reportedly cut off Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin — who supported the Ryan-McConnell approach to raising the debt ceiling — in mid-sentence to announce that he was siding with Schumer and Pelosi.

The stunning slapdown almost overshadowed a surprise that Trump had delivered Tuesday evening: After sending Attorney General [Jeff Sessions](#) out to announce the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, Trump [tweeted](#) that if Congress did not act within six months, he would “revisit” the question.

What Trump clearly has already revisited is his belief in the ability of the conservative GOP congressional majorities to get anything meaningful done. He seems to be at least flirting with the idea of working instead with Democrats and GOP moderates — working not with but around the House and Senate leadership.

I just hope Schumer and Pelosi know not to trust him the way Ryan and McConnell did.

Read more from [Eugene Robinson's archive](#), [follow him on Twitter](#) or [subscribe to his updates on Facebook](#). You can also join him Tuesdays at 1 p.m. for a [live Q&A](#).



Tomasky : Swap DACA for Wall Funding? No Way!

Michael Tomasky
5-7 minutes

WASHINGTON — Suddenly, Washington is awash in talk about deal-making. On Wednesday, President Trump agreed with the Democrats on a plan to increase the debt limit and fund the government until December, enraging his Republican allies. This sudden thaw sets up the possibility of an even bigger deal: In exchange for making the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program permanent law, the Democrats would agree to maybe a couple of billion for the president's beautiful wall on the border.

Should the Democrats accept such a deal? A part of me would like to say they should. Hey, it's an actual compromise, just like Washington politicians used to make!

But alas, no, the Democrats should not. The reasons reflect both Americans' views on these two

policies and, more broadly, a brutal truth of our polarized politics today.

The simple fact is that voters support the “liberal” position on DACA. In [one recent poll](#), 58 percent of respondents said the program's participants, known as “Dreamers,” should be allowed to stay and have a path to citizenship. An additional 18 percent favored letting them become legal residents, but not citizens. Only 15 percent opted for deportation.

Letting the Dreamers stay is also the position of many Republican leaders — House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senator Lindsey Graham most notably in recent days, but many others as well. It's gone from being the liberal position to what we might call the common-sense humane position.

Representative Nancy Pelosi and Senator Charles Schumer, the Democratic leaders. Tom Brenner/The New York Times

At the same time, Americans do not support a border wall. A [survey in](#)

[late July](#) — conducted by the polling company Rasmussen, generally considered to lean toward Mr. Trump — found that 56 percent of respondents opposed the wall, and 37 percent backed it. This is a big change from late January, the week after Mr. Trump took office, when in another Rasmussen survey [a slight plurality supported](#) the wall.

Now toss into the mix the president's own sagging approval numbers. On Tuesday, [Gallup had him at 37 percent](#).

So let's review. We've got one policy that enjoys broad public backing, as well as bipartisan support on Capitol Hill. We've got another policy that has little public backing, which congressional Democrats oppose implacably and leaves even some Republicans ambivalent. Kevin McCarthy, the House majority leader, said Tuesday that [he hopes to punt](#) the wall-funding question to December. Under these circumstances, making a DACA/wall deal would be like Rafael Nadal saying to his 75th-

ranked opponent, “Sure, I'll let you win half the time.”

I've been surprised in recent days to see [some prominent liberal commentators](#) venture that maybe the Democrats should take such a deal. What's \$1.5 billion, goes the argument? That won't build a wall. In exchange, the Dreamers are safe.

It's tempting. But once Democrats agree to one payment of \$1.5 billion, the door to many payments of \$10 billion or \$20 billion has been flung open. And — here's the crucial point — they will have lost all ability to make a principled case against Mr. Trump's wall.

I'm normally fairly comfortable with tactics and pragmatism, but this is one of those cases where that would constitute self-defeating politics. The Democrats need to be thinking about the midterm elections. Midterms are always “base” elections and referendums on the incumbent president. The Democrats should be heading into

2018 standing firm against the single most conspicuous symbol of Mr. Trump's racial policies and attitudes, not cutting deals with him on it.

And this brings us to a brutal truth of our polarized time: Pundits don't like obstruction. Experts at think tanks bemoan it. But voters rarely punish it.

In fact, they more often reward it. Look at how the Republicans fared in [the two off-year elections](#) during

Barack Obama's tenure. In 2010, they took six Senate seats and 63 House seats, recapturing control of that body. In 2014, they gained just 13 in the House — they'd about maxed out there — but picked up a whopping nine Senate seats.

These elections represented Republican voters rewarding their senators and representatives for saying no to President Obama on every major initiative. Democrats were outraged when the Senate Republican leader, Mitch

McConnell, said in October 2010 that "the single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president." But not Republican voters. Two weeks after he said it, they gave Mr. McConnell six new Republican Senate colleagues to work with to try to accomplish that goal.

I report this with no joy in my heart, but it is what it is. There may be some solutions for this state of affairs over the long term. But in the

short term, one party can't unilaterally disarm on a core issue.

As for the Dreamers, Democrats should be able to find other ways to help them. As the six-month deadline approaches, the hue and cry will be thunderous. Republicans will feel enormous pressure. There will be other horses to trade then. But giving an unpopular president money for an unpopular idea is how a minority stays a minority.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Trump's Debt-Ceiling Deal Boosts Pressure on Paul Ryan

Kristina Peterson and Siobhan Hughes

6-7 minutes

Updated Sept. 7, 2017 7:46 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump's decision to strike [a deal with Democrats](#) this week will land House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) in an uncomfortable position Friday: fighting to pass a bill he had argued against both in public and in the Oval Office only two days earlier.

Mr. Ryan likely will need Democratic votes to pass legislation providing emergency aid to Hurricane Harvey victims and a three-month extension of the government's funding and debt limit, given that many House GOP lawmakers are unhappy with the deal. Some have started to train their anger not on the president who cut it but on Mr. Ryan for failing to prevent it.

"What was the leadership's plan on raising the debt ceiling? Was there a plan?" asked Rep. Mark Meadows (R., N.C.) at a Bloomberg News event.

"The leader is responsible for everything that happens or fails to happen," said Rep. Warren Davidson (R., Ohio).

Mr. Ryan's predecessor as speaker, Rep. John Boehner (R., Ohio), carried a heavy political burden in having to pass high-stakes fiscal legislation without majority support from House members of his own party. That circumstance helped build pressure leading to his 2015

resignation. Mr. Davidson now holds his seat.

Mr. Trump's decision to strike a deal with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) over the public objections of Mr. Ryan and private pressure from other Republicans laid bare the tensions that have been brewing between Mr. Trump and GOP leaders.

On Tuesday night, GOP leaders, who supported an 18-month extension of the federal government's borrowing limit, firmly believed they were on the same page as the White House ahead of the next day's meeting in the Oval Office, according to GOP aides in both chambers.

Rank-and-file colleagues had been briefed on the plan. So Mr. Ryan didn't mince words Wednesday morning when reporters asked him about Democrats' offer to pair just a three-month extension with aid for Hurricane Harvey victims, calling it "ridiculous" and "unworkable."

Then just a few hours later, Mr. Trump accepted Democrats' deal to raise the debt limit for three months, leaving Mr. Ryan and other GOP leaders shocked and frustrated, according to House GOP aides.

Mr. Ryan said nothing publicly Wednesday about the deal. He plowed through a schedule packed with meetings and attended lawmaker fundraisers in the evening, according to a GOP aide. On Thursday, he told reporters that Mr. Trump had made a "game call" to show bipartisan cooperation in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey

and with Hurricane Irma barreling toward Florida.

"He was interested in making sure that this is a bipartisan moment while we respond to these hurricanes," Mr. Ryan said. Though he noted he would have preferred to see a longer-term increase in the debt limit, to provide more certainty to credit markets.

Republicans on Capitol Hill frequently say that signs of friction with the White House are overblown. But in Wednesday's deal, Mr. Trump sided with Democrats on the core GOP matter of fiscal policy—an area that Mr. Ryan is closely associated with, due to his time at the helm of the House Budget Committee.

After suffering through a tumultuous and ultimately unsuccessful effort to roll back the Affordable Care Act, the deal with the Democrats may be a signal that Mr. Trump was fed up with GOP leaders. Mr. Trump's budget director, former Rep. Mick Mulvaney, said Thursday that he believed Mr. Trump was annoyed at GOP leaders over the health-care failure.

"I think he probably is," Mr. Mulvaney said on [Fox Business Network](#). "I was promised that they would have repealed and replaced Obamacare by now. ... To the extent that the president was annoyed by that is simply reflecting many of the people of this country."

Democrats said intraparty divisions among House Republicans have weakened their negotiating power with Mr. Trump, since GOP leaders cannot reliably produce votes to pass major legislation.

"Here, the currency of the realm is the vote," Mrs. Pelosi told reporters Thursday. "You have the votes, no discussion necessary."

An overarching question, Republicans say, is whether Mr. Trump could be a trustworthy partner of GOP leaders on other consequential issues, such as the effort to rewrite the tax code.

"He's not a conservative. He's not moored to anything Republicans have stood for," said former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele. "He's agnostic on these things related to policy and politics. He's all about the moment."

The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Underlying the tensions is Republicans' concern that they could lose control of the House in next year's elections. Republicans see their ability to deliver on major promises, such as repealing the ACA and cutting tax rates, as essential to maintaining their majority.

Mr. Meadows said: "If we get to December and we've not repealed and replaced Obamacare; we've not built the [border] wall; we've not done tax reform—let me just tell you, it is not going to be pretty some eight or nine months after that in terms of re-election."

Write to Kristina Peterson at kristina.peterson@wsj.com and Siobhan Hughes at siobhan.hughes@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 8, 2017, print edition as 'Debt Deal Boosts Pressure on Ryan.'

The New York Times

Betsy DeVos Says She Will Rewrite Rules on Campus Sex Assault

Stephanie Saul and Dana

Goldstein

10-12 minutes

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos spoke on Thursday at George Mason University about coming changes to campus sexual-assault policies. Mike Theiler/Reuters

ARLINGTON, Va. — Saying that the Obama administration's approach to policing campus sexual assault had "failed too many students," Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said on Thursday that her administration would rewrite the

rules in an effort to protect both the victims of sexual assault and the accused.

Ms. DeVos did not say what changes she had in mind. But in a strongly worded speech, she made

clear she believed that in an effort to protect victims, the previous administration had gone too far and forced colleges to adopt procedures that sometimes deprived accused students of their rights.

"Through intimidation and coercion, the failed system has clearly pushed schools to overreach," she said in an address at George Mason University in suburban Arlington, Va. "With the heavy hand of Washington tipping the balance of her scale, the sad reality is that Lady Justice is not blind on campuses today."

Advocates for assault victims reacted strongly and swiftly, as did Arne Duncan, who was education secretary during most of the Obama administration.

"This administration wants to take us back to the days when colleges swept sexual assault under the rug," Mr. Duncan said in a statement. "Instead of building on important work to pursue justice, they are once again choosing politics over students, and students will pay the price."

But Ms. DeVos's remarks, delivered to a student chapter of the Federalist Society, an organization of conservative and libertarian lawyers, echoed complaints by conservatives and lawyers for accused students that colleges were punishing students unfairly.

Frederick M. Hess, director of education policy for the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute, noted that courts have reversed some punishments handed down by campus administrators.

"I think DeVos laid out a sensible, responsible approach to crafting a more measured policy that can better secure the rights of all involved," he said.

In recent years, campuses across the country have been roiled by high-profile sexual assault cases. A scandal involving the Baylor University football team ultimately [led to the removal](#) of the school's president, Kenneth W. Starr, the former independent counsel whose work led to President Bill Clinton's impeachment.

A [2015 survey](#) of students at 27 schools, commissioned by the Association of American Universities, found that nearly one in four women had complained of sexual assault or sexual misconduct. Advocates for victims seized on the study, but as with similar reports, [it was criticized](#) by some for overstating the problem, and even its authors acknowledged that it had limitations.

Though Ms. DeVos said she believed that accused students were often mistreated, she also said that victims were being ill-served by a quasi-judicial process that lacked the sophistication required for such sensitive matters.

Ms. DeVos repeatedly used the term "survivors," a term often preferred by victims when speaking of sexual assault. And she also vowed that colleges would not return to the days when sexual assault complaints were ignored.

"One rape is one too many," she said. "One assault is one too many. One aggressive act of harassment is one too many."

But her remarks focused more heavily on the young men who, she said, were denied due process in campus proceedings, sometimes attempting suicide.

She referred to campus sexual misconduct hearings as "kangaroo courts" that forced administrators to act as "judge and jury." Referring to scores of lawsuits filed by punished students, she said: "Survivors aren't well served when they are re-traumatized with appeal after appeal because the failed system failed the accused. And no student should be forced to sue their way to due process."

She suggested that colleges had gone too far in other types of cases, too. In the speech, Ms. DeVos referred to a case at the University of Southern California in which the football team's kicker, Matt Boermeester, [was suspended from school and kicked off the squad](#) after being investigated for physically assaulting his girlfriend. The girlfriend later spoke out in defense of Mr. Boermeester, saying no assault had happened.

In a statement Thursday, the university said it stood by its investigation, and that evidence from multiple witnesses suggested "an act of violence took place that violated our university codes of conduct and Title IX regulations."

Ms. DeVos signaled in July that she was thinking of rewriting the rules, by holding listening sessions with victims, students who had been accused and higher-education officials. Though she announced no specific changes on Thursday, Ms. DeVos did say she would open a public comment period, an administrative step taken before a government agency issues new guidelines.

Any move would be aimed at revising or rescinding a [2011 guidance letter](#) from the [Education Department](#) to college officials across the country. The letter required a tougher response to

campus sexual-assault accusations under Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination in education, and it warned the colleges that federal funding would be at risk if they did not comply.

The letter set out a number of requirements, including having employees trained to handle sexual assault complaints and mandating that the accuser and the accused have equal access to advisers or legal counsel.

Most controversially, it asked schools to adopt a "preponderance of evidence" standard in evaluating accusations, a lower bar than many schools had previously used. In essence, schools would hold accused students responsible if more than 50 percent of the evidence pointed to their guilt. Previously, many universities had required "clear and convincing" evidence to substantiate an accusation, meaning that the claim is highly probable.

Many cases involve alcohol-clouded sexual encounters where only two people were present, contributing to the difficulty of evaluating accusations, which often come down to determining whether a woman was sober enough to give consent.

Critics of the Obama administration's guidance to colleges complained that [it was unfair](#) to use a standard of proof that was far lower than that used in criminal law, since disciplinary actions and expulsions that result from ambiguous sexual encounters can stigmatize young men long into the future, affecting their educational and job prospects. The critics argued that if sexual assault had, in fact, taken place, it should be a matter for the police.

Ms. DeVos appeared to side with this point of view, saying Thursday that "Washington dictated that schools must use the lowest standard of proof."

But victims' groups say that criminal law is the wrong model for colleges, which do not have the investigative and subpoena powers of law enforcement, and that the more aggressive guidance issued by the Obama administration helped make colleges safer for women, correcting a previous imbalance in which accusers were often not taken seriously.

In a statement, the National Women's Law Center said Ms. DeVos's plan to issue new rules to colleges was "a blunt attack on survivors of sexual assault."

"It will discourage schools from taking steps to comply with the law

— just at the moment when they are finally working to get it right," the group said. "And it sends a frightening message to all students: Your government does not have your back if your rights are violated."

Although her speech was short on details of what the administration's new rules might look like, Ms. DeVos mentioned a proposal by the American Bar Association that entails independent three-person panels to adjudicate complaints, and a requirement that campuses provide advisers to both sides; and another proposal by the American College of Trial Lawyers that would shift to the "clear and convincing" standard of proof.

She also mentioned an idea circulated by two lawyers who represent colleges in sexual assault cases that would establish a system of regional centers, possibly nonprofit organizations or arms of the government, to investigate and adjudicate campus sexual misconduct claims.

The prospect of a change in the rules may require colleges to overhaul procedures that are just a few years old. Michael Roth, president of Wesleyan University, said Ms. DeVos's portrayal of the Obama-era guidelines as burdensome to colleges did not reflect his own views or that of other college presidents to whom he has spoken about the issue.

"I remember the times when men, with impunity, would throw their weight around," sexually harassing and assaulting women, Mr. Roth said. "Changing that culture over the last decade, as the Obama administration tried to do, was an enormous contribution."

Mr. Roth acknowledged that disciplinary procedures are imperfect, but he said that men accused of assault at Wesleyan are offered the presumption of innocence, are given access to a counselor, and are shown all relevant evidence pertaining to their case.

But Justin Dillon, a lawyer in Washington who has represented dozens of accused college students, said he believed Ms. DeVos's speech "is being secretly cheered by every university general counsel in the country."

One of his cases involves a University of Virginia law school student whose degree was delayed for a year because of a sexual assault complaint. His lawsuit states that the adjudicator, a retired judge, called it a "very close" case but that she had to rule against him because

of the “preponderance of evidence” standard.

“Fundamentally,” Mr. Dillon said Thursday, “my clients got into this

because they felt strongly they wanted to be part of the fight

against what they saw as unlawful conduct.”

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Editorial : The DeVos Guidance Speech

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

Sept. 7, 2017 7:17 p.m. ET

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos on Thursday gave one of the most important and defining speeches to emerge from the Trump Administration. It deserves to be read in full.

Her subject, long anticipated in the academic community, was the Obama Education Department's 2011 “guidance letter” to all institutions of higher learning on conducting investigations of sexual abuse under the federal education law known as Title IX. As expected, Mrs. DeVos and the head of her civil-rights office, Candice Jackson, intend to replace the current Title IX guidance after a period of public comment. The DeVos speech, however, was about much more than a bureaucratic revision.

Let's review the origins of the 2011 guidance letter. Its nominal purpose was to address unanswered complaints on

campuses by victims of sexual assault—a real problem.

The Obama Education Department's response was to circumvent Congress and neglect normal executive-branch rule-making procedures mandated in the Administrative Procedure Act, such as soliciting public comment. Instead, it simply jammed the policy through by sending out a “Dear Colleague” letter, including an explicit threat that noncomplying schools could lose federal funding.

Mrs. DeVos's speech is a meticulous deconstruction of the damage done when progressive activists like those who populated the Obama Administration believe their ends justify whatever legal and administrative obliteration it takes.

“Rather than engage the public on controversial issues, the (Obama) Department's Office for Civil Rights has issued letters from the desks of unelected and unaccountable political appointees,” Mrs. DeVos said. “Instead of working with schools on behalf of students, the prior administration weaponized the Office for Civil Rights to work

against schools and against students.”

With the original Dear Colleague letter, the Obama Administration introduced a new judicial standard, in which students accused of sexual misconduct could be severely punished based on a mere “preponderance of evidence.” Mrs. DeVos noted that these high-stakes cases—with lifetime consequences for both sides—are brought before a “school administrator who will act as judge and jury.”

The result, unsurprisingly, has been a travesty of injustice, incompetence and inconsistency as schools struggled to comply. Many institutions, often small colleges with limited resources, are now engulfed in lawsuits flowing, again unsurprisingly, from these kangaroo courts.

Secretary DeVos opened her speech with the hope that “every person—even those who feel they disagree—will lend an ear to what I outline today.” It is a faint hope.

Even before she gave the speech, 20 Democratic attorneys general, of all people, wrote a letter warning

against “a rushed, poorly-considered effort to roll back current policies.” After the speech, teachers union president Lily Eskelsen Garcia of the National Education Association said the DeVos proposal to rethink sexual-assault adjudication “offends our collective conscience.”

Well, hers anyway—this from a union that makes it nearly impossible to dismiss incompetent or even rule-breaking teachers.

Mrs. DeVos in her address goes more than the extra mile to include the valid concerns of victims, the accused, their parents, school administrators and what used to be commonly held notions of decency and justice.

The secretary deserves credit for taking on this legal and administrative nightmare, which she inherited from an Administration that specialized in creating them. She deserves support from the academic community in finding a way back to a solution.

Appeared in the September 8, 2017, print edition.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Editorial : Democrats and ‘Dogma’

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

Sept. 7, 2017 7:20 p.m. ET

‘Why is it that so many of us on this side have this very uncomfortable feeling that—you know, dogma and law are two different things. And I think whatever a religion is, it has its own dogma. The law is totally different. And I think in your case, professor, when you read your speeches, the conclusion one draws is that the dogma lives loudly within you, and that's of concern when you come to big issues that large numbers of people have fought for years in this country.’

Thus did California Sen. Dianne Feinstein pronounce on Wednesday that, by virtue of being a faithful Catholic, Amy Barrett, a respected law professor at Notre Dame, may have excluded herself from a federal judgeship. President Trump has nominated Ms. Barrett for the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. But the Democratic obsession with

Ms. Barrett's religion transformed what should have been a routine Senate confirmation hearing into a tour of the mind of the modern secular left.

The ugly implication of Mrs. Feinstein's words is underscored by the context. She deployed them to suggest Ms. Barrett's faith would lead her to substitute her personal beliefs for the law, basing the accusation primarily on a law review article Ms. Barrett wrote in 1998 as a law clerk.

Ms. Barrett and her co-author explicitly reached the opposite conclusion: “Judges cannot—nor should they try to—align our legal system with the Church's moral teaching whenever the two diverge.”

The question addressed by the law review article was what Catholic judges ought to do when they conclude they cannot in good conscience apply the law as written because it clashes with their own moral views. If she was rattled by the question, Sen. Feinstein ought to have been reassured by the

answer Ms. Barrett gave: They should recuse themselves.

David Rivkin, a constitutional litigator, says “the tenor of questions by Democrat Senators seemed designed more to challenge the ideas of Catholic orthodoxy—a subject more fitting for a theological debate than a Senate hearing.”

Proving Mr. Rivkin's point. Sen. Dick Durbin jumped in to demand of Ms. Barrett: “Do you consider yourself an orthodox Catholic?” Does Mr. Durbin understand that he sounds like the Southern Baptist ministers in 1960 who thought Jack Kennedy shouldn't be President because he'd take orders from the pope?

This questioning is part of a broader effort on the left to disqualify people with strong religious views from the public square. Ms. Feinstein's smear about Ms. Barrett's “dogma” dovetails with the left-wing Southern Poverty Law Center's effort to label any outfit that doesn't go along with its agenda a “hate group.”

Sen. Al Franken, the great legal philosopher, wrapped it all up nicely

by accusing Ms. Barrett of having appeared before a “hate” group. He was referring to the Alliance Defending Freedom, a religious liberty outfit that the Southern Poverty Law Center designated a hate group because it adheres to traditional views about human sexuality and marriage.

As for judges imposing dogma over the law, it's worth noting that not all dogmas are religious. Democratic interest groups are explicit in demanding that Democratic judicial nominees be committed to overturning *Citizens United's* defense of free speech while brooking no modification in *Roe v. Wade*.

Let's hope the Senate rejects the bigotry that marred Wednesday's hearing and approves the eminently qualified Ms. Barrett for the Seventh Circuit. The federal bench could use more judges who understand their civic duty as well as Ms. Barrett does.

Appeared in the September 8, 2017, print edition.

Williams : How Not to Run the E.P.A.

Christine Todd Whitman

6-7 minutes

I have been worried about how the Environmental Protection Agency would be run ever since President Trump appointed Scott Pruitt, the former attorney general of Oklahoma, to oversee it. The past few months have confirmed my fears. The agency created by a Republican president 47 years ago to protect the environment and public health may end up doing neither under Mr. Pruitt's direction.

As a Republican appointed by President George W. Bush to run the agency, I can hardly be written off as part of the liberal resistance to the new administration. But the evidence is abundant of the dangerous political turn of an agency that is supposed to be guided by science.

The E.P.A.'s [recent attack on a reporter](#) for The Associated Press and the installation of a political appointee to ferret out grants containing "[the double C-word](#)" are only the latest manifestations of my fears, which mounted with Mr. Pruitt's swift and legally questionable repeals of E.P.A. regulations — actions that pose real and lasting threats to the nation's land, air, water and public health.

Scott Pruitt, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, answering

questions from reporters at the White House in June. Al Drago for The New York Times

All of that is bad enough. But Mr. Pruitt recently unveiled a plan that amounts to a slow-rolling catastrophe in the making: the creation of an antagonistic "[red team](#)" of dissenting scientists to challenge the conclusions reached by thousands of scientists over decades of research on climate change. It will serve only to confuse the public and sets a deeply troubling precedent for policy-making at the E.P.A.

The red-team approach makes sense in the military and in consumer and technology companies, where assumptions about enemy strategy or a competitor's plans are rooted in unknowable human choices. But the basic physics of the climate are well understood. Burning fossil fuels emits carbon dioxide. And carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere. There is no debate about that. The link is as certain as the link between [smoking and cancer](#).

A broad consensus of scientists also warn of the influence of the warming climate on extreme weather events. Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, the enormous wildfires in the Western United States and widespread flooding from monsoons in Southeast Asia are potent reminders of the cost of ignoring climate science.

As a Republican like Mr. Pruitt, I too embrace the promise of the free market and worry about the perils of overregulation. But decisions must be based on reliable science. The red team begins with his politically preferred conclusion that climate change isn't a problem, and it will seek evidence to justify that position. That's the opposite of how science works. True science follows the evidence. The critical tests of peer review and replication ensure that the consensus is sound. Government bases policy on those results. This applies to liberals and conservatives alike.

There are two sides, at least, to most political questions, and a politician's impulse may be to believe that the same holds true for science. Certainly, there are disputes in science. But on the question of climate change, the divide is stark. On one side is the overwhelming consensus of thousands of scientists at universities, research centers and the government who publish in peer-reviewed literature, are cited regularly by fellow scientists and are certain that humans are contributing to climate change.

On the other side is a tiny minority of contrarians who [publish very little by comparison, are rarely cited](#) in the scientific literature and are often funded [by fossil fuel](#) interests, and whose books are published, [most often, by](#) special interest groups. That Mr. Pruitt seeks to use the power of the E.P.A. to elevate those who have already lost the argument

is shameful, and the only outcome will be that the public will know less about the science of climate change than before.

The red-team idea is a waste of the government's time, energy and resources, and a slap in the face to fiscal responsibility and responsible governance. Sending scientists on a wild-goose chase so that Mr. Pruitt, Rick Perry, the energy secretary, who has endorsed this approach, and President Trump can avoid acknowledging and acting on the reality of climate change is simply unjustifiable. And truly, it ignores and distracts from the real imperative: developing solutions that create good jobs, grow our economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Policy should always be rooted in unbiased science. The E.P.A. is too important to treat like a reality TV show. People's lives and our country's resources are at stake. Mr. Pruitt should respect his duty to the agency's mission, end the red team and call on his agency's scientists to educate him. No doubt they're willing and eager to impart the knowledge they've dedicated their lives to understanding.

If this project goes forward, it should be treated for what it is: a shameful attempt to confuse the public into accepting the false premise that there is no need to regulate fossil fuels.

Editorial : Another cyberattack alarm is going off. We need to start paying attention.

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

4-5 minutes

FOR THE second time this year, evidence has surfaced of a serious potential threat to electrical and industrial systems from cyberattack. In June, a computer worm [spread across the globe](#) that caused systems that were managing oil companies, airline flights and more to lock up, and there was a [report](#) that hackers were penetrating a company operating nuclear power plants. Now, a security firm, Symantec, has [discovered](#) a wave of malware called Dragonfly in Europe and the United States that could put bad actors in position to switch off the lights.

The firm said that malware by that name had been around since 2011

but was dormant for a while before reemerging — Symantec calls it Dragonfly 2.0 — with a "distinct increase in activity" this year. The attackers are using familiar tools, such as "spearphishing" emails with attachments reeking with dangerous code, including an attachment resembling a benign invitation to a New Year's Eve party. Once opened, however, the attachments would leak the victims' network credentials to a server outside the company. The attackers also used other measures: "watering holes," fake websites designed to attract visitors with common interests; "Trojans," which look like legitimate software but contain malicious code; and fake warnings to update Adobe Flash Player, which, when activated, would instead install malware.

This gave the attackers access to networks to gather intelligence, plot

more destructive actions and steal additional credentials. The ability of a computer worm to trigger physical destruction is not fantasy, amply demonstrated by the [Stuxnet malware](#) used by the United States and Israel to interfere with centrifuge machines that were part of Iran's nuclear weapons program. [According to Symantec](#), the bad actors behind Dragonfly 2.0 have entered electric utility networks in Turkey, Switzerland and the United States numerous times and they "may be entering into a new phase," exploring how they can throw the switches on operational systems. What Symantec found "most concerning" was that the intruders were taking screenshots of the layout of the operational systems — a road map for a possible return.

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The company said the architects of the Dragonfly campaign are an "accomplished attack group" and highly experienced but did not otherwise identify them. However, it is known that Ukraine has [suffered](#) power blackouts caused by cyberattacks that it blames on Russia. Could Russia also be probing the U.S. electrical grid? Or another nation? Wired magazine [quoted](#) Eric Chien of Symantec as saying of the latest discovery, "There's a difference between being a step away from conducting sabotage and actually being in a position to conduct sabotage. ... We're now talking about on-the-ground technical evidence this could happen in the U.S., and there's nothing left standing in the way except the motivation of some actor out in the world."

Electric and industrial operators in the United States have been building defenses against

cyberattacks for some time. But the latest disclosure should serve as yet another alarm that cyberattacks and

intrusions are not just about stealing data or emails. They can lead to real-world damage.



Zakaria : Stop being afraid of more government. It's exactly what we need.

<https://www.facebook.com/fareedzakaria>

6-7 minutes

Members of the Texas National Guard distribute water and emergency meals. (Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

Seeing the devastating effects of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma and of wildfires out West, one cannot help but think about the crucial role that government plays in our lives. But while we accept, even celebrate, the role of government in the wake of such disasters, we are largely blind to the need for government to mitigate these kinds of crises in the first place.

Ever since President Ronald Reagan, much of the United States has embraced an ideological framework claiming that government is the source of our problems. [Reagan famously quipped](#), "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government, and I'm here to help."

Reagan argued for a retreat from the vision of an activist state and advocated instead a strictly limited role for government, one dedicated to core functions such as national defense. Outside of these realms, he believed, government should simply encourage the private sector and market forces.

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Reagan's worldview grew out of the 1970s — a period marked by fiscal mismanagement, government overreach and slowing growth. It might have been the right attitude for its time. But it has stayed in place for decades as a rigid ideology, even though we have entered a new age in which America has faced a very different set of challenges, often desperately requiring an activist government. This has been a bipartisan abdication of responsibility.

For decades now, we have watched as stagnant wage growth for 90 percent of Americans has been coupled with supercharged growth for the richest few, leading to widening inequality on a scale not seen since the Gilded Age. It has been assumed that the federal government could do nothing about this expanding gap, despite much evidence to the contrary.

We have watched China enter the global trade system and take advantage of its access to Western markets and capital, while still maintaining a massively controlled internal economy and pursuing predatory trade practices. And we have assumed that the U.S. government can't do anything about it, because any action would be protectionist.

We watched as financial institutions took on more and more risk, with

other people's money, effectively gambling in a heads-I-win, tails-you-lose system. Any talk of regulation was seen as socialist. Even after the system blew up, causing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the calls soon came to deregulate the financial sector once again because, after all, government regulation is obviously bad.

In this same period, technology companies have grown in size and scale, often using first-mover advantage to establish quasi-monopolies and quash competition. The digital economy was supposed to empower the individual entrepreneur, but it has instead become one in which four or five companies utterly dominate the global landscape. A new technology company today aspires simply to be bought by Google or Facebook. And we assume that the federal government should have had no role in shaping this vast new economy. That would be activist and bad. Better for government to simply observe the process, like a passive spectator watching a new Netflix drama.

And then there is climate. These hurricanes have not been caused by global warming, but their frequency and intensity have likely been magnified by climate change. Particularly calamitous hurricanes have their names retired, and in the last 20 years there have been [about as many names retired](#) as in the preceding 40 years. [California has](#)

[had](#) more than 6,400 wildfires this year. [The 17 hottest years on record](#) have all taken place in the past two decades.

And yet, we have been wary of too much government activism. This is true not just in tackling climate change but in other areas that have contributed to the storms' destructive power. [Houston chose](#) not to have any kind of zoning that limited development, even in flood-prone areas, paving over thousands of acres of wetlands that used to absorb rainwater and curb flooding. The chemical industry has been able to persuade Washington to exercise a light regulatory touch, so there is limited protection against fires and contamination, something that was [made abundantly clear](#) in the past couple of weeks. And now, of course, low-tax and low-regulation Texas has come to the federal government, hat in hand, asking for [more than \\$150 billion](#) to rebuild its devastated state.

We are living in an age of revolutions, natural and human, that are buffeting individuals and communities. We need government to be more than a passive observer of these trends and forces. It needs to actively shape and manage them. Otherwise, the ordinary individual will be powerless. I imagine that this week, most people in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico would be delighted to hear the words "I'm from the government, and I'm here to help."



Kean and Hamilton : Our war on terror is a war of ideologies

Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, Opinion contributors Published 3:15 a.m. ET Sept. 8, 2017

6-8 minutes

Though the U.S. has put ISIS on the defensive, it still struggles to effectively combat its dangerous ideologies.

9/11 memorial exhibit at the Lincoln Memorial on Sept. 7, 2017. (Photo: Sait Serkan Gurbuz, AP)

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks 16 years ago, herculean exertions by U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies have prevented another mass casualty

attack on our soil, and U.S. military and intelligence operations have [killed Osama bin Laden](#) and thousands of hardened terrorists overseas.

Despite these successes, each time we have made apparent progress our adversary only moves, morphs and grows, and we cannot claim to be close to winning against this persistent threat.

The answer for long-term defeat lies in understanding and winning the struggle of ideas. Defeating an ideology is hard, but not impossible: By the end of the Cold War, communism was utterly discredited as a governing philosophy. The U.S. and its allies must wage a similar battle against the ideas that animate Islamist terrorists, a battle

that will be won only when the ideology that spurs many to violence today falls only on deaf ears tomorrow.

More: [Fading white evangelicals have made a desperate end-of-life bargain with Trump](#)

More: [5 Trump illusions about Middle East peace and Jared Kushner's mission impossible](#)

Last year, more than 25,000 people died in roughly [11,000 terrorist attacks](#) in 104 countries. Compare that with the 7,000 deaths in fewer than [2,000 attacks in 2001](#) (with nearly half those deaths occurring [on a single day](#)) and it is clear that the threat from terrorism has grown despite the U.S. government's many post-9/11 efforts.

That relatively few of the more recent terrorism-related deaths have occurred in the USA should be of little consolation. Global terrorism has created a humanitarian and migration crisis — the political, economic and social cost of which America and its partners will be shouldering for years to come.

Now, with the United States and its allies on the brink of militarily vanquishing yet another terrorist group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, we must avoid the temptation of confusing the defeat of one brutal terrorist organization with victory against terrorism.

As we commemorate the anniversary of the worst terror attack on U.S. soil, policymakers should pause to reflect on what it

would actually mean to defeat Islamist terrorism, and what a comprehensive strategy to achieve that goal would look like.

The basic challenge is that terrorist ranks are being replenished almost as quickly as the military can decimate them. In 2014, the CIA estimated [ISIS](#) had at least 20,000 members. Since then, U.S. forces claim to have [killed 60,000 ISIS fighters](#), but in 2016, according to the State Department, the terrorist group was still [15,000 strong](#).

As long as jihad maintains its overpowering appeal, even in the face of almost certain death, then terrorist movements will persist. ISIS will live on, even as its caliphate lies crushed amid the rubble of Mosul, Iraq, and Raqqa, Syria. Al-Qaeda will reorganize and rebuild. New groups and new generations of terrorists will continue to emerge.

Defeating terrorism must entail weakening this magnetic attraction. To do this, we must discredit and supplant the jihadist ideology that legitimizes and incites people to violence.

Policymakers of both parties have long recognized this. “The murderous ideology of the Islamic radicals,” President George W. [Bush declared in 2005](#), “is the great challenge of our new century.” Four years later, President Obama called for “rolling back the violent ideologies that people of all faiths

reject.” Most recently, [President Trump argued](#) that a peaceful “future can only be achieved through defeating terrorism and the ideology that drives it.”

More: [President Trump puts Pakistan on notice in Afghanistan speech](#)

POLICING THE USA: A look at [race, justice, media](#)

Yet the U.S. has struggled to make combating terrorist ideology an effective piece of its counterterrorism policies. If the current administration is to succeed where previous ones have failed, it should craft its policies keeping in mind the following principles first articulated by the 9/11 Commission and now reaffirmed by a [Bipartisan Policy Center review](#) of U.S. counterterrorism efforts:

- The threat is terrorism, not any one terrorist organization. We have fought al-Qaeda and we have fought ISIS; neither of these groups, nor any other, is the sole manifestation of the enemy the United States seeks to defeat. They are merely the embodiment of an ideological ambition, one whose banner can be taken up anywhere, anytime, by anyone so long as it is being promoted unchecked.

- Do not confuse terrorists’ means with their ends. As stunning as the violence that terrorists perpetrate may be, it is what they hope to achieve through their bloody tactics that attracts recruits and truly threatens U.S. interests. Islamist terrorism aspires to create a caliphate that unites the Muslim world under a fundamentalist version of Islamic law.
- While the majority of Muslims reject the jihadis’ violent methods, a non-trivial portion of the Muslim world nevertheless shares this ultimate objective. Jihadi groups heavily rely on the groundwork laid by non-violent Islamist groups. The explicit call to violence is not the sole reason for jihad’s appeal; focusing on it alone will not suffice to silence terror’s siren song.
- Supplant Islamist ideology with positive alternative visions of the future. Part of the strong appeal of Islamism — which is separate and distinct from the Muslim faith — is the absence of a strong competing ideology. For it to lose its

appeal, it must be replaced by something more appealing.

- Prepare for a generational struggle. The damage that even a single terrorist act can wreak compels policymakers to focus on the most immediate and visible terrorist threats. The limited time horizon of most elected officials only reinforces this focus on short-term gains in the fight against terrorism. Ideologies, however, cannot be defeated in the short term. As in the Cold War, countering an ideology will require us to invest in programs and partnerships whose benefits might not be immediately visible.

The terrorists’ ideas, repugnant as they are, still attract far too many young Muslims to their ranks. We can, and must, do better in the struggle against their ideology.

Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton served as chairman and vice chairman, respectively, of the [9/11 Commission](#) and are co-chairs of the [Bipartisan Policy Center’s National Security Program](#).