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STORM DEBRIS.



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FRANCE – EUROPE



It’s official: Los Angeles to host the 2028 Olympics, Paris gets 2024 Games (online)

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

4-5 minutes

IOC President Thomas Bach is

flanked by Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti as he ensures the 2024 and 2028 Summer Olympics both have homes. (Buda Mendes/Getty Images)

Calling it a “win-win-win” situation, International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach officially awarded the 2024 and 2028 Olympic Games to Paris and Los Angeles, respectively, at the IOC Session in Lima, Peru, on Wednesday.

The announcement was far from a surprise. In July, the L.A. Olympic bid committee had agreed to wait to host the Games until 2028, which made Paris the only option for 2024. With fewer cities vying to host the Games as costs connected to the event surge, the IOC said at the

time it would award the 2028 Games simultaneously.

"Today is an incredibly special day for two great cities here on the stage," United States Olympic Committee CEO Scott Blackmun said Wednesday, congratulating his French counterparts on their "great work on behalf of Paris 2024."

"We all look forward to a spectacular Games in your beautiful city," Blackmun added, before crediting L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti and L.A. 2028 Chairman Casey Wasserman for making the California city's bid an attractive one to the IOC.

"These two gentlemen never gave up on L.A.'s Olympic dreams — and

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Los Angeles Is Officially Awarded the 2028 Olympics (online)

Matthew
Futterman

3-4 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 2:30 p.m. ET

Los Angeles officially won the rights to organize the 2028 Summer Olympics Wednesday, completing an unprecedented arrangement the International Olympic Committee struck earlier this summer to name the next two summer Games sites at once.

The deal, overwhelmingly approved by the IOC at its meeting in Lima, awarded the 2024 Summer Games to Paris and the 2028 version of the event to Los Angeles.

The vote brings the Summer Games back to the U.S. for the first time

thank goodness they didn't," he said.

Los Angeles began its quest to host the Games in 2014, but it was originally beat out by Boston. However, when Boston dropped out because of cost concerns, the USOC decided to put forth Los Angeles as the United States' prime option in 2015. While several L.A. residents objected to hosting the Games, which the city previously hosted in 1932 and 1984, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously backed the bid. An IOC promise to advance at least \$1.8 billion to the city with the goal of increasing participation and access to youth sports programs appeared to sweeten the deal for city officials.

since 1996; the last Winter Games in the U.S. were held in Salt Lake City in 2002. Los Angeles previously hosted the Summer Games in 1932 and 1984. London is the only other city to host the Olympics three times.

"A Games on home soil is an extremely special opportunity that will allow us to grow and serve the Olympic and Paralympic movements for decades to come," said Scott Blackmun, chief executive of the USOC. We couldn't have found a better partner than Los Angeles."

The Paris-Los Angeles deal came after months of discussions among the parties and followed decisions by officials in Hamburg, Rome and Budapest to drop their bids for the 2024 games amid political opposition.

[L.A. Olympic bid committee agrees to wait, giving Paris the 2024 Games]

Sports Break newsletter

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Garcetti, one of the leading negotiators in the process, called the offer "too good to pass up" at the time.

On Wednesday, Garcetti appeared to still hold that position while speaking to the crowd in Lima.

"L.A. is a city where the Games are not a barrier to making progress; we know that they are an accelerating force to re-envisioning a better city

and a better world in the days ahead as we welcome you back to the City of Angels," he said, mentioning his 5-year-old daughter, Maya, who will be 16 when the Olympics kick off in the city in 2028.

"I will see her and my city grow up," he said, "with new rail lines and a reborn airport, and the Olympics will help spur our bold vision to build a city of opportunity, no matter what neighborhood you live in."

Once it became clear that Paris was the preferred choice for the IOC for 2024, leaders of the Los Angeles bid and officials with the U.S. Olympic Committee signaled they would step back from the race against Paris in exchange for securing hosting rights for 2028.

Usually the IOC awards hosting rights to the Olympics seven years ahead of the Games. However, IOC President Thomas Bach did not want to lose either Paris or Los Angeles as a potential host city, and both cities and their respective national Olympic committees had indicated they were unlikely to bid again if they lost the current campaign. This was the third bid from Paris since 2000. New York and Chicago lost races to organize the 2012 and 2016 Summer Olympics

Los Angeles will receive about \$200 million from the IOC to sustain the work of its organizing committee, LA28, for an extra four years and to support youth sports in the region.

By securing Paris and Los Angeles, Bach has bought the IOC time to create a new system for awarding the event that will avoid the embarrassment of having so many cities abandon their efforts and leaving the IOC with few choices for host sites.

The IOC will have to address the situation sooner rather than later. A host city for the 2026 Winter Games must be chosen by the end of 2019. Innsbruck, Austria would like to be the host city but a referendum later this year could upset those plans, and enthusiasm elsewhere has been tepid.

Chicago Tribune : Win-win: Paris awarded '24 Olympics, LA gets '28

Eddie Pells

7-8 minutes

The tears welling in the Paris mayor's eyes told the story one way. The words the Los Angeles mayor spoke told it another.

This was one of those rare Olympic moments when everyone walked away a winner.

Paris for 2024. Los Angeles for 2028. And the International Olympic Committee for transforming its unruly, tension-filled and sometimes corrupt bidding process into a history-making, two-city victory that secures the future of the Games for the next 11 years.

"This is a pretty radical revolution today," LA mayor Eric Garcetti said. "Usually, we have two or three cities crying in a corner, and one glorious victory. In this world, there are

enough losers today, enough people who go after dreams to have them crushed. Today, we model something that can be different."

Different, as in the first time the IOC has granted two Summer Olympics at once. And different, in that there was no need for a secret ballot or any last-minute, back-room deal making. This result came after a year's worth of scrambling by IOC president Thomas Bach, who had only the two bidders left for the original prize, 2024, and couldn't afford to see either lose.

There was no drama — the decision had been locked in for more than a month. But to say there was no emotion would not be true.

After Bach called for a show of hands to approve the dual award, dozens of arms shot skyward from the audience; moments later, Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo stood next to

the IOC president dabbing tears from her eyes.

"It was a very strong, very emotive moment," Hidalgo said. "We are all united. Altogether, it's very special for us, because in France, and in other countries, that's not usual."

Moments after the vote, Bach handed cards with the winners' names on them to Hidalgo and Garcetti. One read "Paris 2024," and the other "LA 2028." It was a mere formality, yet both mayors held them aloft with wide smiles on their faces.

Both cities will host their third Olympics.

The Paris Games will come on the 100th anniversary of its last turn. That milestone, plus the fact that Paris has been on the losing end of these bids for 1992, 2008 and 2012, would have made the French capital the sentimental favorite had only 2024 been up for grabs.

Los Angeles moved to 2028, and those Olympics will halt a stretch of 32 years without a Summer Games in the United States. In exchange for the compromise, LA will grab an extra \$300 million or more that could help offset the uncertainties that lie ahead over an 11-year wait instead of seven.

"We're ready now," Garcetti insisted, speaking of a city that has virtually every sports venue already in place.

Without any nail-biting conclusion to see, the post-vote celebration at the Eiffel Tower was a sparsely attended near rain-out. Los Angeles held a small event with Olympians Nastia Liukin and John Naber standing beneath the blazing Olympic cauldron at the famous LA Coliseum, but it was mostly media, and no fans.

Meanwhile, in the Lima exhibition hall, the California-cool LA delegation wore sneakers to the

presentation, and was going to forego neckties, too, before thinking better of it.

In this never-before-seen style of selection, Bach asked the 94 IOC members to allow the real contests to play out at the Olympics themselves and transform the vote from a game of sorts into a pure business decision.

It wasn't such a bad idea considering the news still seeping out about a bid scandal involving a Brazilian IOC member's alleged vote-selling to bring the 2016 Olympics to Rio de Janeiro.

More than that, Bach needed to ensure stability for his brand.

The public in many cities is no longer keen to approve blank checks for bid committees and governments that have to come up with the millions simply to bid for the Olympics, then billions more to stage them if they win.

That reality hit hard when three of the original five bidders for 2024 — Rome, Hamburg, Germany, and Budapest, Hungary — dropped out,

and the U.S. Olympic Committee had to pull the plug on its initial candidate, Boston, due to lack of public support.

"This is a solution to an awkward problem," said longtime IOC member Dick Pound of Canada.

It was solved by Paris and Los Angeles, two cities with a storied tradition of Olympic hosting and an apparent understanding of Bach's much-touted reform package, known as Agenda 2020. It seeks to streamline the Games, most notably by eliminating billion-dollar stadiums and infrastructure projects that have been underused, if used at all, once the Olympics leave town.

Can they deliver?

Paris will have the traditional seven-year time frame to answer that.

Only one totally new venue is planned — a swimming and diving arena to be built near the Stade de France, which will serve as the Olympic stadium. In all, the projected cost of new venues and upgrades to others is \$892 million.

To be sure, Paris already has much to work with. Beach volleyball will be played near the Eiffel Tower; cycling will finish at the Arc de Triomphe; equestrian will be held at the Chateau de Versailles. And what would an Olympics be without some water-quality issues? There will be pressure to clean up the River Seine, which is where open-water and triathlon will be held.

Los Angeles, meanwhile, will get an extra four years that Garcetti insists is hardly needed. Los Angeles proposed a \$5.3 billion budget for 2024 (to be adjusted for 2028) that included infrastructure, operational costs — everything. A big number, indeed, though it must be put into perspective: Earlier this summer, organizers in Tokyo estimated their cost for the 2020 Games at \$12.6 billion.

Traffic could be a problem — it almost always is in LA — but the city will be well along in its multi-decade, multibillion-dollar transit upgrade by 2028. Those with long memories recall free-flowing highways the last time the Olympics came to town, as locals either left the city or heeded

warnings to use public transportation or stay home.

Those 1984 Games essentially saved the Olympic movement after a decade of terror, red ink and a boycott sullied the brand and made hosting a burden. The city points to its Olympic legacy to explain a nearly unheard-of 83 percent approval rating in a self-commissioned poll — not an insignificant factor when the IOC picks a place to bring its crown-jewel event.

Along with Paris, LA is stepping in again to try to change the conversation about what hosting the Olympics can really be.

"I think it's a very positive message about the value of the Olympic movement and the value of the Olympic Games," said Sergei Bubka, the Olympic champion pole vaulter, who is an honorary member of the IOC. "I think we're going in the right direction."

NPR : Dual Olympic Bids Approved For Paris And Los Angeles : The Two-Way

Jason Slotkin

3-4 minutes

Paris and Los Angeles have been awarded the honor of hosting the 2024 and 2028 Olympic games, respectively. Pictured above: IOC President Thomas Bach (center), Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo (left), and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garrett. **Martin Mejia/AP** [hide caption](#)

toggle caption

Martin Mejia/AP

Paris and Los Angeles have been awarded the honor of hosting the 2024 and 2028 Olympic games, respectively. Pictured above: IOC President Thomas Bach (center), Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo (left), and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garrett.

Martin Mejia/AP

It's official, the 2024 Olympics are coming to Paris — and four years later they'll be in Los Angeles in the first "double allocation" of the Olympic contests in modern history.

The International Olympic Committee announced it had approved the allocations — the result of a three-way deal — by vote Wednesday.

"This historic double allocation is a 'win-win-win' situation for the city of Paris, the city of Los Angeles and the IOC," said IOC President Thomas Bach following the vote to approve the decision.

The Associated Press reports that Bach declared the vote unanimous after a "show of hands" count raised no objections.

The vote, in addition to setting the Olympic schedule for 11 years, breaks the IOC's tradition of selecting host cities one at a time. Initially agreed to over the summer, the three-way deal followed an exodus of other bidders for the 2024 games, reported Ben Bergen, of member station KPCC, in June.

"Few governments want to risk the billions in cost overruns that have become synonymous with recent Olympics. That's why the IOC is considering awarding dual bids," said Bergen at time.

And once the IOC was looking at just two bidders, as NPR's Tom Goldman reported, it was down to a matter "of who'd get what."

"Paris said it didn't want to host in 2028. 2024 will be the 100th anniversary of the 1924 Paris

summer games. ... LA sent signals that it was open to going second," Tom told Morning Edition last month.

Los Angeles, host city to the 1932 and 1984 summer games, conceded the 2024 Olympics to Paris, Tom goes on, and has been promised \$180 million by the IOC for doing that.

The AP adds this will be the third Olympics for both cities, and the Los Angeles games will be the first Summer Olympiad in the U.S. since 1996.

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Osgood: The Olympics used to feature art competitions. Let's bring them back. (online)

By Miles Osgood

12-15 minutes

A representation of the Olympic rings are displayed in the Olympic Village in Rio de Janeiro. (Leo Correa/Associated Press)

By Miles Osgood September 13 at 1:51 PM

Miles Osgood is a PhD student in English at Harvard University.

The International Olympic Committee has finally officially announced the sites for both the 2024 and the 2028 Summer Games, with Paris hosting seven years from now, followed by Los Angeles.

Both cities will get to boast of their legacies as third-time Olympic hosts. But what you probably won't

hear is that Paris and Los Angeles also have a special place in Olympic cultural history as the two most successful organizers of the long-lost Olympic art competitions.

Paris and Los Angeles have an opportunity to bring back the art competitions that were once fundamental to the Games. From 1912 to 1948, sculptors, writers, painters, architects and composers could win Olympic medals. Each

Olympic summer, host cities displayed sport-themed submissions from around the world in public galleries, as international juries awarded gold, silver and bronze in five major categories.

Act Four newsletter

The intersection of culture and politics.

The latest Olympiads, from Beijing to Rio, have produced spectacular

contributions to the “Cultural Program” (the artistic tradition that replaced the contests), but such celebrations miss what the Olympics can be at their best: not a showcase of regional culture but an encounter of international cultures.

The 2024 and 2028 Games should welcome new artistic Dream Teams. Acclaimed contemporary sports novels such as C.E. Morgan’s “The Sport of Kings” and Aravind Adiga’s “Selection Day” could go head-to-head. Or we could see what an updated music competition inspires from such noted sports fans as Jay-Z, Elton John and Shakira. And although the Olympics originally excluded entries in dance, photography and film, new competitions could expand to include films that are already contenders at the Oscars or Sundance, or to competitors in brand-new categories, such as sports journalism or half-time choreography.

It’s easy to make sport (so to speak) of this idea; the Olympics seem to have survived just fine without the

arts competitions. But Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Games, considered this “Pentathlon of the Muses” so integral to his Olympic revival movement that he claimed on multiple occasions that it marked the only difference between Olympiads and regular sports championships. In other words, the Olympic art competitions once made the Olympics *the Olympics*.

Commentators have often portrayed the old competitions as a failure or farce: Winning entries were either forgettable (such as the overblown “Ode to Sport” by Coubertin himself) or political (such as the suspicious selections for Berlin 1936). This dismissive sentiment has a long history. English poet Robert Graves called the contests a “bad joke” in private correspondence after his poem lost in 1924. But Graves also fibbed, awarding himself a bronze he never won.

However comical the contests were, Graves was hung up on them; he wanted to be in on the joke. There is something undeniably alluring about

the prospect of an Olympic medal—even a bronze in literature. And in 1924, Paris lent distinction to the Olympic arts as no city had done before, advertising a list of 150 celebrity judges, such as Béla Bartók, Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel for music and Maurice Maeterlinck, Paul Valéry and Edith Wharton for literature.

Never mind that many of these invited judges probably declined; the mere possibility that they would be evaluating the entries was enough to persuade Graves to compete, along with other rising stars such as Henry de Montherlant, Jack B. Yeats and Paul Landowski. As the summer progressed, the Parisian avant-garde got in on the action: Cocteau, Picasso and Chanel presented a sports ballet for the Olympic theatrical season, and Russian expats threw an “Olympic Ball” with performances by Tristan Tzara and Foujita.

After Paris elevated the Olympic arts, Los Angeles made them global. The 1932 Games in Los Angeles featured more than 1,100 artworks

from more than 30 national teams—including, for the first time, Japan, Turkey and half a dozen Latin American countries. The exhibition, which attracted nearly 400,000 visitors, was the biggest and most international that the artistic “Pentathlon” would ever have. It was so big, in fact, that the competition’s most famous artist, the German architect Walter Gropius, was largely lost and forgotten in the mix.

Paris and Los Angeles proved that the Olympic art competitions had promise, and they can do it again. We might mark the words of Thornton Wilder, who served as literary judge for the Los Angeles Games in 1932. He saw, then, that the Olympic arts still had a ways to go. “But,” he wrote, “if we continue encouraging them . . . we may be able to build up a tradition that will call forth some splendid work.” That deserves another shot.



The Education of Emmanuel Macron

Benjamin Haddad

10-13 minutes

Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, would surely have preferred to kick off the most important month of his young administration in a less precarious position. Last week, he unveiled his plans to reform France’s notoriously rigid labor market to grant more flexibility to small companies to directly negotiate some aspects of their contracts with employees, rather than involving the government, as was previously the case. His ability to take on one of the most radioactive issues in French politics, a reform he has repeatedly called his priority, will set the tone for the rest of his five-year term.

There is no serious institutional hurdle standing in Macron’s way. He boasts a large majority in the National Assembly, made up largely of novice lawmakers who pledged to support his platform during the campaign. They have granted him the authority to bypass parliamentary debate to pass these measures. He has also already received support from two of the three major labor unions.

Yet nothing will come easy for Macron. The Confederacy General of Labor, once France’s largest left-wing worker’s union, held a strike on Tuesday, while the far left Jean-Luc Mélenchon has called for his supporters to take the streets on the

23rd. Both are protesting the free-market orientation of Macron’s labor reforms. More problematic for Macron, though, is the 22-point drop in his popularity rating over the summer. At 40 percent, he is less popular than his two predecessors, Nicolas Sarkozy and Francois Hollande, at the same point in their first terms.

While the initial enthusiasm that drove Macron to victory—and that encouraged me to work as a U.S. representative for his campaign—has faded, there’s little to justify the widespread anger against him. Something deeper is at work. As a Frenchman living in Washington witnessing the rise of Donald Trump first hand, I came to see that, at heart, Macron’s fall reveals the profound challenges that moderate liberals face in a polarized political climate. As he pursues his reforms, he is also trying to reshape French politics, bringing together a coalition of reformists from both sides of the political aisle, elected with center-left votes but governing with a mostly center-right cabinet. But he will have trouble building a lasting base if he is seen only as a moderate technocrat—a fate he escaped during the campaign. His success or failure to hold the center in the face of populists may well shape the fate of liberals across Europe.

Macron’s political gamble succeeded, in part, because of the unpopularity of his chief opponents, the scandal-marred Francois Fillon of the right-wing Republicans party

and the divisive Marine Le Pen of the National Front. More importantly, beyond his policy platform, he captured much of the anti-establishment anger sweeping France (and indeed, the world). In January, a vast majority of French voters felt their political leaders were “corrupt”; 49 percent wanted a “strongman that wouldn’t have to worry about parliament or elections.” He pledged to run against the failures of both traditional parties, and was well-positioned to do so: At the age of 39, he had never run for office, and built a party from scratch. Only five percent of the candidates he endorsed were incumbents—most had never run for office.

Following his victory, Macron weathered several early controversies—some more partisan than others, including the widely publicized resignation of the armed forces chief over proposed defense budget cuts, to his desire to grant official first-lady status to his wife. (He appeared to be trying to afford her a favored status after campaigning against such privileges, leading to disingenuous charges of favoritism and elitism.) He’s also been cast as controlling and overbearing. Paradoxically mocked for his desire to be a “Jupiter”—remote and mysterious, letting cabinet ministers deal with day-to-day policy squabbles—he is acting in precisely the opposite way from the Roman god. Instead, the Jupiterian Macron appears to be all-too-human: Perhaps because of his temperament, or because the media

cycle dictates it, his communication style is frenetic, and he tends towards micromanagement—just like his predecessors.

But Macron is no failure. In addition to getting new candidates elected, he and his allies in parliament successfully passed a bill that sought to make France’s politics more transparent, and roll back the conflicts of interest that have poisoned the country’s institutions for decades, by imposing stricter controls on parliamentary spending. Furthermore, the inexperienced president’s first steps in the international arena, especially his handling of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, were largely hailed as successes. Now with his labor-market reforms, Macron continues to execute on his campaign promises.

Yet it’s easier to campaign on youthful liberalism than it is to hold together an enthusiastic new coalition while governing as a moderate reformer. Candidate Macron positioned himself as the direct challenger to the right-wing populist Le Pen, arguing that the real issues shaping the French political debate—free-market reform, Europe, globalization—transcended an obsolete right-left divide. In such an open versus closed contest, he was the liberal, pro-European reformer. He did not shy from defending the European Union, a rarity in French politics, especially in a time of rising euroskepticism.

On the campaign trail, Macron used Brexit to argue that a tired old defense of the EU on the basis of its costs and benefits simply won't work in the face of its opponents. On the one side, David Cameron defended his deal with the EU as a balanced one that would allow Britain to remain in the single market while preserving opt-outs like the euro or Schengen, without ever actually making the case for Europe itself; on the other, Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage, and UKIP, argued for the basic freedom and independence for Britons. The former, with its managerial technocratic insistence that populists and their ideas just "don't work," will always lose in the face of the latter's blunter message.

Macron has recognized that a defense of European identity must be synonymous with a defense of French identity. Rather than playing it safe by shying away from these themes, he argued that liberal Europeans have abandoned the fight, and ran a very ideologically, unabashedly pro-European campaign, complete with EU flags flying at his rallies. He won because he combined some elements of populism while discarding the toxic ideas often associated with it.

I chose to work for Macron's campaign specifically because he was the first liberal to shape his

political message as a direct response to the rise of populists, in a way Remainers or Democrats hadn't. Along the way, he convinced many moderates like me that a centrist campaign didn't have to be boring or elitist. As such, he captured the center of gravity of French public opinion and stunned the Socialists and center-right Republicans who had shared power for half a century. Macron will succeed if he can durably reshape French political identity and create a strong center—that is to say, if he can convince liberals from both left and right to join him in a political force against extremists.

But it's unclear whether voters will follow him down this path. After all, he captured only 24 percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential election, and benefited from the collapse of the Socialist party after Hollande's unsuccessful term. As the Socialist share in parliament fell from 295 to 31 seats, orphaned center-left voters turned to him. And yet, Macron's cabinet tilts to the right, with a prime minister, economics minister, and budget minister, poached from the right-wing Republicans party. His first economic measures, from tax cuts to reduction in housing subsidies and labor market reforms, are drawn from the center-right. Macron may see all this as a way of building a

new liberal pole that unites center-left and center-right. But disgruntled voters might see his triangulation as a betrayal.

Macron seems cautious not to appear as a mere technocrat. In a recent long interview with *Le Point*, he criticized France's "flavorless democratic life" and the "collective stupidity that was the belief in the end of history." For decades, France's mainstream parties had alternated strategies against the insurgent National Front. Some, like most of the left, virtually ignored issues like immigration, even treating them as taboo; some on the right, like Sarkozy, tried co-opting some of its rhetoric. All along, political elites of both sides failed to craft an alternative political narrative to the National Front and Le Pen's discourse of national sovereignty and French culture, and kept ceding ground to it, both in intellectual debate and at the ballot box. In the interview, Macron called for a renewed sense of "political heroism," and for French politicians to reconnect with the country's "historical narrative." What all this means in practice is less clear.

It is perhaps on the European stage that Macron can reignite his presidency. In Athens last week, he defended a concept of European sovereignty that would protect

citizens, economically and culturally and secure its border, seizing once again on the themes that have made populists successful but without their toxic nationalism.

So far, Macron's poor ratings have not worn down his determination to pass his reform agenda—the country doesn't have a choice. The labor reforms will bring much needed flexibility to the labor market to lower an unemployment rate that just recently got under 10 percent, and still hits close to 24 percent of youth under 25. But as large as his natural base may be, it is a fragile one, and voters may be tempted to revert to the Republicans and Socialists, or turn to the populist far-left and far-right. Mélenchon of the far left is emerging as the key opponent.

The lesson for Macron, then, is that governing from the center does not produce the same enthusiasm and vitality as a start-up campaign. Holding his majority will be a challenge, and attests to the scope of his political gambit when he started his run a year ago: reforming France while at the same time reshaping its politics. Can he create anything like "heroic" centrism? That will be his challenge. Liberals across Europe will watch closely.



Why Macron Doesn't Fear France's Unions

@pegobry More stories by Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry

6-8 minutes

Europe

Traditionally united against any reforms, France's unions are now less radical and more divided.

by

September 14, 2017, 5:36 AM EDT

Not the threat they once were.

Photographer: THOMAS SAMSON/AFP/Getty Images

The first street protests against Emmanuel Macron's proposed labor market reforms have been underwhelming. Several major unions stayed away. Estimates of the turn-out varied -- from 223,000, according to fairly reliable police figures, to 500,000, according to the CGT, France's biggest union, which called for the march. Whatever the real number, French unions are divided, and this helps Macron's reform efforts.

This is unusual. France's unions are traditionally a united front against pro-market reforms of any kind,

especially labor market reforms. Despite a history of radicalism, Jean-Claude Mailly, Secretary General of the Force Ouvriere (FO), has all but endorsed the bill, while criticizing it. The moderate CFDT union, which most observers expect to eventually support the bill, has not yet taken an official stance, saying it is still studying the matter. Meanwhile CFE-CGC, usually a moderate union, has denounced the bill in terms more fitting for a far-left tract. What's going on?

Some of this is just habitual political squabbling: Mailly, traditionally allied with the bigger, formerly Communist Party-affiliated CGT, is said to be tired of playing second fiddle and is therefore looking for opportunities to distinguish his group from his senior partner. But there are structural factors at play: The fundamental realignment of French unions as they become more responsive to their members' concerns.

French unions are famously radical and resistant to all reforms. After World War II, French leaders wanted to create a German-style "social market economy" whereby workers would be represented on boards and be key stakeholders in corporate decisions. A system of "representivity" was set up whereby

a company, industry sector or government must negotiate labor rules with those unions that the law deems "representative" of the workers concerned. In sector-wide or national negotiations, any proposed reform must meet a certain threshold of approval by unions, and each union's vote is weighted by its representivity.

The cardinal sin of the post-war system in France is that the law simply set out which unions were deemed "representative," whatever their results in elections or their membership numbers, thereby giving them a legal lock on the process and freeing them from accountability to their own members and to employees. Most workers, employees and managers don't actually want to strike and protest over every little thing --even in France. But unions were not accountable to them, and were not incentivized to cater to them.

Unions therefore became little more than political machines. With no incentive to provide services to workers, most of the people drawn to join them were either ideological radicals, or civil servants, because civil service rules incentivize union membership, giving unions the ability to bring the whole country to a

halt by triggering strikes in key public services. This led to an oft-noted paradox: France had extremely powerful unions, but also the lowest percentage of union membership of any major economy.

In 2008, a crucial reform changed the rules around representivity for unions so that election results were taken into account in the formula for their representivity. The consequences of this systemic shift have been slow in trickling through the system; participation in union elections slowly increased as everyday employees find out their vote actually matters. In March of this year, an earthquake happened: In professional elections, the centrist and moderate CFDT union came in first, ahead of the radical CGT. It was the first time since World War II that CGT didn't come in first.

Unions have slowly begun to realize that they cannot represent only their ideological activist base but must also reflect a broader swathe of French workers, lest they become irrelevant. FO, usually a radical union, has been treading a fine line, denouncing the bill in press releases and holding a non-binding vote against it, but also refusing to call for strikes and protests; the union has generally been moving in a more

conciliatory direction, voting in favor of a deal with bosses on unemployment insurance in March, for example. It is said to be trying to find a middle way between CFDT's

image as always saying yes to everything, and CGT's as always saying no.

This alone has significantly altered the landscape. Macron's labor

market reform is essentially tailor-made to squeak through without too much disruption and to be supported by at least a few unions. It might be a missed opportunity to push more

radical reforms, but by capitalizing on the structural changes to the landscape of French unions all the signs are there for relatively smooth sailing.



Community college students say 'oui' to France – and science

The Christian Science Monitor

9-11 minutes

breaking barriers

A new program, sponsored by the French embassy in the US, aims to open the classic junior-year-abroad experience to students who don't typically find the means or programs to study internationally.

September 13, 2017 Paris — Daniela Markovic worked hard in high school with her sights on college – and possibly studying abroad. But when faced with economic reality, she opted for the honor's program of her local community college, and accepted that a two-week trip to Italy offered by the program would have to suffice.

"Whenever I saw all my friends going off to university, and I was stuck at home – you can ask my mom – I cried so hard. I really did," says the American undergraduate student. "I was expecting to go to university with all of my peers."

Two years later, however, after completing her associate's degree at Lone Star College in Texas, she's gone much farther away than she imagined – to France. Ms. Markovic this week begins a four-year program that will ultimately see her earn a bachelor's and master's in engineering from a top school in France – not to mention becoming fluent in French and acquiring all the soft skills that come from living far from one's comfort zone.

She's the first American community college student to be offered a scholarship in a new program launched this summer by the French embassy in the United States. Community College Abroad in France aims to open up the classic junior-year-abroad experience to community college students. Amid soaring tuition prices in the US, they make up a significant portion of America's post-high school student

body but rarely find the means or programs to do some of their studies internationally.

"They are very, very underrepresented," says Cultural Counselor Bénédicte de Montlaur in the French embassy in the US.

In fact, 39 percent of all undergraduates in the 2015-16 school year in the US were at two-year community colleges, according to the Community College Research Center at Columbia University. But only 2 percent of them study abroad.

Countering perceived stigmas

Focused on students studying engineering and environmental science, the program – which aims to expand next year – also brings top talent from US schools to France, and in doing so, gives the American community college system a chance to counter enduring stigmas, sometimes even among its own students.

"Community college in the US has suffered the reputation that it's not the higher education of first choice," says Katharine Caruso, associate vice chancellor, International, Honors, and Engagement Programs at Lone Star College. "But within the last 10 years, we've been turning that previously held concept on its head."

Community college students from the US visit the Pavillon de Manse, Chantilly, France, in the summer of 2017.

Courtesy of Natan Leverier/Cultural Services of the French Embassy

|
Caption

Markovic's scholarship includes a preparatory year to master French and French methods of study, and then three years of work-study to help finance a degree from the n+i network of the country's 50 top engineering schools.

As she now begins her year at CESI Graduate School of Engineering in Saint-Nazaire, 17 other community

college students have returned home to school from a "bootcamp" this summer, the second prong of "Community College Abroad in France." Its goal was to give students "a taste of France," says Ms. Montlaur, as well as whet their appetites for the kind of scholarship Markovic is now pursuing, which several have said they plan to do.

The "bootcamp" was a 10-day visit with "the environment" as its central theme, so the group learned about France's air quality control and its lighting management. They walked among the gardens at Versailles, past the Luxor Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde, and did the most Parisian of all things, picnicked on the Seine. "It was like being a kid in a candy shop," says Elena Bolotova, a second-year student at Tunxis Community College in Farmington, Conn. Others called it "glorious" and "lifetime experience."

Markovic, who was raised in Houston and is the child of refugees from Bosnia, says that such escapades are not always associated with life at community college. "At my high school there was this saying, 'If you are going to Lone Star you are going to 13th grade,'" she says on a Skype call after finishing an intensive morning of French lessons in the seaside community of Royan.

Growing interest from schools

That's one of the reasons community colleges are eager to get involved in more international exchange: Montlaur says many have since contacted them at the embassy to learn how to get their students abroad. Yet Community College Abroad doesn't just benefit the participants. It also helps to bring new ideas to France.

Montlaur says that although France has a reputation for its top-notch engineering schools, most of the 17,000 foreign students who come to France each year study language and other humanities. "We want to encourage them to study science in France," says Montlaur.

The "bootcamp," in fact, took place in June, just as President Trump pulled out of the Paris climate agreement, and French President Emmanuel Macron appealed to American climate researchers to come across the Atlantic.

For Matthew Stromberg, who finished his associate's degree in engineering science at Norwalk Community College in Connecticut, the timing was nothing short of "momentous." "There is a lot of stuff happening politically [in the US] that makes me uncertain about the future of environmental progress," he says. "You realize that regardless of whatever is happening here, other countries, or at least France, is on the right track. It helped reaffirm my commitment to what I want to study and what I want to do."

Exposure to new ideas

It's about far more than the science though. Mr. Stromberg says it was exposure to different values about education, particularly how much more affordable a college degree is in Europe, that is a lasting takeaway. As with every student interviewed, he always planned on completing a four-year degree and chose community college for the first two years due to budget constraints. He transferred to the University of Virginia in Charlottesville this year to complete a degree in environmental engineering and science and wants to pursue a PhD.

"A lot of people in this country don't like the idea of supporting anything seen as a social welfare system," he says. "But if you have an educated populace, that educated populace will create new ideas, and inventions, more jobs. It is investing in the long-term prosperity of your society."

Of course he was faced with the negatives of French culture too – just not as much as he was expecting. "The aspect of the waiters being jerks," he says, "that was very, very accurate." But, he adds, "That impression that you get that the Parisians are snotty ... it's largely not true."



British and French leaders visit territories after Irma to reassure residents, launch aid efforts

The Christian Science Monitor

6-8 minutes

September 13, 2017 Marigot, St. Martin—Nearing the end of a

sweeping visit to assess the devastation wrought by Hurricane Irma, French President Emmanuel

Macron promised Wednesday to rebuild the wrecked island of St.

Martin and diversify its economy from a sole reliance on tourism.

In further responses to complaints that his government didn't do enough to handle Irma's wrath, Mr. Macron also pledged to evacuate residents of his country's Caribbean territories and provide services and shelter for those who choose to stay.

The French president stayed overnight on St. Martin, reportedly sleeping on a camp cot. He was heading to the heavily damaged island of St. Barts with the French health minister, who has warned about diseases spreading on the islands after water supplies, electricity, and communication were knocked out for days.

"What we have seen today are people determined to rebuild and return to a normal life," Macron said. "They are impatient for answers and some are very, very angry. The anger is legitimate because it is a result of the fear they have faced and of being very fatigued. It is certain that some want to leave, and we will help them in that effort."

He said France was bringing in air-conditioned tents so children can start classes again soon, and that a center would be established by Monday to begin processing requests for financial help.

Macron pledged to rebuild St. Martin as a "model island" that would be a "showcase of French excellence."

"I don't want to rebuild St. Martin as it was," he said. "We have seen there are many homes that were built too precariously, with fragile infrastructure. The geography of the homes was not adapted to the risks."

Macron said the Category 5 hurricane killed 11 people in St. Martin, while another four people died on the Dutch side of the island,

bringing the death toll in the Caribbean to at least 37.

The president was joined in the region by British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, whose itinerary focused on the badly damaged British Virgin Islands and Anguilla. Mr. Johnson also defended the British government following criticism that it had failed to provide enough help to British Overseas Territories devastated by the storm.

In London, Prime Minister Theresa May told Parliament an additional \$33 million would be spent on recovery efforts as Johnson oversaw early aid efforts in Anguilla.

Johnson told Anguilla governor Tim Foy Tuesday night that his visit is meant to show the Britain's commitment.

"It is clear this place has been through an absolutely hellish experience, and it is no doubt at all that you need help with power generation, with getting the hospital back up, and running, getting the airport back up and running, and schools properly set — all kinds of things need to be done," Johnson said.

He said 1,000 British troops are in place to help residents and several hundred more are on the way. Britain also has a landing ship in place on the British Virgin Islands to help bring in heavy equipment and the Royal Navy warship Ocean is on the way, though it won't arrive from Gibraltar for about 10 days.

Some 60 British police officers are also helping restore order in the British Virgin Islands, where roughly 100 prisoners escaped after the hurricane.

The visits came as residents tried to revive a sense of normalcy with small gestures like sharing radios and rescuing dogs.

The Dutch Red Cross said more than 200 people were still listed as

missing on St. Maarten, but with communications extremely spotty a week after the storm hit, it wasn't clear how many were simply without cell service and power and unable to let friends and family know they survived. The organization said 90 percent of buildings on the Dutch territory were damaged and a third destroyed as Irma roared across the island it shares with French St. Martin.

Yogesh Bodha, a jewelry store employee, said there was no response from European officials for two days and he hasn't seen many changes since Dutch authorities arrived on St. Maarten.

"They should've been more organized than they were," he said. "We have not received any food or water. They say it's on its way. Let's see."

For Liseth Echevarría, who works as a bartender in St. Maarten, offering whatever she could to family, strangers, and abandoned pets was helping her cope — and those around her were doing the same.

The manager of a marina next door threw over a hose so Ms. Echevarría and her husband could have a semblance of an outdoor shower. He also offered them a temporary power connection from his generator so they could charge phones and listen to the sole radio station still broadcasting.

"This is the only communication that St. Maarten has with the world right now," she said.

It was thanks to that radio station that she found out about a flight for all Latin Americans stuck in St. Maarten. She rushed to the airport with her brother, who was evacuating back to Colombia. As she dropped him off, Echevarría saw a Yorkshire terrier tied to a metal barricade, abandoned by a passenger fleeing the island and

told they couldn't bring pets on the plane.

Echevarría scooped up the dog named Oliver and took him home to meet her three other dogs, including one rescued from a neighbor's property. The neighbor fled with her son after the hurricane destroyed their home. There was nothing left of it other than jagged pieces of wood and a shower curtain covered in colorful butterflies tangled in a toppled tree.

Echevarría's husband, Lex Kools, a civil engineer, jumps over the fence every day to feed the other two dogs on the property.

"They were attacking each other, they were so hungry," he said.

At Echevarría's and Mr. Kools' home, the couple fed relatives and the girlfriend and two children of Echevarría's cousin, all of whom were staying with them.

Near the front door, a large plastic table sagged under the weight of boxes of spaghetti and cookies, soup cans, chips, bags of almonds and macadamia nuts and rice. Underneath were dozens of bottles of water.

The couple said they took the goods from a grocery store blown open during the storm.

They said they had planned on buying the items, but no one was working at the store and they were running out of food and water. They looked at each other as they observed looting.

"Do we do this as well?" Kools recalled thinking. "Everybody was just running inside. It was chaos."

This story was reported by The Associated Press. Coto reported from Philipsburg and Katz reported from London. AP writers Mike Corder in The Hague, The Netherlands, and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed to this report.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

In St. Martin, Authorities Struggle to Deliver Aid Amid Post-Irma Turmoil

Matthew Dalton
4-5 minutes

Updated Sept. 13, 2017 7:41 p.m. ET

MARIGOT, St. Martin—Despite reassurances from France and the Netherlands that aid is flowing to St. Martin, the stricken island's residents on Wednesday were still struggling to get food and water amid an atmosphere of lawlessness.

The day after a visit by French President Emmanuel Macron, residents continued to report

problems with aid deliveries. Emmanuel De Freitas, 63 years old, said she hasn't had much to eat or drink recently. She drove to a food delivery point on the French side of the island but the aid never arrived.

"I waited for two hours, but the truck never came," Ms. De Freitas said. "I can't wait anymore."

Eddie Richardson, who lives on the Dutch side, says he has rarely seen deliveries of aid in his neighborhood.

"We've been hearing that they're bringing food and water," he said, "but up until now nobody has gotten

food. So I don't know what the government is doing."

Mr. Macron, who visited Tuesday, said he flew in with several tons of medical supplies for the island's hospitals, where doctors have faced shortages of medicines since the hurricane hit. With communication networks down, the authorities will walk around neighborhoods with megaphones announcing the hour and location of food and water deliveries, Mr. Macron said.

The French leader also vowed that officials would step up security and stop lawlessness as reports of looting continued. Underscoring the

challenge, just half a block from where the French leader spoke Tuesday night, men in ski masks carrying shotguns robbed Thierry Piton, 17 years old, according to the teenager, who said they took a scooter that his friend had lent him.

Mr. Macron said the government would boost the number of reinforcements of police and soldiers to 3,000 to maintain law and order on the French side of St. Martin, where looting has been rampant since the storm hit.

"We will be extremely vigilant on this subject given what has happened, which is unacceptable," he said to

reporters after meeting with local officials Tuesday.

Mr. Macron also outlined a plan to restore basic services on the island. He said running water would return only gradually, projecting that the water system would be at a third of capacity by Sept. 20.

To provide some immediate supplies of fresh water, the U.S. is sending two mobile desalination plants shortly to the island, he said.

French authorities Wednesday morning deployed heavy equipment

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Harrup

7-8 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 3:39 p.m. ET

Chantal Piazzini and her husband own an Italian restaurant in Anguilla that offers tourists delicacies like lobster ravioli, in a setting of palm trees and white Caribbean sands. But after Hurricane Irma tore through the island, the visitors are gone and only the restaurant's shell remains.

"Everything's is gone: the equipment, kitchen, storage and decking," Ms. Piazzini said on Wednesday, expressing hope they can rebuild enough to partially reopen by Christmas.

A week after one of the most powerful storms on record rampaged through the Caribbean, killing at least 38 people, officials from St. Martin to Barbuda to the U.S. and British Virgin Islands are scrambling to assess damage in a region that depends on tourism more than any other in the world.

Others are trying to stave off cancellations in areas that haven't sustained damage, such as St. Lucia, Aruba and Barbados further south.

"There's a perception issue that we constantly battle with," said Frank Cornito, chief executive of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association. "More than 75% of the Caribbean was not severely impacted and is open for business."

Still, the Category 5 hurricane caused significant damage to small tourism-dependent islands in the Caribbean as well as larger, more economically diversified nations such as the Dominican Republic and Cuba, where the capital Havana and the beachside Varadero resort were damaged.

to remove mounds of debris that have hampered relief and recovery efforts. Residents reported that electricity was returning to an increasing number of homes.

Mr. Macron said that 50% of mobile connections have been restored, and that the rest would return in the weeks to come.

"Pylons have been knocked down," he said. "The damage is unprecedented."

At Juliana airport on the Dutch side, people lined up to catch flights

'Everything Is Gone'; Hurricane Irma Sets Back Caribbean Tourism

Chris Kirkham and Anthony

Some resort owners, like Sonesta International Hotels Corp., which has three properties on the Dutch side of St. Martin, have canceled all reservations through the end of the year.

The timing is particularly challenging, coming just months before the high season from November through April, when North Americans and Europeans seek to escape to warmer climes during their winter. The hurricane also interrupted the normal late summer-early fall period of repairs and renovations for many resorts.

"Do I think that the season is going to be off? Yeah, the season is going to be way off...The only question is 'how much?'" said Tim Warburton, CEO of Wimco Villas & Hotels, which has luxury vacation rental properties throughout damaged parts of the Caribbean. "It takes three to four weeks to find out what the situation really is."

Travel and tourism directly accounted for about 15% of gross domestic product in the region last year, compared with about 10% in the European Union and 8.4% in North America, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council, a global trade group. The region has for years tried to diversify their economies with limited success due to their few natural resources, small populations and remote locations.

Tourism provides substantial indirect benefits, especially for jobs. Anguilla, for instance, counts on tourism for more than half of annual economic input and jobs.

"Tourism is inflow of dollars...Tourism is employment, and tourism is a lot of ancillary activities in terms of services, so it is a huge impact," said Nathalie Marshik, a strategist covering Latin America and the Caribbean at Oppenheimer & Co. "That's going to hurt because these islands produce

organized by the U.S., France, the Netherlands, Spain and other governments. Families with members of different nationalities—common on this polyglot island—agonized over which flights to take and whether to split up.

"I don't know if we're going to be separated," said Kaya Helligar, who is Franco-American but whose two daughters are French. "Or if we're going to be stuck here. There's no water, there's no food."

nothing. They have to import everything."

At the Oyster Bay Beach Resort, on the Dutch side of St. Martin, co-owner Mike Dolente said the company was still assessing the damage and has no timeline to reopen after prioritizing guest evacuations and providing food and water to dozens of employees.

Others in damaged areas say they are far more optimistic than a week ago. The day after Hurricane Irma swept through the Turks and Caicos Islands last week, Mark Durliat, chief executive of Grace Bay Resorts, said everyone was "walking around like zombies, predicting the worst."

But with power and water restored to his part of the islands this week, he said he thinks he can have the resort reopened to guests by October.

"There are a few scars here, a few rough edges we're going to polish, but to the naked eye you may not see it," he said.

The longer-term impact on the affected economies will depend on how much reconstruction costs and who pays for it, said Gabriel Torres, a country risk analyst for Latin America at Moody's Investors Service.

"What has happened in the past is that not all the hotels, for example, decide to rebuild, for different reasons. In that case what you have is a permanent decline in the amount of tourism," he said. "Often these countries and islands take years to recover. Not that the tourism industry disappears, it remains crucial, but could be smaller than what it was before."

For protectorates like British Virgin Islands and French-Dutch St. Martin, the money to rebuild may come from parent countries. Others are likely to need loans, said Yuri Chakalall, a senior specialist in Natural Disaster and Risk

"I don't have any family in France or any other French territory," she added, "It's a difficult situation."

Ms. Helligar ended up getting on the flight to the U.S. with her daughters, one of the last U.S. military flights out of St. Martin for at least several days.

Write to Matthew Dalton at Matthew.Dalton@wsj.com

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Management at the Inter-American Development Bank.

British Prime Minister Theresa May on Wednesday said the U.K. would provide an additional £25 million (\$33 million) on top of the £32 million already pledged to support the recovery effort in its overseas territories.

The Caribbean Development Bank said it was providing emergency relief grants of \$200,000 each for Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands to help cover costs of damage assessment, emergency supplies and services, and materials for temporary shelters. It also offered those countries loans of up to \$750,000 under easy terms to support cleanup work and restoration of services.

"It is life and death, basically," said Kenroy Herbert, owner of Leviticus Lifestyle & Travel, a luxury villa management company that has 15 properties in Anguilla. "It is of the utmost importance for us to get back to being as normal as possible."

On the island of St. Lucia, which wasn't in Irma's path, Karolin Troubetzkoy has been putting together online maps of the Caribbean to show tourists which parts saw no damage. As president of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association and a marketing director at two resorts on St. Lucia, she said she worries travelers don't understand the geography, and are "just horrified by the reports they're seeing."

—Santiago Pérez, Matthew Dalton and Dudley Althaus contributed to this article.

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France: Man detained for punching pedestrians, police

PARIS — Sep 13, 2017, 3:08 PM ET

A local police official says an unarmed man assaulted police officers while shouting "Allahu akbar" in the southern French city of Toulouse.

The man was detained by police Wednesday after he allegedly punched and kicked several people in the street, as well as the officers who came to arrest him.

Three police officers and two bystanders were slightly injured.

The police official says the incident is not being treated as terrorism-related. "Allahu akbar" is Arabic for "God is great."

The official requested anonymity to discuss the case in accordance with police procedures. He wouldn't give details on the suspect's identity or motives.

Local newspaper La Depeche says the man was born in 1975, had been in a psychiatric hospital before April and does not have any criminal convictions.



Man shouting 'Allahu Akbar' arrested for attack in France

A man who apparently shouted "Allahu Akbar" attacked seven people in the French city of Toulouse on Wednesday before he was captured, according to reports.

Police quickly responded to the attack on Avenue Frederic-Estebe, where they overpowered the man,

who is well known to authorities, the Express of the UK reported.

"We were chatting and he jumped on us. He first caught my son and then beat my daughter. We ran," one man told local media.

Two of the victims were taken to a hospital with minor injuries.

The suspect, who was not armed, is believed to have stayed in a psychiatric hospital before he was released in April.

He reportedly burst into tears when cops collared him, the paper reported.

Three officers suffered light injuries as they brought him down, the UK's Daily Star reported.

The police union SGP praised the "professional and cool" handling of a "delicate" situation.

In February, a machete-wielding man yelled "Allahu Akbar!" – Arabic for "God is great!" – near the Louvre museum in Paris.

A patrolling soldier shot and seriously wounded the man.



Merkel's Electoral Rivals Target Her Russia Policy

Anton Troianovski
7-8 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 5:30 a.m. ET

PFORZHEIM, Germany—As German Chancellor Angela Merkel cruises toward likely reelection, the parties trailing her are finding a wedge issue: Russia.

With less than two weeks to go until Election Day, Russian hackers haven't dumped any stolen emails, as German officials have warned they might. But Russian President Vladimir Putin looms over the campaign nonetheless.

Four of the five parties likely to enter German parliament behind Ms. Merkel's conservative bloc advocate a friendlier approach to Moscow, so the vote could affect the future ruling coalition's Russia policy by pressuring Ms. Merkel to loosen her relatively tough line.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, a member of the center-left Social Democrats, said Europe should lower the bar for when it would start lifting sanctions against Russia and defended the stance in an interview with pro-Kremlin news outlet RT.

Christian Lindner of the pro-business Free Democrats, whose party is in the running to join the next Merkel government, drew praise from the radical Left party after he said the West should accept Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea as a "long-term provisional arrangement."

And in a packed house of more than 1,000 here in the country's southwest last week, the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany, or AfD, cast Moscow as a critical ally for stopping migration.

"We can only block the way for refugees from Asia and Afghanistan trying to get here by working with Russia," AfD candidate Alexander Gauland told the cheering crowd, which included many ethnic German immigrants from the former Soviet Union. "We need Russia as a Christian bulwark against an Islamic invasion."

"Vot imenno!"—Russian for "that's right!"—Gerda, a 66-year-old retired librarian in the audience, exclaimed as Mr. Gauland spoke.

Ms. Merkel's center-right Christian Democrats seem assured of winning the Sept. 24 election, leading the Social Democrats 37% to 23% in an average of the latest polls. But they are unlikely to secure a majority of seats in parliament and will need a coalition partner to govern, making the policies of the other parties a factor in the direction of Germany's next government.

In the campaign, Ms. Merkel has stuck to her line on Russia. Accepting Russia's annexation of Crimea would be akin to the West having accepted the division of Germany, she said in an interview published over the weekend. She has made pushing back against Mr. Putin for what she describes as illegal Russian actions in Ukraine a core element of her foreign policy.

While Ms. Merkel may come under pressure from future governing

partners to soften that stance, she is unlikely to make a significant shift. Any change in Berlin's Russia policy, however, could affect the European Union's ability to hold a unified line against the Kremlin. The chancellor played the leading role in 2014 in organizing European Union sanctions against Russia over its intervention in Ukraine, and Germany has since helped corral doubters among the bloc's other 27 members into maintaining them.

Of Ms. Merkel's potential coalition partners, only the environmentalist Greens support her stance of keeping the current EU sanctions against Russia in place until Moscow until the Minsk peace agreements for Ukraine are implemented in full. Mr. Gabriel, by contrast, said last week that implementing the complete peace deal soon was unrealistic and that relations with Moscow needed to be improved before then.

"Let's at least get a cease-fire implemented and the heavy weapons withdrawn, and then do two things as a reward: lift the sanctions and help with rebuilding eastern Ukraine," said Mr. Gabriel, an ally of Social Democratic chancellor candidate Martin Schulz.

With Ms. Merkel enjoying approval ratings above 60%, her campaign opponents have struggled to find issues to attack her on. Given widespread German unease about souring relations with Moscow, many of them have seized on Russia policy as a way to score points.

Mr. Lindner, whose center-right Free Democrats are polling around 9%

and are contenders to join the next government, said last month that the dispute over Russia's annexation of Crimea needed to be set aside "in order to make progress on other issues."

He earned praise from Sahra Wagenknecht, who coleads the ticket of the socialist Left party at the opposite end of the political spectrum and wants to replace the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with an alliance including Russia.

Security officials have warned that Germany could be vulnerable to interference similar to what U.S. intelligence agencies say occurred in the American campaign. German officials believe Kremlin-linked hackers stole emails from parliament's servers in 2015, but no high-profile instances of such interference have emerged during the campaign.

"We assume that Russia is in a position to launch disinformation campaigns in connection to the parliamentary election," domestic intelligence chief Hans-Georg Maassen told the Welt am Sonntag newspaper last month. He added, however, that the Kremlin may have "no interest in further damaging relations with Germany."

Russia denies having interfered in the U.S. election and any intention of doing so in Germany.

The group officials see as among the most vulnerable to Russian influence is the more than one million ethnic Germans who immigrated from the former Soviet Union. Hundreds of them demonstrated early last year against

Ms. Merkel's acceptance of refugees after Russian news media spread a false story about migrants raping a Russian-German girl.

Traditionally, analysts say, these voters overwhelmingly supported Ms. Merkel's conservative Christian

Democrats. But in a Pforzheim precinct where many Russian-Germans live, Buckenberg, 43.2% voted for the anti-immigrant AfD in the state election last year, while support for the Christian Democrats plummeted to 21% from 56% in 2011. The AfD message here

combines support for improved ties to Russia with a harsh critique of Islam.

"More and more mosques are being built here," said Waldemar Birkle, an ethnic German émigré from Kazakhstan who is the AfD's

parliamentary candidate for Pforzheim. "We came to Germany in order to stay German."

Write to Anton Troianovski at anton.troianovski@wsj.com

**The
New York
Times**

E.U. Leader Suggests Simplifying How the Bloc Is Run

James Kanter

6-7 minutes

"Ten years since crisis struck, Europe's economy is finally bouncing back," the European Commission president, Jean-Claude Juncker, said on Wednesday in Strasbourg, France. Christian Hartmann/Reuters

BRUSSELS — Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, laid out plans on Wednesday to simplify the byzantine governance of the European Union.

In perhaps the boldest proposal in his annual address to the European Parliament, Mr. Juncker suggested streamlining the leadership of the 28-nation bloc — an idea that could in theory eliminate his own job.

The complexity of the European Union is legendary. It has a plethora of institutions and no single leader, leaving many wondering who is in charge — or speculating that Germany, the bloc's largest economy, really runs the show.

Mr. Juncker, of Luxembourg, leads the commission, a mass of powerful bureaucrats. Donald Tusk of Poland leads the European Council, which consists of the leaders of the 28 member nations and sets the union's overall political direction. Antonio Tajani of Italy is president of the European Parliament.

Then there is the Council of the European Union — not to be confused with the European Council — which is made up of ministers and has a six-month rotating

presidency.

The structure of the bloc, which reflects decades of gradual evolution, contributes to what scholars call a "democratic deficit," the feeling that structures and officials in Brussels are unaccountable to ordinary people.

Mr. Juncker seemed sympathetic to this criticism in his remarks on Wednesday, suggesting that a single president should lead both the European Commission and the European Council.

"The European landscape would be clearer and more understandable if the European ship was steered by one and the same captain at the helm," he said.

By looking toward the future, Mr. Juncker to some extent reflected the bloc's at least partial recovery from several acute crises, including a wave of migration from the Middle East and Africa, Britain's vote to leave the bloc and a surge in far-right political forces.

Mr. Juncker's wide-ranging speech touched on these themes:

• **The favorable circumstances and relatively healthy economic growth across much of the bloc.** This means that "the wind is back in Europe's sails" and that there is "a window of opportunity" for reform, he said.

Economic growth, which stands at more than 2 percent across the European Union, has outstripped growth in the United States, while unemployment has reached a nine-year low, he said.

"Ten years since crisis struck, Europe's economy is finally

bouncing back — and with it our confidence," he said, a reference to the long, grinding battle to overcome a debt crisis that nearly destroyed the euro currency, prompted the imposition of austerity on millions of citizens and helped fuel a populist backlash that focused anger at the European Union.

• **A new European minister for economy and finance.** Mr. Juncker suggested that such a minister could be part of the European Commission and could also lead the Eurogroup, a body consisting of finance ministers from the 19 nations that use the euro. That group made many of the decisions regarding Greece during the debt crisis.

The idea, he said, would be for this new minister to coordinate among various European bodies to help countries that are in an economic recession or "hit by a fundamental crisis."

The goal would be "efficiency" rather than to create a new position "just for the sake of it," Mr. Juncker said.

• **Proposals in finance, intelligence-gathering and cybersecurity.** Particularly notable was an announcement that the European Union would soon begin far-reaching trade talks with Australia and New Zealand. That could compete with British efforts to strike trade deals with its Commonwealth partners that London sorely wants as it prepares to leave the bloc.

"Since last year, I see that our partners all over the world are knocking at our door to sign trade agreements with us," said Mr.

Juncker, who cited a deal with Canada that will start to go into force next week, an agreement with Japan and negotiations with Mexico and a group of South American nations.

Even as Europe opens up to new trade opportunities, Mr. Juncker said, it must do more to protect strategic sectors like defense — a remark that was essentially a response to calls from Germany, France and Italy to vet the acquisition of European technology by Chinese companies.

• **A warning that Britain's exit from the bloc was "very sad and tragic"** and would come at a cost.

"We will always regret this, and I think you will regret it as well soon, if I might say," Mr. Juncker told the British, to a thunderous burst of applause.

In hopes of encouraging a strong voter turnout for European Parliament elections in May or June 2019 and shoring up confidence in the bloc, Mr. Juncker called on Romania, which is set to hold the union's rotating presidency during that period, to schedule a European Union summit meeting on the day after Britain's planned exit from the bloc.

• **A far tougher line with Turkey,** which has taken an authoritarian turn under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "That rules out E.U. membership for Turkey in the foreseeable future," Mr. Juncker said.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

EU Looks to Champion Free Trade in Wake of 'America First'

Valentina Pop in Strasbourg, France and Emre Peker in Brussels

5-6 minutes

Updated Sept. 13, 2017 12:50 p.m. ET

The European Union's top executive called for the bloc to expand its economic links from Asia Pacific to Latin America, articulating the EU's ambition to champion free trade in

the wake of President Donald Trump's "America First" policies.

Spurred by positive data and an uptick in EU popularity after a decade of economic and political crises, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker outlined his vision of a bigger and more-cohesive union that would carry its weight in the world.

"Europe has always been an attractive economic space," Mr. Juncker said Wednesday in his

annual State of the European Union address in Strasbourg, France. "But since last year, I see that our partners all over the world are knocking at our door in order to sign trade agreements with us."

Mr. Juncker proposed starting free-trade talks with Australia and New Zealand and completing a number of agreements by late 2019, when his mandate ends.

The EU has "a very good chance" of striking a deal on trade with Mexico

and South American countries by the end of 2017, Mr. Juncker said. EU officials are in talks to update a 17-year-old free-trade accord with Mexico and sign its first accord with Mercosur—composed of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. In July, Brussels and Tokyo struck a political agreement on a comprehensive trade deal.

Mr. Juncker said he also wanted to bolster the EU's trade defenses including by screening foreign investments—a policy aimed at

protecting European assets and companies from acquisitions.

Chinese business representatives expressed disappointment at the proposal. "Obviously, it is targeting China," said Duan Wei, chief executive of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Germany.

France, Germany and Italy have advocated increasing the bloc's trade defenses, but ran into opposition from some EU members when French President Emmanuel Macron pushed proposals in June.

"We are not naive supporters of free exchange; Europe has always got to defend its strategic interests," Mr. Juncker said. "Europe is open to trade, yes, but there has to be reciprocity."

Mr. Juncker also laid out steps to increase the bloc's security in coming months. He proposed the creation of a European intelligence

unit that would share information and an EU prosecutor able to prosecute cross-border terrorist crimes. All his proposals are subject to approval by national governments and the European Parliament.

Mr. Juncker sought to appease growing discontent within the bloc's former communist countries, speaking of his vision of a Europe where all member states are free, equal and subject to the rule of law. In doing so, he seemed to cast aside calls from some governments for a 'multi-speed' Europe, where countries aim for different levels of integration.

He renewed calls to integrate the bloc's newer members in the eurozone, in the bloc's passport-free travel area and in its banking union, proposing new funding and assistance to help them get there.

Several countries, including Hungary and Poland, could already

join the euro, but are holding off. For now, only 19 of the bloc's 28 members share the common currency.

Mr. Juncker said the EU must continue to expand in the western Balkans, where discussions are advancing with Serbia and Montenegro. But underscoring growing tensions with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, he said the prospect of Turkish membership was off the agenda for the foreseeable future and accused Ankara of trying to provoke the EU into ending accession talks.

Mr. Juncker barely mentioned Brexit negotiations in his speech, stressing that the U.K.'s decision was made and the bloc needed to focus on shaping its common future. He said the day the U.K. left would be "a tragic moment in our history" and offered a warning to Britain.

"We will always regret this. And I think that you will regret it soon too," Mr. Juncker said in response to heckling from Nigel Farage, the ex-leader of the UK Independence Party who championed Brexit.

Not all Mr. Juncker's proposals went down well with EU leaders. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte called him a "romantic" and stressed that his country continues to oppose EU's expansion to the Balkans and the admission of Romania and Bulgaria in the border-free Schengen area.

— Laurence Norman in Brussels, Andrea Thomas in Berlin and Nina Adam in Munich contributed to this article.

Write to Valentina Pop at valentina.pop@wsj.com and Emre Peker at emre.peker@wsj.com



Editorial : The West's learning curve on Russian election meddling

The Christian Science Monitor

3 minutes

September 13, 2017 —German security officials are scratching their heads. They have yet to see a serious attempt by Russia to meddle in the country's Sept. 24 election. What's changed, they ask, since the recent American and French elections when Russia was accused of disseminating fake news, leaking negative information, or trying to tamper with election machinery?

One change may be that Russia now knows that voters in the West have wised up to its tactics and more firmly embrace the essentials

of democracy, such as the need to discern the truth in political campaigns and to safeguard the integrity of the voting process. News media in Germany as well as global social media giants are on guard to challenge false information and hate speech. Election officials are tightening up their computer systems. And counterintelligence agencies are better equipped to detect the origins of any threat to the German election.

Rather than simply fearing foreign meddling, Western countries are providing a protective shield for the basic freedoms and necessary mechanics of their democracies. Germany has learned much from the 2016 election in the United States and the French election last

spring. But it also experienced Russian hacking of Germany's parliament, the Bundestag, in a 2015 cyberattack. Another attack was attempted in 2016 on the country's two leading parties. And officials are alert to right-wing hate groups in Germany that seem to mimic Russian propaganda.

It helps that the parliamentary elections in Germany are less divisive than the presidential elections in France and the US. And polls show Angela Merkel easily winning another term as chancellor. Perhaps Russia sees any meddling as pointless. It might even backfire and harm its diplomatic goals in the rest of the world.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has also learned that Germany will

stand up to his attempts to challenge the West, such as in Ukraine. With the US reducing its role in the world and Britain splitting from the European Union, Germany has slowly taken on the mantle of a global leader, especially on issues such as climate change and refugees. Ms. Merkel has called on Germans to be a "force for freedom."

Her immediate task, however, is to ensure Germans enjoy a free and fair election. After what they've seen in the US and France, they are more demanding in protecting their democracy.

INTERNATIONAL



Joe Biden: Reclaiming America's Values

Joe Biden

7-8 minutes

Delcan & Company

In over 45 years of working in global affairs, I've observed a simple truth: America's ability to lead the world depends not just on the example of our power, but on the power of our example.

American democracy is rooted in the belief that every man, woman and child has equal rights to freedom and dignity. While the

United States is far from perfect, we have never given up the struggle to grow closer to the ideals in our founding documents.

The constant American endeavor to live by our values is a great strength that has drawn generations of strivers and dreamers to the United States, enriching our population. Around the world, other nations follow our lead because they know that America does not simply protect its own interests, but tries to advance the aspirations of all.

This has stood as the foundation of American foreign policy throughout my political career — until recently.

Around the world, including in the United States, we are seeing the resurgence of a worldview that is closed off and clannish. President Trump keeps longstanding allies such as Germany at arm's length, while expressing admiration for autocrats like Vladimir V. Putin who thwart democratic institutions.

Joe Biden, a former Democratic senator from Delaware and vice president of the United States, leads the Penn Biden Center for

Diplomacy and Global Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania.

Rather than building from a narrative of freedom and democracy that inspires nations to rally together, this White House casts global affairs as a zero-sum competition — for the United States to succeed, others must lose. Among the many problems that plague the Trump administration's foreign policy, this line of thinking is perhaps the most disturbing.

During a speech in July, Mr. Trump said, "The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has

the will to survive." This statement divides the world into "us" and "them." No American political figure has so narrowly defined our interests since the period between the world wars.

Mr. Trump's shameful defense of the white nationalists and neo-Nazis who unleashed hatred and violence in Charlottesville, Va., further abnegated America's moral leadership. Not since the Jim Crow era has an American president so misunderstood and misrepresented our values.

Most recently, the Trump administration's order to rescind Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals — punishing young people brought to this country by their parents, many of whom know no home but the United States — betrays an unnecessary cruelty that further undermines America's standing in the world.

When Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson said that it was important to "understand the difference between policy and values," he wrote off the very thing that makes the United States exceptional. And at a time when democratic values are under siege around the globe — from populist attacks that

undermine confidence in democratic institutions to leaders who try to bolster their power by closing the space for civil society and rolling back citizens' rights — the world cannot afford to have America cede the field to illiberalism and intolerance.

Placing American democratic values back at the center of our foreign policy does not mean we should impose our principles abroad or refuse to talk with nations whose policies run counter to them. There will always be times when keeping Americans safe requires working with those whom we find distasteful. But even when we must make those hard choices, we can never forget who we are and the future we seek.

The United States must be a bulwark for global democracy or powers like Russia will bully and divide, argues former Vice President Joe Biden. The Statue of Liberty, a beacon of American democracy, has welcomed millions of immigrants and refugees to the country. Keith Meyers/The New York Times

Reclaiming our values starts with standing up for them at home — inclusivity, tolerance, diversity, respect for the rule of law, freedom

of speech, freedom of the press. If these are the democratic principles we wish to see around the world, America must be the first to model them.

These are also the values that tie us to our closest allies — the friends we depend on to address major global challenges. They must believe that the United States will continue to support them and to stand up for democracy.

Leading with our values also means that we speak out when nations violate their citizens' rights. If leaders repress their own people, we must make clear that it constrains our ability to cooperate with them. We can meet our security imperatives without giving a green light to dictators who abuse universal human rights.

Finally, a foreign policy built on our values must stand firm against foreign powers that celebrate a perceived withdrawal of American leadership as an opportunity to increase their influence. Without the United States standing as a bulwark for global democracy, illiberal powers like Russia will take increasingly aggressive steps to disrupt the international order, bully

their neighbors and return to a more divided world.

From the Marshall Plan after World War II to our alliances in East Asia, both Republican and Democratic officials have long embraced a vision of American leadership that fosters a more secure, inclusive and generous planet. That ideal made the world safer and more prosperous — for Americans and everyone else.

The international community still needs a strong, democratic America leading the way. And the good news is that the United States remains better positioned than any other country to shape the direction of the 21st century. But to succeed, we cannot abandon the tenets that we fought so hard to defend over the past seven decades — ideals that magnified American leadership and produced the greatest increase in global prosperity in history.

You cannot define Americans by what they look like, where they come from, whom they love or how they worship. Only our democratic values define us. And if we lose sight of this in our conduct at home or abroad, we jeopardize the respect that has made the United States the greatest nation on earth.

The New York Times

North Korea Resumes Work at Nuclear Test Site, Analysts Say

Choe Sang-Hun
7-8 minutes

Messages calling for a reunified Korea on South Korea's side of the Demilitarized Zone. Lee Jin-Man/Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea has resumed work at its underground nuclear testing site, defense analysts said, as the country vowed to keep expanding its nuclear arsenal despite the latest United Nations sanctions.

The defense analysts also said that the North's Sept. 3 nuclear test, which Pyongyang said was of a hydrogen bomb, may have been much more powerful than previously estimated.

In its first official reaction to the sanctions resolution adopted by the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday that the sanctions would only strengthen the country's resolve to pursue its nuclear weapons program "at a faster pace without the slightest diversion."

The sanctions resolution, adopted in response to the nuclear test this month, was the ninth passed by the

Security Council since North Korea's first such test in 2006. If enforced, it would deprive North Korea of 30 percent of its annual fuel imports. It also bans imports of textiles from North Korea, stripping the country of another key source of hard currency.

But the North, already heavily sanctioned, remained defiant on Wednesday, saying that it would "redouble the efforts to increase its strength to safeguard the country's sovereignty and right to existence" and establish "practical equilibrium with the U.S."

South Korea's Defense Ministry released this photo of a Taurus "bunker buster" cruise missile that the military says it successfully tested. South Korean Defense Ministry, via Getty Images

The statement, released through the North's state media, came at about the same time that a group of defense analysts, after studying recent satellite images, said they had detected new vehicles, mining carts and other signs of activity at the Punggye-ri underground nuclear test site in northeast North Korea.

"Such activity, coming shortly after the largest underground nuclear test conducted at Punggye-ri to date (via the North Portal), suggests that on-

site work could now be changing focus to further prepare those other portals for future underground nuclear testing," the defense analysts, Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Jack Liu, said in a Tuesday report on 38 North, a website focused on North Korea. The analysts gave no indication that a test appeared to be imminent.

The analysts also said that the explosive yield from the Sept. 3 nuclear test may have been as much as 250 kilotons, based on revised estimates of the magnitude of the tremor created by the blast. That would be much higher than most official estimates, which have varied. Japan, for example, gave an estimate of 160 kilotons, while South Korea's was as low as 50 kilotons.

The analysts said the data appeared to verify the North's claim that it had detonated a hydrogen bomb, a much more powerful device than the atomic bombs it detonated in its early tests. The United States, South Korea and other governments have yet to confirm that the North tested such a weapon, but the Sept. 3 test, the North's sixth, was by far its most powerful to date. Satellite imagery since the test has showed evidence of numerous landslides at the test site.

On Wednesday, South Korea's Nuclear Safety and Security Commission said it had detected traces of radioactive xenon gas from the nuclear test. But the data was not sufficient to determine what type of nuclear device the North had detonated, it said.

The latest United Nations sanctions against the North were considerably weaker than what the United States had sought. Among other things, the Trump administration wanted a complete cutoff of oil exports to the North.

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 »

"We think it's just another very small step — not a big deal," President Trump said of the new sanctions on Tuesday. "But those sanctions are nothing compared to what ultimately will have to happen."

In the past week, Mexico and Peru have decided to expel North Korean ambassadors to protest the

country's continued violation of United Nations sanctions. South Korea's foreign minister, Kang Kyung-wha, said Tuesday that a Middle Eastern country, which she did not identify, had also agreed to expel Pyongyang's envoy.

North Korea's ambassador to Peru, Kim Hak-chol, said Tuesday that his expulsion "throws gasoline on the fire," according to Reuters.

On Wednesday, the South Korean

military said it had successfully tested a new air-to-land "bunker buster" Taurus cruise missile, part of its effort to increase its ability to destroy key weapons sites and bunkers deep underground where the North's leaders might take refuge.

South Korea has agreed to buy 260 Taurus missiles from Taurus Systems, a German and Swedish joint venture. The missiles are among billions of dollars' worth of

new weapons that South Korea is buying to strengthen its pre-emptive and retaliatory strike capabilities as a deterrent against North Korea.

They have a maximum range of 310 miles, meaning that South Korean planes can launch them without entering North Korean airspace. They can also fly a low, terrain-hugging route to better avoid radar, defense officials said.

North Korea flew an intermediate-range missile over northern Japan last month and has threatened to launch more missiles into the Pacific.

Correction: September 13, 2017

Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article referred incorrectly to the foreign minister of South Korea. The minister, Kang Kyung-wha, is a woman.

**The
Washington
Post**

North Korea nuclear test may have been twice as strong as first thought

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

5-6 minutes

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un attending a photo session with teachers who volunteered to work at remote schools, released Sept. 12 by the official Korean Central News Agency. (/AFP/Getty Images)

SEOUL — North Korea's powerful nuclear test this month may have been even stronger than first reported, equivalent to roughly 17 times the strength of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, according to a new analysis by a U.S. monitoring think tank.

North Korea's Sept. 3 nuclear test, its sixth and biggest, showed how much progress the country has made on its nuclear program.

Estimates of the bomb's yield, or the amount of energy released by the blast, have ranged from South Korea's 50 kilotons to Japan's 160 kilotons, although some analysts have said the 6.3 magnitude of the earthquake caused by the detonation could put it into the "hundreds of kilotons." This would put it into the realm of the thermonuclear weapons, supporting North Korea's claim that it had tested a hydrogen bomb.

In comparison, the bomb detonated over Hiroshima in 1945 released about 15 kilotons of energy.

The new analysis by 38 North, run by the U.S.-Korea Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, found North Korea's test may have been much stronger.

The U.N. Security Council passed new sanctions on North Korea on Sept. 11 in light of North Korea's most recent nuclear tests. The U.N. Security Council passed new sanctions on North Korea on Sept. 11 in light of North Korea's most recent nuclear tests. (Reuters)

The U.N. Security Council passed new sanctions on North Korea on Sept. 11 in light of North Korea's most recent nuclear tests. (Reuters)

Updated seismic data showed the magnitude of the resulting earthquake was greater than initial estimates — between 6.1 and 6.3. That means the yield of the latest test was roughly 250 kilotons, reported 38 North's Frank V. Pabian, Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. and Jack Liu.

In other words, the North Korean test may have been almost 17 times stronger than the bomb detonated over Hiroshima. This is close to what 38 North previously calculated

as the maximum yield that could be contained at the underground Punggye-ri test site.

This new estimate by 38 North is much higher than initial estimates from U.S. intelligence sources and allies. The United States intelligence assessment put the blast at 140 kilotons, Japan at 160 kilotons and South Korea at 50 kilotons.

Experts at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, Calif., said that the size of the earthquake triggered by the explosion also suggested that the bomb could have had a force in the hundreds of kilotons.

The Pentagon declined to comment, calling it an intelligence matter.

A U.S. intelligence official said the 38 North analysis is consistent with the range of estimates by the intelligence community. The Air Force Technical Applications Center's early estimate was a range of 70 to 280 kilotons, based on the possible magnitude, the official said.

Satellite imagery showed the test resulted in many more landslides than after any of the previous five tests, according to the 38 North analysis.

North Korea described the device it had detonated as a hydrogen bomb designed to be carried by a long-range missile capable of reaching the U.S. mainland. The international community widely condemned the test and within 10 days, the U.N. Security Council unanimously approved its toughest sanctions on the country to date.

In the wake of the North Korean test, both the United States and South Korea are highlighting their own military readiness.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis was traveling Wednesday to Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota, the center of the American nuclear arsenal, with more than 100 land-based nuclear missiles and aircraft.

Meanwhile, the South Korean Air Force on Wednesday conducted its first live-fire drill to test its preemptive strike capability, according to the South Korean Defense Ministry.

Anna Fifield in Tokyo and Ellen Nakashima in Washington contributed to this report.

**The
New York
Times**

Arms Control Experts Urge Trump to Honor Iran Nuclear Deal

Rick Gladstone

5-7 minutes

disarmament experts urged him on Wednesday to reconsider and said the accord was working.

In a joint statement, the experts said the 2015 agreement, negotiated by the Obama administration and the governments of Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia, was a "net plus for international nuclear nonproliferation efforts."

Because of the monitoring powers contained in the agreement, they said, Iran's capability to produce nuclear weapons has been sharply reduced. They also said the agreement made it "very likely that

any possible future effort by Iran to pursue nuclear weapons, even a clandestine program, would be detected promptly."

Mr. Trump has repeatedly assailed the agreement — a signature achievement of his predecessor — describing it as "a terrible deal" and a giveaway to Iran.

He also has said that he believes Iran is violating the accord, an assertion that has been contradicted by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations nuclear monitor that polices Iran's compliance.

The accord, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, severely limited Iran's nuclear activities in return for ending or easing many sanctions that were hurting the Iranian economy.

Under an American law, Mr. Trump must recertify every 90 days that Iran is complying with the nuclear accord, or the American sanctions that were lifted could be reinstated. The next 90-day deadline is in mid-October.

When he reluctantly signed the last recertification in July, Mr. Trump said, "If it was up to me, I would

President Hassan Rouhani of Iran at Parliament in Tehran last month. President Trump says he believes Iran is violating the nuclear accord, an assertion that has been contradicted by the United Nations nuclear monitor. Vahid Salemi/Associated Press

Alarmed that President Trump may soon take steps that could unravel the international nuclear agreement with Iran, more than 80

have had them noncompliant 180 days ago.”

The possibility that Mr. Trump may find a reason to declare Iran noncompliant, regardless of the merits, alarmed the nonproliferation experts.

Is the U.S. Trying to Kill the Iran Nuclear Deal?

In July, President Trump reluctantly agreed to confirm that Iran is complying with the terms of the nuclear agreement. But now, analysts say he is actively looking for ways to get the United States out of the deal.

By NILO TABRIZY on July 31, 2017. Photo by Vahid Salemi/Associated Press. Watch in Times Video »

They warned in their statement that “unilateral action by the United States, especially on the basis of unsupported contentions of Iranian cheating, would

isolate the United States.”

Last week, Mr. Trump’s ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki R. Haley, suggested in a Washington speech that the president would be justified in decertifying Iran even if it was technically honoring the accord.

Iranian officials have said that any resumption of the nuclear-related sanctions by the United States would violate the deal.

Whether that would lead to its unraveling is unclear, but President Hassan Rouhani of Iran has suggested the country could quickly restore the nuclear-fuel enrichment capabilities that had been limited by the agreement.

The signers of the statement urging Mr. Trump to respect the agreement are experts in nuclear nonproliferation diplomacy from around the world.

The Washington Post **Fix or nix the Iran nuclear deal, Netanyahu demands ahead of Trump meeting**

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

7-9 minutes

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks to Argentine and Israeli business executives during a visit to Buenos Aires on Sept. 12, 2017. (Javier Caamano/European Pressphoto Agency-EFE)

JERUSALEM — The Iranian nuclear deal is “bad” and needs to be fixed or canceled, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said ahead of a visit to the United States, where he is expected to meet President Trump and push for changes.

An Israeli official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity ahead of the discussions, said the Israeli government’s main concern is the “sunset clause,” which sets expiration dates on limits imposed on Iran’s nuclear program.

Changes to those provisions are among several demands Netanyahu will present to Trump during their meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, according to a report Wednesday on Israel Army Radio.

Israel’s opposition to the Iranian nuclear deal is not new, but analysts say Netanyahu probably sees a new window of opportunity to change it. Global concern over North Korea’s nuclear program is mounting, and Trump has

repeatedly signaled a desire to kill the Iran deal.

The new impetus comes as Israel nervously watches Iran and its proxy force Hezbollah build a presence in neighboring Syria, where they are fighting in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Netanyahu has accused Iran of building sites in Syria and Lebanon to produce missiles.

Iran could abandon its nuclear agreement with world powers “within hours” if the United States imposes any more new sanctions, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Aug. 15. Iran could abandon its nuclear agreement with world powers “within hours” if the United States imposes any more new sanctions. (Reuters)

Iran could abandon its nuclear agreement with world powers “within hours” if the United States imposes any more new sanctions, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Aug. 15. (Reuters)

“Our position is straightforward. This is a bad deal. Either fix it — or cancel it. This is Israel’s position,” Netanyahu said in Argentina on Tuesday night as he toured South America before traveling to New York for the U.N. General Assembly.

According to the agreement’s sunset clause, after 10 years, Iran will be able to increase the number of centrifuges it operates beyond the current limit of 5,060. The centrifuges are used to enrich

They included Nobuyasu Abe, commissioner of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission; Hans Blix, former director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Thomas E. Shea, a former safeguards official at the International Atomic Energy Agency; and Thomas M. Countryman, a former assistant secretary of state for international security and nonproliferation.

The statement was organized by the Arms Control Association, a disarmament advocacy group based in Washington.

The Trump administration’s concerns with Iran have come as the United Nations Security Council, prodded by the United States, has ratcheted up pressure on North Korea to stop its nuclear and missile testing and resume disarmament talks.

Kelsey Davenport, the director for nonproliferation policy at the Arms

Control Association, expressed worry that if the administration abandoned the Iran agreement, any possibility of inducing North Korea to negotiate would be lost.

“Given that we are already struggling to contain the North Korean nuclear and missile crisis, it would be extremely unwise for the president to initiate steps that could unravel the highly successful 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which would create a second major nonproliferation crisis,” she said.

Correction: September 13, 2017

An earlier version of this article referred incorrectly at one point to the director for nonproliferation policy at the Arms Control Association, The director, Kelsey Davenport, is a woman.

uranium. Israel would like to see this time frame extended or made indefinite.

Other restrictions, including a 300-kilogram cap on Iran’s stockpile of low-enriched uranium, last 15 years.

Netanyahu has said often that as the agreement runs in its current form, it shortens the breakout time for any Iranian development of nuclear weapons. After 10 years, he has said, this breakout time will have shrunk to zero.

However, the agreement stipulates in its opening paragraph: “Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons.” So if Iran waited 10 or 15 years for sunset provisions to expire before building a nuclear bomb, it would still be breaking the accord.

According to the Army Radio report, Netanyahu will also ask Trump to prevent Iran from conducting research in the nuclear field and developing advanced-stage centrifuges, with much higher power.

In addition, the report said, Israel will demand that Iran cease developing long-range missiles and that a clause be added to the agreement to limit Iran’s support of organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which Israel and the United States consider terrorist groups.

Spokesmen for the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the prime minister’s

office declined to confirm whether Netanyahu would raise these issues with Trump. But Yaakov Nagel, former director of Israel’s National Security Council, said in a radio interview that these demands are nothing new and are in keeping with Israel’s position from the beginning of negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program.

“Israel has not changed its position,” Nagel said. “Even when the agreement was signed, we said there were three or four clauses that were really bad. The deal that exists basically gives Iran the right to develop uranium.”

The president must inform Congress every 90 days about whether Iran is complying with the nuclear agreement. The next report is scheduled for Oct. 15.

Earlier this month, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, said the president has grounds to declare Iran noncompliant, raising speculation about whether he intends to keep the United States in the pact.

Trump has also slammed the agreement, which was reached two years ago between Iran on one side and the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany on the other. It gave Iran relief from nuclear-related economic sanctions in return for curbs on Tehran’s nuclear program.

In July, however, following a meeting between Trump and his senior national security advisers, his

administration told Congress that Iran has been complying with the nuclear deal.

Haley pointed to breaches in the amount of heavy water — which is used in certain kinds of nuclear reactors — that Iran was allowed to have and its refusal to open up all its sites for inspection as grounds for declaring Iran to be noncompliant.

With deep concern over North Korea's nuclear tests, there is currently an "opportunity" to send a message over the Iranian threat, said Yossi Kuperwasser, a researcher at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and a former director of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs.

The day's most important stories.

"It's clear that if we don't do anything, Iran will become a new North Korea, except more dangerous," Kuperwasser said.

Speaking at a counterterrorism conference in Tel Aviv on Monday, Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett called on the United States to throw its full economic weight behind sanctioning Iran.

Meanwhile, Intelligence Minister Israel Katz said the prime minister must demand that Trump freeze, change or cancel the agreement.

"The lesson to be learned from the Korean case is that dialogue and compromise with dictatorships seeking nuclear capability, rather than decisive action, ultimately leads to crossing the threshold and changing the rules of the game," he said.

Today's Headlines newsletter

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Saudi Arabia Clamps Down as Crown Prince Consolidates Power (UNE)

Margherita Stancati and Summer Said

7-9 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 7:23 p.m. ET

Saudi Arabia is stamping out traces of internal dissent in a far-reaching campaign targeting influential clerics, liberal thinkers and even princes as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman moves to consolidate power ahead of his expected accession to the throne.

In the past week, Saudi authorities have detained more than 30 people, roughly half of them clerics, according to activists and people close to those who have been detained. The campaign goes beyond many of the government's past clampdowns, both in the scope of those targeted and the intense monitoring of social media posts by prominent figures. It is not known if any charges have been filed.

"This is unlike anything Saudis have experienced before," says Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi political commentator who left the kingdom recently and now lives in self-imposed exile in the U.S. "It was becoming so suffocating back at home that I was beginning to fear for myself."

Saudi officials didn't comment about the crackdown.

The detentions are seen by some Saudi and Western observers as part of a wider effort by Prince Mohammed to shore up control over the kingdom.

In recent months, the government has also barred several senior princes from traveling abroad, according to several people close to the royal family. They include a brother of King Salman. The princes were unreachable for comment.

Prince Mohammed leapfrogged an older cousin in June to become first in line to succeed King Salman, his octogenarian father. Prince

Mohammed has become the country's de facto day-to-day ruler.

King Salman is planning to abdicate in his son's favor, say people close to the royal court. But the timing isn't clear.

"Mohammed bin Salman is definitely preparing to become king," said a Saudi adviser to the government. "He wants to tackle the internal debate about him becoming the king and focus on consolidating his power, rather than doing that while being distracted by dissidents."

The government has denied an abdication is planned, but several people close to the royal family say preparations have already started. The transfer of power, which several people close to the royal family had expected to occur this month, is likely to take place late this year or early next year, these people say.

King Salman is due to travel to Russia and the U.S. on official trips, in October and January, respectively.

The clampdown on dissent "is symptomatic that the transfer of the throne is nearing, even if it will not be as imminent as we thought," said a Gulf-based Western diplomat.

Most of the people detained in the past week have two things in common: They have a large social media following and haven't supported the Saudi government in its monthslong dispute with neighboring Qatar. Many are close to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood movement.

The Saudi government earlier this week said it had arrested people whose behavior was helping "foreign parties" and harming the nation's interest. It didn't name those people. "This is a very specific network of people who were planning, under the behest of foreign agencies, a grand plan to destabilize Saudi Arabia," said a person familiar with the matter,

referring to the people who were detained.

The clampdown also comes ahead of antigovernment protests that activists based outside Saudi Arabia are planning for Friday.

"They want to give a strong warning to all Saudis: You are either with us or you are against us," said a Saudi activist.

Those detained include 15 Saudi clerics, according to activists. Many are former religious fundamentalists who took part in the antigovernment Islamic Awakening movement in the 1990s and who have ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, a group banned in Saudi Arabia, and whose views have since moderated. The most prominent among them is Salman al-Odah, who has some 14 million Twitter followers. He couldn't be reached for comment.

The Saudi government crackdown on clerics has drawn the attention of extremist groups, such as al Qaeda. On Wednesday, the group urged the Saudi religious establishment to challenge the Saudi royal family.

"How can the grandsons of the Prophet and his Companions become slaves of the Family of Saud and its fool-headed tyrants?" the terrorist group said, according to SITE Intelligence group, which monitors extremist activity.

Some people who spoke out against a program to transform the oil-dependent Saudi economy, which is spearheaded by Prince Mohammed, were also detained.

Among them is Essam Al-Zamil, a popular commentator, who cast doubts on how much the government could raise with a sale of up to 5% of Saudi Arabian Oil Co., the national oil company, according to activists and people who know him. Prince Mohammed has said the sale could value the company at \$2 trillion at least. Mr. Al-Zamil couldn't be reached.

Prince Mohammed has taken care to ensure the pace of economic changes doesn't cause too much pain for ordinary people. The Saudi government has backed away from some measures, such as a planned increase in fuel prices.

Within the royal family, the meteoric rise of Prince Mohammed has sowed divisions. Some members opposed the decision to sideline the former crown prince, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, a powerful former minister of interior who was close to Washington. His movements have been limited since the line of succession was reshuffled in June, according to people close to the royal court. The government denies restricting his movements.

Last week, government authorities detained a minor royal who had criticized the decision to remove Prince Mohammed bin Nayef from the line of succession.

In addition to leading the economic overhaul, Prince Mohammed has backed muscular foreign-policy moves, such as waging a war in neighboring Yemen and imposing an embargo on rival Qatar.

Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries broke ties with Qatar in June, citing its support for Islamist groups like Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and its alleged ties to terrorist organizations, a claim Qatar denies.

Since then, Riyadh has warned that anyone who shows sympathy toward Doha could face punishment. Last month, the government launched a campaign asking Saudis to expose to authorities people who tweeted in favor of Qatar or against Saudi interests. Over 400 people have so far been questioned by Saudi authorities over the Qatar crisis, according to the London-based human rights group ALQST.

"The country is going through a major economic transformation that

is supported by the people—a transformation that will be painful and hard to do, and that requires unity,” said Mr. Khashoggi, the

Saudi now living in the U.S. “Instead, they are encouraging intimidation.”

Write to Margherita Stancati at margherita.stancati@wsj.com and Summer Said at summer.said@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 14, 2017, print edition as 'Saudis Clamp Down As Prince Consolidates Power.'

The Washington Post

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

9-12 minutes

MOSUL, Iraq — The collapse of the Islamic State in its most important Iraqi strongholds has brought a rare moment of hope for a country mired in war for most of the past four decades.

It is also a moment of peril, as Iraq emerges from the fight against the militants only to be confronted with the same problems that fueled their spectacular rise in 2014.

Old disputes between Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds over territory, resources and power already are resurfacing as the victors of the battles compete to control liberated areas or jostle for political advantage in the post-Islamic State landscape.

These rivalries now are compounded by the mammoth task of rebuilding the towns and cities destroyed by the fighting, returning millions of displaced people to their homes, and reconciling the communities that once welcomed the Islamic State's brutal rule as preferable to their own government's neglect and abuse.

A failure to manage the post-conflict situation risks a repeat of the cycle of grievance and revolt that fueled the original Iraqi insurgency in 2003, and its reincarnation in the form of the Islamic State after 2011, Iraqis and other observers say.

But it is a vast and potentially insurmountable challenge, laid bare in the traumatized communities of Mosul. In the city's relatively unscathed east, life has bounced back. Traffic clogs the streets, music blares from markets and stores are piled high with consumer goods, such as cellphones, air conditioners and satellite dishes, that were banned or hard to find under Islamic State rule.

In the ravaged west, which bore the brunt of the fighting, entire neighborhoods have been leveled beyond repair. In the Old City alone, 230,000 people have been left without habitation, and “they are not going home soon; the whole district has to be rebuilt,” said Lise Grande, the deputy special representative of the U.N. mission in Iraq.

ISIS is near defeat in Iraq. Now comes the hard part. (UNE)

So far, there is no sign of any reconstruction effort on the scale that will be required, said Hoshiyar Zebari, a former Iraqi foreign minister who is from Mosul and now works as an adviser with the Kurdish regional government.

“All the writing is on the wall that there will be another ISIS,” he said, using an acronym for the Islamic State. “The scale of frustration. The lack of hope. The lack of government stepping in. What can you expect?”

Meanwhile, distractions loom as Iraq's focus shifts to the long-standing political rivalries that were put on hold by the imperative of confronting the Islamic State.

The Kurdish region is pressing ahead with a referendum on independence — over the strenuous objections of Iran, Turkey and the United States — that has the potential to ignite a new war before the present one is over. The vote is reopening the contentious question of where the borders of the Kurdistan region lie, and tensions are rising in areas where the Kurdish peshmerga forces and Iranian-backed Shiite militias have been brought face-to-face by the war against the Islamic State.

Rifts are emerging within Iraq's governing Shiite majority, which rallied behind the country's security forces and militias — known as al-Hashd al-Shaabi, or the popular mobilization units — for the sake of fighting the Islamic State. There are sharp divergences, however, over the future identity of the country, over whether it should tilt further toward Iran or maintain an alliance with the United States, and over how far to go to reconcile minority Sunnis with the Shiites.

These issues are expected to come to the fore in elections due in the spring that could become a focus for conflict as the political parties behind the Iranian-backed militias that played a big role in the fighting seek to capitalize on their victories by winning a bigger share in parliament.

The country's Sunnis are in disarray, scattered among refugee camps or returning to wrecked homes in towns and cities that have been laid waste. Some 2 million of the 5 million people displaced by the fighting over the past three years have returned home. But 3.2 million still live as refugees,

mainly in dismal camps, according to the United Nations. Many have no homes to which they can return, and others fear retribution from neighbors or the security forces, Grande said.

[ISIS: A catastrophe for Sunnis]

In Mosul, there is relief that the militants have gone but also trepidation about what the future holds. Multiple militias roam the streets, loyal to a variety of political masters, government ministers, tribal leaders and members of parliament. The government security forces are spread thin, and some have been withdrawn and deployed elsewhere for the other battles still to be fought before the final territorial defeat of the militants.

Some of the armed men in Mosul are local Sunnis, trained as part of a U.S.-promoted initiative to include locals in the city's future security arrangements. Others are members of the Iranian-backed Shiite militias that were kept out of the battle for fear they would inflame sectarian tensions, but that have moved in to set up offices and recruit local allies.

The militias are needed because there are not enough police and other security forces personnel to keep the city safe, said Mohammed al-Sayyab, a businessman originally from the majority-Shiite city of Basra who heads a small Sunni fighting force controlled by the minister of education. “We cannot say it is 100 percent safe. It is 70 percent safe,” he said. “There are still ISIS sleeper cells. We are working to clear them, but we are up against a very clever enemy.”

Few think the Islamic State has gone away. Everyone, it seems, has a story about someone they know who was with the militants and has reappeared in their neighborhoods, sometimes after being detained and freed. Corruption within the security forces and judiciary contributes to the perception that Islamic State fighters have bought their way out of prison.

Omran Mohammed Bashir, 32, who runs a laundry in eastern Mosul, ticked off on his fingers the former Islamic State members he has seen around his area and elsewhere in the city. Among them are a relative who has not been detained, even though her father reported her to the security services, and a man who commanded the fighters in Bashir's neighborhood; Bashir ran

into the man while visiting a different part of Mosul.

“I don't think there will be any support for another insurgency. The people of Mosul have learned a lesson,” he said. “But it's unpredictable what will happen, especially if the situation continues like this, with no reconstruction and corruption inside the government.”

[After victory over ISIS, Mosul discovers the cost]

But Iraq has no budget for reconstruction, government officials say. Years of declining oil prices and the financial demands of the war against the Islamic State have left the country bankrupt, forced last year to take a bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

The absence of a discernible reconstruction plan in turn fuels perceptions among Sunnis that the Shiite-led government is neglecting them, said Hassan Alaf, the deputy governor of Nineveh, the province in which Mosul lies.

“It seems some of the politicians are not keen to bring life back to Mosul,” he said. “We still suffer from sectarian conflict, and its implications are reflected in the reconstruction.”

It will be left to the international community to come up with the money to repair the damage, much of it caused by the relentless airstrikes and artillery bombardments conducted under the auspices of the U.S.-led coalition formed to fight the Islamic State, according to Grande, the U.N. representative. The United Nations is planning a fundraising conference in Kuwait this month at which it will seek up to \$100 billion in donations for Iraqi reconstruction.

But the countries that enthusiastically prosecuted the war are proving less willing to pay to fix the resulting damage, U.N. and aid agency officials say. The U.S. military has spent \$14.3 billion on fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria over the past three years, according to Pentagon figures, but just 10 percent of that — or \$1.4 billion — on repairs.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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The State Department has asked for \$300 million to fund basic repairs such as fixing electricity and water systems in 2018, but the United States does not plan to contribute to the reconstruction effort. The U.S.-led military coalition "is not in the business of nation-building or reconstruction," Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said earlier this year.

One glimmer of hope lies in a recent rapprochement between the Iraqi government and Saudi Arabia, which have been icily estranged since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion brought a Shiite-dominated government to power in Baghdad. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has visited the kingdom, and so has the Iraqi Shiite cleric Moqtada al-

Sadr, who has broken ranks with Iran's Shiite allies in Iraq to champion calls for reconciliation with Sunnis.

U.S. and U.N. officials hope the wealthy Arab states of the Persian Gulf will provide much of the funding. But they are embroiled in their own conflicts, disputes and

budget shortfalls, and may not have the will or inclination to come up with the many billions of dollars required.

Kareem Fahim, Louisa Loveluck and Mustafa Salim contributed to this report.

**The
New York
Times**

ISIS Convoy Reportedly Crosses Syria, at Russia's Request

Rod Nordland

4-5 minutes

An Islamic State convoy stuck in the middle of the Syrian desert for more than two weeks because of American airstrikes finally reached eastern Syria late Wednesday night, according to reports from citizen journalist groups in the area. The convoy reached territory held by the Islamic State, despite vows by the American-led coalition fighting the group that it would not be allowed to do so.

There was no official confirmation of the reports, which were from credible contacts in eastern Syria that were monitored in Damascus, the capital. A spokesman for the coalition, Col. Ryan Dillon, said early Thursday in Baghdad that he had no comment on the matter. The reports said that the remnants of the convoy, which originally carried 600 Islamic State fighters and their family members, had reached Mayadin in eastern Deir al-Zour Province, near the border with Iraq.

The coalition announced last Friday that it was removing surveillance aircraft from the vicinity of the convoy at the request of the Russian authorities, because Russian warplanes were involved in supporting a Syrian Army advance into Deir al-Zour Province. That advance took the Syrian forces directly past the area where the convoy was stranded, near the town of Sukhna.

The convoy, originally consisting of 17 vehicles — buses and ambulances — and escorts from the Lebanese Hezbollah militia group, had been stuck near Sukhna, on the main highway from Damascus to the city of Deir al-Zour, where the Syrian Army claimed it ended a blockade by the Islamic State last week. The convoy was whittled down to 11 vehicles when six returned to Syrian government territory in western Syria, coalition officials said.

In a deal brokered by Hezbollah, the Islamic State militants and their families had been allowed to leave an area on the Lebanese-Syrian border in exchange for turning over

the bodies of Lebanese soldiers and Hezbollah militants, as well as an Iranian officer of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. They were promised free passage to the town of Abu Kamal, in the southern part of Deir al-Zour Province.

But the American-led coalition bombed the highway to prevent the convoy from advancing and carried out airstrikes against Islamic State units said to be coming to the convoy's aid, but did not strike the convoy itself because of the presence of women and children.

Coalition officials said the American military and its allies were not a party to the deal among Hezbollah, Lebanon, Syria and the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, and did not want to let ISIS fighters return to the battlefield. Iraq also criticized the deal because the convoy's intended destination, Abu Kamal, is near Iraqi battlefronts against ISIS.

According to the antigovernment sources monitored in Damascus, once the American surveillance aircraft withdrew from the area on Sept. 8, the convoy was free to move, but Hezbollah extracted

further concessions from the Islamic State, including the release of a Hezbollah prisoner of war, Ahmed Martouk, who was turned over alive. In exchange, Hezbollah turned over two ISIS leaders to the group. The convoy was allowed to cross through government-held territory to Mayadin, near the Iraqi border, about halfway between Deir al-Zour and Abu Kamal. The antigovernment sources estimated that the convoy had been reduced to about 200 fighters, plus family members; others had sneaked away.

The convoy's predicament was another indication of the declining fortunes of ISIS in the region. It lost its last major city in Iraq, Tal Afar, the week before, and coalition-backed forces have taken much of the city of Raqqa, the ISIS capital, as well. But the latest development illustrates the complexities of the Syrian battlefield, where both American-led coalition aircraft and Russian planes are backing rival factions, some of which are fighting one another as well.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Moscow Acknowledges Effort to Woo Donald Trump's Administration

Thomas Grove

4-5 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 5:12 p.m. ET

MOSCOW—The Kremlin said Wednesday it had sent President Donald Trump's administration a road map earlier this year aimed at restoring ties between Moscow and Washington, but it said the U.S. didn't respond in kind to its overtures.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said suggestions to reopen diplomatic and military channels "were handed over to the American side in various formats."

"Moscow has consistently advocated for a renewal of dialogue, for an exchange of opinions and an attempt to look for joint solutions," Mr. Peskov said. "But unfortunately, we weren't met with reciprocity here."

Mr. Peskov was asked about proposals to re-establish military and intelligence contacts that were contained in a document and sent to the Trump administration, as BuzzFeed first reported Tuesday. The document, reportedly sent in March, included specific meetings and deadlines to advance a series of initiatives meant to boost trade and even establish joint working groups on cybersecurity and counterterrorism.

At the White House, the National Security Council wouldn't confirm or deny the report of a Russian communiqué.

"This administration came into office hoping to be able to improve relations between the U.S. and Russia and it is unfortunate that that hasn't been able to happen," an administration official said. "We don't see that as our fault."

A month into his presidency, Mr. Trump lauded the prospect of better

relations with Russia. Ties sagged to a post-Cold War low during former President Barack Obama's administration, following Russia's move to annex the Crimea region of Ukraine.

Optimism was also high in Moscow that the new Trump administration would move to bring about a sea change in U.S. policy toward Russia.

However, diplomatic relations between Russia and the U.S. have remained strained amid a spiral of sanctions and counter-sanctions that have cut embassy and consular staff and closed diplomatic properties in both countries, largely degrading diplomatic contacts.

Mr. Trump hasn't acted on his expressed desire to improve relations with Russia. His political capital in regard to Russia is limited due to a continuing investigation into whether officials from his campaign colluded with Moscow. In

July, Congress overwhelmingly voted for sanctions against Russia in retaliation for Moscow's alleged meddling in the 2016 presidential election. Mr. Trump signed the sanctions bill but called the measures "seriously flawed." He and his campaign aides have denied any collusion.

Moscow, which has denied allegations it meddled in the election, has threatened additional measures in retaliation. Russian officials have floated the idea of introducing economic sanctions on U.S. firms operating in the country, but President Vladimir Putin said in July that such measures weren't yet necessary.

One of the main diplomatic channels recently established for the two sides to air grievances is a series of bilateral talks between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Tom Shannon. The two met

this week in Helsinki, Russian news agencies reported Wednesday.

—Peter Nicholas in Washington contributed to this article.

Write to Thomas Grove at thomas.grove@wsj.com

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**The
New York
Times**

Russia's War Games With Fake Enemies Cause Real Alarm (UNE)

Andrew Higgins
10-12 minutes

Russian-Belarusian military exercises in 2013 near Kaliningrad. Some analysts fear that this year's version could be a prelude for military aggression. Alexey Druginyn/Ria Novosti

MOSCOW — The country does not exist, so it has neither an army nor any real citizens, though it has acquired a feisty following of would-be patriots online. Starting on Thursday, however, the fictional state, Veishnoriya, a distillation of the Kremlin's darkest fears about the West, becomes the target of the combined military might of Russia and its ally Belarus.

The nation was invented to provide an enemy to confront during a six-day joint military exercise that is expected to be the biggest display of Russian military power since the end of the Cold War a quarter-century ago.

The exercise, known as Zapad-2017, is the latest iteration of a series of training maneuvers that began under the Soviet Union in the 1970s. After a long break following the collapse of communism, Zapad was revived in 1999 and then was expanded after Vladimir V. Putin became president at the end of that year.

Zapad, "west" in Russian, used to include military forces from countries under the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet-led military alliance whose non-Soviet members have now all joined NATO. Today, the military exercise has shrunk to just two participants — Russia and Belarus — but it is still viewed warily by military planners in the West.

It comes at a time of deteriorating relations between Russia and the West, with Washington and Moscow trading diplomatic penalties seemingly weekly. From bitter experience over Russian election meddling and military adventurism in recent years, Western officials have developed a deep distrust of the Kremlin's motives and its proclamations of good intentions.

There are fears that Moscow may be moving far more troops into Belarus than it intends to withdraw, establishing a permanent military presence there on the border with NATO countries. And officials in the Baltics and Poland have voiced

alarm that the exercises could be used as a cover for Russian aggression, as happened in 2014, when Moscow staged large-scale exercises to camouflage preparations for its annexation of Crimea and intervention on the side of pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine.

"NATO will be monitoring the exercises closely," the alliance's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said in an interview recently in Brussels, the site of NATO's headquarters. Russia, he said, is entirely within its rights to train its forces, but has stirred unease by routinely skirting mutually agreed upon rules designed to calm jitters.

"The lack of transparency increases the risk of misunderstanding, miscalculations, accidents and incidents that can become dangerous," Mr. Stoltenberg said. He called on Russia to "respect both the letter and intentions" of the so-called Vienna Document, which commits Russia and Western nations to report all exercises with more than 13,000 troops or 300 tanks and to allow foreign observers to monitor those that do.

The West has been bracing for the Russian exercises for months. Then, late last month, a scenario outlined by the military leadership in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, described the main task for this year's Zapad program: to repel aggression by Veishnoriya, a fictional country that is backed by the West and intent on driving a wedge between Russia and Belarus. The scenario also includes two other fake countries, Lubeniya and Vesbasriya, which form a coalition with Veishnoriya to menace Russian security.

The Baltic States and Poland, which fear that the fictional nations invented by Zapad planners are thinly disguised proxies for their own countries, say they believe that the number of Russian troops taking part in Zapad-2017 could reach 100,000.

Western nations conduct war games, too, of course. This summer, the United States led an allied force of 25,000 in exercises in Eastern Europe. But the West follows the rules in the Vienna Document, and allows Russian observers to keep a watch.

Russia, Mr. Stoltenberg said, has a record of exploiting loopholes in the Vienna Document, habitually

understating the number of troops taking part in war games by tens of thousands.

Moscow and Minsk insist that this week's Zapad exercise will involve just 12,700 troops. This means that, like all previous Russian military exercises since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, it weighs in just under the 13,000-troop threshold and is therefore free of observers from the West.

Protesters in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, rallied on Friday against the joint war games with Russia that begin this week. Some fear that Moscow will leave thousands of troops behind. Tatyana Zenkovich/European Pressphoto Agency

But Estonia's defense minister, Margus Tsahkna, has pointed to a tender issued this year by Russia's Ministry of Defense for more than 4,000 railway wagons to transport military equipment and soldiers to Belarus. The figure suggests that far bigger military contingents would be on the move than declared, the minister said, a sign that Moscow may intend to leave some behind.

The United States military has echoed such worries, with Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, who heads the Army forces in Europe, describing Zapad as a possible "Trojan horse" that would send in Russian forces but not take them out.

Belarus, which depends on Russian supplies of cheap energy to keep its economy afloat and shares Mr. Putin's belief that the West is plotting to sow division and even to invade, says it has no such concerns itself.

Military exercises, including those conducted by NATO, often feature invented enemies, a practice that blurs their real purpose and avoids upsetting real countries that do not like to be used as a punching bag for military training — especially when this involves simulated nuclear attacks. Western experts say they believe that Russian war games in 2009 and 2013 included simulated nuclear strikes against Warsaw and Stockholm.

The three fake countries at the center of the Zapad-2017 drills, however, have taken on a virtual life of their own online. While it is not clear who is behind it, a clearly pro-Western satirical Twitter account issues regular announcements in the name of the Veishnoriya

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and displays pictures of the fake country's passport, flag, national currency and other national symbols, all of them invented.

"We are deeply concerned about the concentration of Belarusian military equipment at the borders of Veishnoriya," reads one message posted by the nonexistent nation's Foreign Ministry. Others include a call for volunteers from "brotherly countries" to repel an invasion from the east and warnings that Veishnoriyans are "warlike beasts" who will not surrender.

Veishnoriya also has a lively account on Vkontakte, the Russian equivalent of Facebook, with posts of beautiful Veishnoriyan women and natives in what is said to be traditional Veishnoriyan clothing. It also has fierce supporters on Facebook, where one fan provided a tongue-in-cheek "historical note" about the nonexistent country's martial spirit: "Throughout its history, Veishnoriya hasn't lost a single war."

Russia has dismissed Western anxieties over Zapad-2017, saying that the exercises are purely defensive. Fueling unease is Russia's silence on what exactly the exercises will involve. Belarus has invited foreign military attachés based in Minsk to watch and released some details of its war games with Russia, including airstrikes and tank battles on Sunday and Monday.

But it is not clear that the attachés will have the freedom they need to move about and to talk with soldiers. Moscow, for its part, has said only that the exercises threaten nobody and will involve operations in Belarus, in Russia's Western Military District and in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, next to Poland.

This vagueness, according to NATO officials in Brussels, continues a pattern of obfuscation deeply entrenched since the Soviet era.

A declassified C.I.A. report on Soviet military exercises prepared in the 1980s said that deception was always a central feature of Moscow's training program, with Soviet forces deploying elaborate ruses to camouflage the real number of troops and purpose of their major exercises. It noted that a Soviet naval exercise designed to practice landing troops on islands off Denmark, a member of NATO,

had been disguised as training devoted to the defense of Soviet shores.

Measures taken to deceive NATO, the C.I.A. report said, included leaking fake information on Soviet radio frequencies monitored by the West and planting disinformation through human agents. In some cases, the Soviet military deployed special "camouflage forces" that operated "in

totally different regions" from those taking part in a real exercise "so as to mislead NATO intelligence." It also generated phony radio traffic "in a manner intended to deceive foreign intelligence to the type of the exercise, its aim, conduct etc."

Foreign observers from NATO were never allowed to watch Soviet-era Zapad exercises, and diplomats based in Moscow were barred from visiting regions where the exercises

were taking place. That was supposed to change with the signing of the Vienna Document, adopted in 1990 by the Vienna-based Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and updated in 2011, but Russia has always found ways to circumvent the agreement.

Mr. Stoltenberg, the NATO secretary general, said he could not speculate about the real purpose of

Zapad-2017, saying that this would become clear only once it was over next week. At the same time, he noted, the exercise fits a "pattern of a more assertive Russia" that is "exercising more aggressively" and, through its actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, has shown that "it is willing to use military force against its neighbors."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

James Hookway

11-14 minutes

Updated Sept. 13, 2017 9:12 p.m. ET

In the Indonesian market town of Cianjur, new rules require government workers to clock in with their thumb prints at a downtown mosque to confirm attendance at morning prayers. That's on the order of district chief Irvan Rivano Muchtar, who also wants a 10 p.m. curfew for the town and is sending police to stop teenage girls and boys hanging out without parental supervision.

The 36-year-old elected official, who belongs to a mainstream, secular political party, likes traveling and listening to bands such as Coldplay. These days, he said, Islam is the key to political success.

Hard-line Islamic groups are using the country's democratic system to promote new, Shariah-based laws, and have built support among citizens with charity work and public preaching. Being pulled in their wake are politicians such as Mr. Muchtar, and in concert, these forces are tipping a country known for its moderate brand of Islam toward the more politicized form associated with the Middle East.

"I didn't come from a pesantren, so I have to learn and follow the culture," said Mr. Muchtar, using the local term for an Islamic school. "I'm ready to recite the Quran, and sing rock 'n' roll."

Indonesia, the world's most populous Islamic country, has laws protecting the rights of Christians and other groups, a robust democracy and an open economy attracting investors such as Toyota Motor Co. and Samsung Electronics Co. There is a Hooters restaurant in Jakarta, where female staff in skimpy outfits serve up spicy chicken wings and frosted glasses of beer.

Curfews, Obligatory Prayers, Whippings: Hard-Line Islam Emerges in Indonesia (UNE)

In recent years, lobbying groups such as the Islamic Defenders Front have helped introduce more than 400 Shariah-inspired laws, including those that penalize adultery, force women to wear headscarves and restrict them from going out at night.

They are supported by a popular mood that has turned more religiously conservative. Protesters last month forced officials to cover a 100-foot statue at a Confucian temple they called an affront to Islamic traditions. Over the past year other conservatives have demolished statues in Java and Sumatra depicting characters from traditional, pre-Islamic folk tales.

Women wearing headscarves are more visible, and the wait time for the limited permits to attend the Hajj to Mecca has risen to 30 years, from two years in 2000, according to government data.

Local elections take place across the country next year, and a presidential vote is scheduled for 2019. Some political analysts and local leaders expect conservative Muslims to expand their footprint. Some potential challengers to President Joko Widodo, a religious moderate, already are aligning themselves with hard-liners. "They are playing the long game," said Sidney Jones, a director at the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict in Jakarta.

One hard-line group that has seen success is the Islamic Defenders Front, known locally as FPI. In April it helped engineer the electoral defeat of Jakarta's governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, a Christian and close ally of Mr. Widodo.

The group and other conservative Muslims accused Mr. Purnama of blasphemy, a criminal offense, and organized mass protests to demand his prosecution. He lost re-election, was convicted and is serving a two-year prison sentence.

"The [Jakarta] governor election turned the FPI into something bigger than it had ever been before," said Ms. Jones. "No one

would have thought of it as a political power broker, and now that's the role it has assumed."

The FPI's vision is clear. "The end goal is for [Indonesia] to be based on Shariah," said Slamet Maarif, the group's spokesman. That includes being whipped for violating rules concerning alcohol and extramarital sex.

"If you want to practice Islam, you cannot just be cherry picking. You should follow everything," he said.

Other groups involved in the protests against Mr. Purnama question the economic influence of Indonesia's minority ethnic-Chinese population, many of whom are Christian. Islamic leader Bachtiar Nasir, leader of the National Movement to Safeguard the Fatwas of the Indonesian Ulema Council, wants Indonesia to follow its neighbor Malaysia by introducing an affirmative-action program to provide indigenous Indonesians with better access to capital and contracts.

Mr. Widodo, the president, was caught off guard by the strength of the Purnama protests, which were among the largest in Indonesia's history, according to a person familiar with his thinking.

After not engaging with protesters for weeks, Mr. Widodo joined them at a prayer rally once Mr. Purnama's political survival seemed in doubt.

More recently, his administration banned Hizbut Tahrir, a group that dreams of making Indonesia part of an international Islamic caliphate. During his annual state of the nation speech to parliament last month, the president, dressed in a traditional sarong instead of the usual business suit, said the country must unite behind its founding principles of respect for different faiths.

Police are investigating FPI founder Rizieq Shihab on suspicion of breaking Indonesia's strict pornography laws, which were

approved partly at the FPI's behest several years ago, after he allegedly exchanged lewd text messages and images with a female admirer. Mr. Shihab, who has taken refuge in Saudi Arabia, denies wrongdoing.

Mr. Widodo has encouraged moderate Muslim groups to join his efforts to reassert Indonesia's older, more inclusive traditions. One group, Nahdlatul Ulama, or Awakening of the Muslims, was formed in 1926 to resist ascetic strains of Islam from the Arabian peninsula. It is providing safe houses for people who have come under attack from the FPI for criticizing Mr. Shihab.

Indonesia began tilting toward a more austere version of Islam about two decades ago. A sprawling nation of 18,000 islands, it has long had a hard-line minority kept in check by a strong central government.

After the fall of autocrat Suharto in 1998, Jakarta devolved some powers to local provinces to prevent the rise of another dictator. Around the same time, Saudi Arabia began spending hundreds of millions of dollars to build mosques and schools in Indonesia to export its fundamentalist strain of Islam. FPI's founder, Mr. Shihab, attended a Saudi-funded Islamic university in Jakarta and later studied in Saudi Arabia.

Many hard-liners view Aceh province, on the northern tip of the island of Sumatra, as a role model. After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which killed nearly 170,000 people in the province, Indonesia's government offered even more autonomy to local leaders to help speed reconstruction. The leaders introduced Shariah laws, based on Islamic teachings. In 2015, the laws were further tightened to permit caning for a wide range of moral offenses, from selling alcohol to gay sex.

A public caning there in May made national headlines. Ten people, including two men who had sex with each other, and an unmarried

heterosexual couple who had been alone together, were struck by hooded enforcers in front of a roaring crowd.

Aceh remains the only place in Indonesia where Shariah forms the basis of the criminal code. Polling data is sparse, but a 2013 Pew Research Center survey found that 72% of Indonesian Muslims favored applying Shariah principles nationwide.

The FPI, with its cell-like organization and its followers' white, paramilitary-style uniforms, is the most visible example of the growing strength of Indonesia's conservative religious groups.

In its early days the group was known for smashing up Jakarta bars or scrawling graffiti such as "Jew-Free Zone." U.S. diplomats have said the FPI served as a kind of paramilitary force for the police to extract bribes from brothels and other illegal businesses.

Mr. Maarif, the group's spokesman, acknowledges working with police "like brothers" but denies being paid to do so.

Over time, the FPI revised its strategy to widen its appeal. It found new audiences on Facebook and other social media—often teenagers and young men.

FPI stepped into the national scene in the mid-2000s, when it drummed up protests against a no-nudes Indonesian edition of Playboy magazine. In 2012 it forced Lady Gaga to scrap a Jakarta concert, and the following year it compelled a Miss World pageant to move from the capital to the predominantly-Hindu island of Bali.

It successfully lobbied Indonesia's Supreme Court in 2013 to overrule the government and allow local authorities to restrict sales of alcohol, arguing it was eating away at traditional Islamic values. In 2015, national authorities banned convenience stores from selling beer and liquor, contributing to the decision of the local franchisee for 7-Eleven to close its 160-plus stores in the country earlier this year.

"We still wreck bars. I want to emphasize that we still do that," said Novel Bamukmin, another FPI leader with a punchy preaching style. But he said the group has used social media to grow. "We can reach a lot more people now."

On Sept. 6, the FPI led a rally in Jakarta to protest Myanmar's treatment of its Rohingya Muslim minority.

The group now has offices in 30 of Indonesia's 34 provinces. It relentlessly raises funds at prayer

rallies, and has built public support through charitable projects.

Over the past year it has been preaching and handing out food, water and tarps in Jakarta's poor Kampung Akuarium neighborhood after the city government demolished homes for a new luxury housing development, displacing residents who worked nearby at the fishing port.

"They're still helping us. It's important just to know that someone is there because this situation is so stressful," said Suyitono, a 63-year-old. (Many Indonesians use one name.)

The outreach programs reinforce Islamic values in many areas, said Fatah Sulaiman, a vice rector at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University in Serang, a city just east of Jakarta where the FPI also has a strong presence. "The politicians don't have much choice but to follow," he said.

The FPI had been looking for a way to oust Mr. Purnama, the former Jakarta governor, for years because it objected to the city of 14 million being ruled by a Christian. When Mr. Purnama last year made a lighthearted reference to a Quran verse that said Muslims shouldn't be led by members of other faiths, the FPI accused him of blasphemy.

The group helped organize protests in Jakarta, including one with an estimated 500,000 people, many dressed in white, to demand his prosecution.

When campaigning began for the April elections, the FPI backed Anies Baswedan, a former university rector with a reputation as a moderate who cultivated the group's support by meeting with them and reassuring them he had a conservative stance on social issues such as gay rights.

Mr. Baswedan won the vote comfortably. His political mentor, Prabowo Subianto, a politician who ran against Mr. Widodo for president in 2014 and is a likely presidential candidate in 2019, publicly thanked the FPI for its help in the win.

The FPI is now focusing on swaying the election in West Kalimantan province, on the island of Borneo, by putting up posters and holding prayer rallies. When the Christian governor there leaves office after reaching his term limit next year, they want to make sure a conservative Muslim succeeds him.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Nations and James Hookway in Yangon, Myanmar

5-6 minutes

Updated Sept. 13, 2017 5:22 p.m. ET

A push by the Myanmar military to clear Rohingya villages and drive hundreds of thousands of members of the Muslim ethnic group into Bangladesh drew censure on Wednesday from the United Nations Security Council.

The council called on Myanmar to end the military operation, amid charges that the military leadership that runs the country alongside Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi is pursuing a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Ms. Suu Kyi on Wednesday canceled her trip to the U.N. General Assembly to deal with the situation, the Myanmar government said.

The Council limited its action on Wednesday, however, to avoid criticizing Ms. Suu Kyi and empower her to confront her country's military, diplomats said.

U.N. Security Council Calls on Myanmar Military to Halt Campaign

Farnaz Fassihi at the United Nations and James Hookway in Yangon, Myanmar

After U.N. officials briefed Security Council diplomats at a closed-door meeting on Wednesday on what they described as graphic details of the unfolding "catastrophe," the council expressed concern about reports of excessive violence during security operations and called for steps to end the violence, re-establish law and order, and ensure the protection of civilians.

Myanmar says it is battling a group of "extremist militant terrorists," the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, or ARSA.

Adding to the threat of prolonged conflict, al Qaeda's central leadership urged Muslims to travel to Myanmar and support the Rohingya "financially, militarily, and physically."

"The savage treatment meted out to our Muslim brothers in Arakan by the government of Myanmar...shall not pass without punishment," it said through its media arm, according to SITE Intelligence Group.

ARSA and its founder, Ata Ullah, say it is defending the Rohingya and highlighting decades of repression the Muslim group has

endured in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, where most have lived along the border with Bangladesh.

The U.N. said Myanmar's military has disproportionately attacked and killed civilians, burned villages, conducted mass arrests and laid land mines in response to an attack on the police by ARSA militants on Aug. 25. The drive has pushed more than 370,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh, according to the International Organization for Migration.

The militant group at the center of the crisis, ARSA, and its founder, Ata Ullah, say it is defending the Rohingya and highlighting decades of repression the Muslim group has endured in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, where most have lived along the border with Bangladesh.

The U.N. human-rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, said the Myanmar operation "seems like a textbook example of ethnic cleansing."

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said on Wednesday that he couldn't find a better expression than "ethnic cleansing" to describe the situation, and called for

Myanmar to end military action and recognize the right of return of those who had to leave the country.

Mr. Guterres called Myanmar and North Korea the top two crisis items on the agenda when world leaders gather in New York for the U.N. General Assembly next week. He had written to the Security Council on Sept. 2 urging it to act—the first time since 1981 that a sitting secretary-general had written a letter to the Security Council, Mr. Guterres said.

The council's statement, however, delivered orally after the conclusion of the meeting, is the weakest form of diplomatic action at its disposal. Possible heftier measures include a presidential statement, an open debate and a resolution.

"There is no excuse for [the Security Council] to sit on their hands....They don't need to walk on egg shells," said Louis Charbonneau, the United Nations director at Human Rights Watch.

Security Council diplomats have said that while they can't remain silent, they don't want to fully abandon support for Ms. Suu Kyi.

A Security Council diplomat said that Ms. Suu Kyi was “under the thumb” of the military and that her allies in the West “were seeking to embolden her” to take a stand. China, diplomats said, opposed stronger Security Council action or

public pressure on Ms. Suu Kyi.

The Nobel laureate leads Myanmar in name but under the terms of the army-drafted constitution cedes much of her power to the military.

U.K. Ambassador Matthew Rycroft said it was time for Western diplomats with connections to Ms. Suu Kyi to use their relationship to get action and prevent violence.

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The Washington Post

Caryl : The Rohingya tragedy is turning into a global crisis

By Christian Caryl

6-8 minutes

DemocracyPost

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

By Christian Caryl

DemocracyPost

Opinion

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September 13 at 5:46 PM
Kashmiri students shout slogans during a protest against the treatment of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, in Srinagar, capital of the Indian-administered Kashmir, on Sept. 13. (Tauseef Mustafa/AFP/Getty Images)

Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's de facto ruler, has just canceled her planned visit to the U.N. General Assembly next week. Usually world leaders jump at the chance to hog the spotlight in New York, but Burma's famous Nobel Peace Prize laureate apparently has more pressing business.

A government spokesman says that she's needed at home due to the turmoil in Burma, where about 379,000 members of the Rohingya minority have fled across the border to Bangladesh since late August. He also claims that the authorities have been tipped off to the possibility of terrorist attacks.

All of that may well be true. But there's a more likely reason for Aung San Suu Kyi's decision to stay

home: a rising storm of global indignation over the treatment of the Rohingya, who have been facing what a top U.N. official recently described as “ethnic cleansing.” The Burmese military has been attacking Rohingya villages, often accompanied by violent vigilantes, in retaliation for raids on police outposts by a Rohingya insurgent group that killed 12 people last month. Hundreds of Rohingya, who are overwhelmingly Muslim, have died in the crackdown, and dozens of their villages have been burned down by the attackers, who are mostly from Burma's Buddhist majority.

DemocracyPost

Opinions illuminating the challenges facing democracy around the world

Two years ago, when Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won a landslide victory in Burma's first free and fair election in decades, many of her supporters in Burma and around the world cheered a rare victory for freedom in an era when dictatorships appear to be on the rise. Yet since then her international prestige has plummeted — largely due to her failure to defend the Rohingya. On Sept. 6, she caused global headlines by blaming the crisis on fake news created by “terrorists.”

Over the past few days she's been assailed for her inaction by fellow Nobel Prize winners Muhammad Yunus, Desmond Tutu and Malala Yousafzai. Even Pope Francis has taken up the Rohingya cause.

It's good to see international humanitarians giving voice to a long-suffering group. But there's a more ominous dimension to the growing international scandal. It's inflaming Muslims around the world, who see their co-religionists as the

latest victims in a global clash of civilizations.

The Rohingya have long suffered persecution in Burma, where a 1982 law denies them citizenship and a system of virtual apartheid restricts their movements. Burmese nationalists insist that they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, even though many have lived in the country for generations.

Over the past two weeks, their harrowing exodus has turned what was once a smoldering human rights scandal into an international cause celebre. Demonstrators — many of them Muslim — have taken to the streets to demand justice for the Rohingyas in Malaysia, Canada, Israel, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Australia. Protesters in Jakarta, Indonesia, burned photos of Aung San Suu Kyi and threw a gasoline bomb at the Burmese embassy. Dozens of others were arrested by Russian police this past weekend when they turned up to protest in the center of St. Petersburg.

The crisis is already adding fresh accelerant to a variety of sectarian confrontations around the world. It's already causing complications in India, where Hindu nationalists have been urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to expel Rohingya refugees. Modi, indeed, is one of the few world leaders to support Burma's policy on the Rohingya, a stance that is likely to aggravate his own Muslim population. At the same time, Malaysia and Indonesia — both Muslim-majority countries — are growing increasingly exasperated by Burma's harsh handling of its Islamic minority.

The nascent Rohingya insurgency, which has ties to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, adds an especially explosive ingredient to the regional

mix. Al-Qaeda has issued a statement calling on Muslims around the world to give “military support” to the Rohingya.

And, as so often in the past, strongmen from around the Islamic world are only too keen to seize on the opportunities afforded by emotional imagery of suffering Muslims. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has dispatched his foreign minister and his wife to bring aid to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh — a convenient distraction from his continuing authoritarian crackdown at home. The Iranians have denounced the Rohingya predicament as an Israeli plot. Saudi Arabia has harshly criticized the Burmese while predictably glossing over its miserable treatment of the Rohingya refugees living in its own borders.

And, in perhaps the most bizarre example, the leader of the Russian republic of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, recently rallied tens of thousands of people for the Rohingya cause in his regional capital (though Russian media largely passed over the event). Observers noted that Kadyrov was keen to burnish his global credentials as a Muslim leader.

What is clear is that Burma's policies toward its vulnerable Muslim minority are resonating far beyond its own borders. The Rohingya tragedy has been a blot on Burma's struggling democratic transition for some time. But now it is poisoning global politics to a degree that we are only beginning to appreciate. The international community needs to take action before it's too late.

The New York Times

Editorial : Follow Kenya's Lead on Plastic Bags

The Editorial Board

3-4 minutes

Last month, Kenya took strong action to tackle the scourge of plastic bags. Simon Maina/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Plastic bags are often used for a few minutes before enjoying an eternal afterlife, clogging storm drains, stuffing landfills, killing animals that eat them and contributing to the eight million metric tons of plastic that end up in the world's oceans every year.

Last month, Kenya took strong action to tackle the scourge. Manufacturers and importers of

plastic bags now face fines of \$19,000 to \$38,000 or four-year-jail terms. Retailers can no longer sell plastic garbage bags. Shoppers risk having plastic bags confiscated.

The ban imposes more difficulties on many Kenyans than just the inconvenience of getting reusable bags. Poor residents of Nairobi rely on plastic bags as “flying toilets” in the absence of a functioning

sewage system and of public toilets that don't charge a fee. The solution is to provide more toilets and latrines.

These human waste-filled bags clog trenches leading to the Nairobi River and have been blamed for the flooding that regularly menaces the city. In 2015, plastic bags clogging waterways were blamed for flooding

that killed at least 150 people in Accra, Ghana.

More than 40 countries, including China, France and Rwanda, have taxed, limited or banned plastic bags. By 2019, those bags can no longer be handed out free in Europe.

These measures are effective. After England imposed a 5-pence charge

on plastic bags in 2015, use dropped 85 percent in the first nine months.

In 2014, California became the first American state to ban plastic bags, and many American cities have acted to curb plastic-bag use.

While Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York and the State Legislature scuttled a New York City law to

impose a 5-cent fee on plastic bags early this year, Mr. Cuomo has since formed a task force to come up with legislation. That law cannot come soon enough. New York City alone collects 1,700 tons of used plastic bags every week.

The United Nations, which estimates that, by weight, there will be more plastic than fish in the world's oceans by 2050 if the world

doesn't act, has begun a #CleanSeas campaign to eliminate the use of plastic microbeads and single-use plastic bags by 2022.

Kenya and more than 40 other countries are acting now to help meet this goal. There is no excuse for the rest of the world to wait.

ETATS-UNIS

THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL

GOP to Release Tax Overhaul as Trump Says Rich Won't Benefit

Richard Rubin
9-11 minutes

Updated Sept. 13, 2017 5:58 p.m.
ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump said Wednesday the emerging Republican tax proposal won't cut taxes for the wealthy, and they may go up, an assurance that appeared to contradict the plan that his administration and GOP leaders are drafting.

Mr. Trump, speaking before a meeting with a bipartisan group of House members, said he expects wealthy Americans "will not be gaining at all" under the tax overhaul he wants Congress to pass with a view toward creating new jobs and helping middle-class taxpayers.

"The wealthy will be pretty much where they are," Mr. Trump, a Republican, said. "If we can do that, we'd like it. If they have to go higher, they'll go higher, frankly."

GOP leaders, who are hoping to overhaul the nation's tax code by year's end, signaled they will release a more detailed framework for the high-priority initiative during the week of Sept. 25.

For months, Republican congressional leaders have been negotiating among themselves and with the White House behind the scenes, but their public comments have been vague. The looming announcement of tax details will set the stage for a series of tough votes pitting industries, geographic regions and GOP factions against one another.

If Mr. Trump insists that the wealthy don't benefit from the tax changes, it would shake up the tax debate. But he made similar comments before without altering the core of his tax proposals. For instance an April statement released by the White House called for lowering top tax rates.

The comments were striking this time because they come so close to the release of the tax plan and on the heels of a narrow deal with Democrats last week on government funding, storm aid and raising the national-debt ceiling.

The contradictions point to the broader challenge the White House and congressional leaders face trying to unify a wide range of competing interests over taxes, even within the Republican Party.

Mr. Trump's comment Wednesday sparked immediate derision from some Democrats. In a tweet linked to a news report quoting the president saying the rich won't benefit, Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon wrote: "Right, and next year I'm playing in the NBA."

Republicans, including Mr. Trump, have been talking about repealing the estate tax, eliminating the alternative minimum tax, lowering taxes on capital gains and dividends, cutting taxes on corporations, reducing tax rates on individuals and creating a special lower tax rate for businesses that pay taxes on their owners' individual tax returns.

Those proposals tend to benefit high-income households and would be difficult to square with Mr. Trump's latest comments.

Republicans do want to eliminate the deduction for state and local taxes, which also benefits the top sliver of taxpayers and would counteract some of the other changes. However, they have identified few other changes that would prevent the top 1% of taxpayers from benefiting from rate cuts.

Republicans said the rate cuts on businesses and investment are essential to boosting the economy, and focusing on preventing tax cuts for the top 1% would drastically change their agenda.

"My goal is to lower taxes on every American if it's possible, help them keep more of what they earn and

encourage them to reinvest back in the local economy," Rep. Kevin Brady (R., Texas), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said after Mr. Trump's remarks.

Mr. Brady outlined the fall schedule Wednesday. Republicans hope to finish the budget process—a prerequisite for fast-tracking a tax bill through the Senate without Democratic votes—by mid-October. The tax bill would come after that, and House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) voiced confidence on Wednesday that the whole process could be done by the end of the year.

Republicans will have little margin for internal opposition on each vote because they're likely to get few, if any, votes from Democrats, who say the plan is too tilted to high-income households and corporations.

"Instead of people talking past each other as is happening right now, there can be more of a direct discussion about where this is headed," said Rep. Peter Roskam (R., Ill.)

Republicans generally agree that they want lower tax rates and a simpler system, but they're split on how deeply they want to cut taxes and whether any of the tax cuts will expire. Those divides must get bridged soon because some of these issues must be embedded in the budget resolution.

That budget resolution will set the size of any tax cut. Under the fast-track rules known as reconciliation, the tax bill can't increase deficits beyond the length of the budget, typically 10 years. Getting an agreement could be a particular challenge in the Senate, where Republicans control 52 of the 100 seats.

Congress should make the budget window as long as 30 years and set the tax cuts to expire far in the future, Sen. Ted Cruz (R., Texas) said on Wednesday. That is almost as good as a permanent tax cut, he

said, echoing the calls for deep tax cuts made by Sens. Rand Paul (R., Ky.) and Pat Toomey (R., Pa.).

Mr. Cruz said Congress should "dispense with the handcuffs of revenue-neutrality," the idea that a new tax system should raise just as much money as the old one. Mr. Ryan wouldn't answer directly on Wednesday when asked by the Associated Press whether the bill should be revenue neutral.

The House budget is in a rough spot, too. It came out of committee in July, but House leaders haven't put it up for a vote yet. Conservatives have been balking at adopting a budget without tax details and they're insisting on tying spending cuts to the tax bill.

The need to pass a budget has created a bit of a conundrum for the GOP. Some Republicans, including Rep. Mark Meadows of North Carolina, the leader of a conservative group of lawmakers, have been clamoring for more details on the evolving tax plan before they are willing to advance the budget. But the tax bill's writers need the budget and its revenue targets so they can lay out all the specific details.

"We need it like now. ASAP," said Rep. Dave Brat (R., Va.) "They've been promising that to us for four or five months. We're going to get you the bullet points, we're going to get you the details."

Mr. Brady has been working with top officials from the Senate and the Trump administration on the GOP tax agenda this year. Their goals are to lower tax rates and simplify the tax system, but they are struggling with the arithmetic and political choices needed to get there.

Mr. Trump met Wednesday with a bipartisan group of House members on taxes after meeting with a bipartisan group of senators Tuesday night. Mr. Ryan said he would bet that some House Democrats will vote for the eventual tax bill.

Rep. Henry Cuellar (D., Texas) said Mr. Trump told the group he was going to give bipartisanship “a shot” on taxes. “If it doesn’t work, we’ll go back to the old way,” Mr. Trump told the group, according to Mr. Cuellar.

House Republicans are trying, as much as possible, to work from the same framework as the Senate and Mr. Trump’s administration so that any disputes are over finer points and not the broad aims and outlines.

Lawmakers are still working through the trade-offs needed to drive down tax rates. Mr. Trump wants to lower the 35% corporate tax rate to 15%, though most analysts think that is

nearly impossible.

“You can get it to 20, but everybody’s going to come in and complain. So then you just have to assume that’s going to get back up to 25. It depends how many people complain,” said Rep. Devin Nunes (R., Calif.). “If we’re below 25, I think it would be good.”

House Republicans are bracing for a flurry of interest-group lobbying once they show which tax breaks would get curtailed.

Limits on the deduction for business interest would meet resistance from the private equity, real estate and agriculture industries.

“You could scale that,” said Sen. John Thune (R., S.D.). “You don’t

have to do away with the deductibility of interest expense, but there are some ways in which you could probably achieve some savings.”

House members from New York and New Jersey are resisting a plan to repeal the deduction for state and local taxes.

“I want to keep an open mind,” said Rep. Tom Reed (R., N.Y.). “We can’t do tax reform with the mindset we’re just going to carry forward the status quo.”

He also floated the idea of scaling back the state and local tax deduction instead of eliminating it.

Scaling back tax breaks instead of repealing them would make it

harder for lawmakers to lower tax rates, potentially eroding support from Republicans looking for as deep a rate cut as possible.

“It needs to be substantial or you’re going to be having some people who have problems with it,” Rep. Mark Walker (R., N.C.) said.

—Siobhan Hughes and Kristina Peterson contributed to this article.

Write to Richard Rubin at richard.rubin@wsj.com

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

5-7 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 7:08 p.m. ET

Republicans know that their hold on Congress depends on passing tax reform, but what we hear about the debate behind the scenes is worrisome. The danger is that, as with health care, the GOP will hold themselves hostage to a budget process that is hostile to pro-growth tax policy.

The first test will come soon as the House and Senate write a budget resolution that is essential to be able to pass tax reform with 51 Senate votes. The problem is that under the arcane rules of “reconciliation,” legislation cannot raise the deficit beyond the budget “window” that is usually 10 years. Tax writers thus feel obliged to “pay for” any tax cut based on estimates from the Joint Committee on Taxation and Congressional Budget Office, though such estimates are notoriously unreliable predictors of growth and tax receipts.

The GOP might trap itself inside this budget box. House Speaker Paul Ryan has already conceded publicly that cutting the corporate tax rate to 15% from 35% is unrealistic and the rate might have to be in “the mid-to-low 20s.” House Republicans have already abandoned a cut in the top individual tax rate, and death-tax repeal could also be on the

Editorial : Escaping the Tax-Reform Budget Trap

The Editorial Board

chopping block.

The risk is that Congress ends up passing a tax cut that is a damp squib for economic growth—amid an expansion that is already long by historical standards and needs a capital investment boost.

Congress can increase its pro-growth running room by eliminating tax loopholes, and we hope they do. But some of the biggest money savers are politically difficult—even among Republicans. Repealing the state and local tax deduction gins up more than \$1 trillion over 10 years, but will the GOP delegations in high-tax California and New York buy that? Deductions for charitable giving and mortgage interest have been declared untouchable.

The Joint Tax Committee is also supposed to offer a dynamic “score,” or an estimate that considers how a reform would influence behavior and growth. But Joint Tax makes highly debatable assumptions: One is that deficits increase borrowing costs for Treasury and “crowd out” private investment, as the Tax Foundation has detailed. That argument should have been repudiated in the 1980s when deficits rose but interest rates fell and growth soared. But Joint Tax persists, and the effect is to mute its growth estimates and thus any revenue gains from reform.

The best way to escape the budget trap is to have the courage of GOP tax convictions and assume reform will restore the economy to faster growth. CBO predicts average GDP

growth over the next decade of a mere 1.9% a year—far below the historical norm. It assumes this will yield some \$43 trillion in revenue. But if growth merely averaged 3% a year, that would add some \$2.5 trillion more in government revenue over a decade.

The Trump Treasury is also scoring reform’s budget impact, and Congress is free to use it or any other revenue estimate. Democrats and the media would shout, but revenue estimating is hardly an exact science. The Joint Tax Committee-CBO estimate is merely one guess, and it has often been wrong.

For instance: Dan Clifton of Strategas Research Partners looked at forecasts for capital-gains revenue after the Bush 2003 cuts. In January 2004 CBO predicted \$215 billion in capital-gains revenue through 2007. The actual figure was \$377 billion thanks to investors cashing in and faster economic growth.

Another escape route would follow Pennsylvania Senator Pat Toomey’s advice and extend the budget window to 20 years from 10. The decade horizon is merely a convention, and Congress never follows the budget anyway. Recall how Democrats gamed the Affordable Care Act by claiming that nationalizing the student-loan market would raise revenue.

A third—if less than ideal—option would be to ignore any budget window. But this would mean that

much of the tax reform would expire after 10 years, as the Bush tax cuts of 2003 did. The bet would be that future politicians wouldn’t dare raise taxes in 2027, but that depends on who runs Congress and the White House.

The bigger problem is that temporary tax reform won’t eliminate the uncertainty that has contributed to low capital investment. If Congress goes this route, it should strive at least to make the business tax rates permanent, as well as the “territorial” tax reform that would let companies pay taxes wherever they are located around the world.

One reason Republicans lost the health-care debate is that they bowed to CBO’s estimates of coverage and premiums, though they knew those guesses were surely wrong. On taxes the GOP is caught in a similar procedural trap invented by Democrats in the 1970s, but voters will judge the Republican Congress based on results—economic growth and rising wages. A reform that merely cuts taxes for some without broader prosperity won’t deliver the goods.

And here’s a losing argument for 2018: We didn’t reform the tax code or cut your taxes all that much, but at least we followed all the Senate’s budget rules.

Appeared in the September 14, 2017, print edition.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Rove : The 30 Republicans Holding Up Tax Reform

Karl Rove

5-6 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 6:53 p.m. ET

No matter how persuasive President Trump is, it’s unlikely he can round up enough Democrats to

get 60 votes in the Senate for tax reform. That means Republicans will need to use the Senate’s reconciliation process, which avoids the filibuster, to pass their plan with

51 votes. But first the House and Senate must pass a budget resolution—and soon.

A budget resolution sets spending levels and authorizes congressional committees to prepare bills fulfilling the blueprint. With the reconciliation plan in mind, this year's resolution would set the size of the tax reform and then instruct the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee to flesh out the provisions.

Gaining agreement on a budget resolution is always tough. No more than a handful of lawmakers from the opposition party ever vote for the majority's resolution. It helps that Republicans control both the House and Senate, but the GOP must still resolve its internal philosophical disagreements.

House Republicans tend to insist on resolutions that balance the budget within 10 years. This means resolutions that pledge to slow substantially the growth of entitlement spending. Such promises are rarely fulfilled. But putting them in the budget blueprint fuels Democratic ads claiming Republicans will throw grandma off the cliff and deprive poor children of free school lunches. Knowing this, Senate Republicans tend to want resolutions that reach balance after 10 years. Another GOP tension is between defense hawks, who want increased military spending, and deficit hawks,

who want all spending restrained or cut.

Then there are nerdy but important technical arguments, starting with how the resolution's spending baseline is calculated. Beginning with a baseline of "current law" means assuming that a tax break currently authorized for only a year or two will actually expire instead of being reauthorized. But Congress renews some tax breaks annually and probably will keep doing so through the next decade. To account for this, many in the GOP want to calculate the baseline under "current policy."

It sounds technical, but it quickly becomes political. Democrats demand "current law" because a higher baseline would make tax reform appear to raise the deficit more than it actually would. On the other hand a lower baseline would give tax reform more wiggle room: One GOP budget expert tells me that "current policy" would provide, on paper, \$450 billion that could be used to lower rates and make the tax code simpler and fairer.

Dynamic scoring is another geeky fight. A tax reform that generates economic growth will offset some of the government revenue lost from cutting rates. Republicans want their bill evaluated with dynamic scoring because it takes this effect

into account and makes reform more attractive. Democrats oppose it for the same reason.

Still, given time and leadership—both on Capitol Hill and from the White House—Republicans could cobble together a budget resolution setting up a strong tax reform, which in turn would juice the economy and redeem the GOP in the midterms.

The biggest obstacle is the House Freedom Caucus. This group of just over 30 Republican congressmen has already slowed up the process by threatening to vote with Democrats against the GOP budget resolution unless they can see and approve, in advance, every major provision of the tax-reform bill. The Freedom Caucus tried in late July to block the House Budget Committee's passage of a resolution unless the border-adjustment tax was taken off the table—which it then was. Now the Freedom Caucus's members say they'll flake on the budget resolution if tax reform includes full, immediate expensing of business investment. But if that's agreed to, they'll have more demands.

These lawmakers say they want Congress to operate in "regular order," with committees grinding away to write legislation instead of leadership handing it down. This is

hypocritical bunk. What they want is for their caucus to dictate the details of tax bills to the House Ways and Means Committee, the Senate Finance Committee and the Republican majorities on both sides of Capitol Hill. Their approach is to make demands while threatening to join Nancy Pelosi in opposing the budget resolution unless they get their way.

If the Freedom Caucus acts on its threat, the budget resolution could be voted down, making tax reform impossible. No doubt, following their M.O., the group's members would then blame the GOP leadership. Even if the resolution passes, the Freedom Caucus's shenanigans may delay tax reform until 2018. These lawmakers are demonstrating once again that the freedom they most prize is freedom from the responsibility of governing.

Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of "The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Duggan

3-4 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 6:54 p.m. ET

Businesses with 500 employees or fewer are the cornerstone of the U.S. economy. There are 29.6 million of them in the U.S., and they represent 99.9% of all businesses. Small businesses employ 58 million Americans, or 48% of the workforce.

Congressional leaders and the White House have been working on tax reform. They say their aim is to boost the economy and make the tax system more competitive globally. Advocates correctly note that America's 35% corporate tax rate is much higher than in competing countries such as Ireland and China, with their 12.5% and 25% rates, respectively.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Hackman

7-8 minutes

Duggan : Cut Business Taxes for the 99.9%

Juanita D.

What gets lost in the conversation is that three-quarters of American small businesses pay taxes as individuals. Their top federal rate is 43.3%, which is substantially higher than the current top rate for large multinational firms. When state burdens are added, small businesses are sending close to half their income to the tax man.

Small businesses also face an enormous regulatory burden, forcing them to spend thousands of hours on compliance. It's no wonder the economy has been flat, despite a soaring stock market. If the point of tax reform is to boost the economy, it must start with small business.

The National Federation of Independent Business asks its members periodically to evaluate 75 commonly faced problems. Last year, 5 of the top 10 problems were related to taxes. Their taxes are too high, they tell us. The tax code is too complicated. The cost of compliance in terms of money and

time is enormous. And the rules change too frequently.

We are encouraged that President Trump and congressional leaders acknowledge the need to reduce taxes for small businesses. Yet any change in rates that preserves the advantage currently enjoyed by large corporations would be a mistake.

Earlier this year, Mr. Trump proposed a tax-reform plan that would level the playing field by creating a single rate for all businesses. A single rate would be fairer, but tax reform must also ensure that the rates are lower for all small businesses.

No small business should pay more taxes than it currently does. That means a graduated system that cuts rates for the smallest businesses, allowing them to re-invest in new jobs, new machinery, new vehicles, technology and other capital improvements.

Tax reform cannot succeed if it doesn't simplify the tax code, which currently exceeds 70,000 pages. Each year, according to the Internal Revenue Service, small-business owners spend nearly two billion hours and \$18 billion to pay their taxes. Large corporations are able to deal with taxes with legions of lawyers, accountants and compliance professionals. Small-business owners must either do the work themselves or hire costly consultants.

Congress and the president have one chance to get this right. It won't be easy. Tax reform is fraught with political challenges, and without support from the largest and most important part of the economy—small business—it will fail.

Ms. Duggan is president and CEO of the National Federation of Independent Business.

Appeared in the September 14, 2017, print edition.

Senate Backpedals on Bipartisan Approach to Health Law

Michelle

Sept. 13, 2017 5:35 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Two groups of senators on Wednesday released the details of diametrically opposed

health plans, reflecting an enduring partisan split on health care despite calls for more bipartisanship after

the failed Republican effort to dismantle the Affordable Care Act.

A week after Republicans and Democrats held the first bipartisan hearing on ways to fix the 2010 health-care law, the Senate was once more divided on Wednesday, with one side continuing efforts to undo the ACA and the other pushing to expand government-sponsored health coverage.

Neither plan holds any appeal to the opposite party, and they lack even full support from their respective caucuses. That leaves the question of how Congress can move ahead on health care amid a widespread perception that the ACA is flawed but that Republicans don't have a politically viable replacement.

"I don't want to simply watch health-care costs increase and choices diminish even further while purists in Congress demand the unattainable," Sen. Orrin Hatch (R., Utah), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said this week.

Sens. Bill Cassidy (R., La.) and Lindsey Graham (R., S.C.) unveiled a bill to let states use federal ACA funds however they wish, possibly marking the final push in the current GOP effort to undo the ACA.

On the other side, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I., Vt.), along with 16 Democrats, debuted a plan to build a Medicare-like government insurance system that would cover all Americans.

Both proposals face such high hurdles that many health-care analysts believe Congress will be able to make incremental changes at best.

"'Small-bore' is the expression I would use for the range of possible bipartisan compromise," said Ted Marmor, emeritus professor of public policy at Yale University. But, he added,

"Universal health insurance is one of those topics that you don't easily compromise about—it's a moral dispute."

The highest-profile bipartisan effort, led by Sens. Lamar Alexander (R., Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D., Wash.), is struggling to gain traction, and the White House has suggested President Donald Trump wouldn't sign it. The Alexander-Murray proposal would authorize payments to insurers to offset subsidies to low-income consumers, while giving states added flexibility under the ACA.

At an event at the Capitol on Wednesday, Messrs. Cassidy and Graham introduced their plan to turn funding under the ACA into block grants, letting states use it to design their own health-care systems. The bill would also let states waive certain ACA rules, including one that prohibits insurers from charging higher premiums to people with pre-existing medical conditions.

Mr. Graham said Republicans "should keep fighting to the last tick of the clock" to repeal the ACA. A procedural shortcut allowing Senate Republicans to pass the plan with 50 votes, rather than the 60 typically needed, expires on Sept. 30.

But Sen. John Thune (R., S.D.) said Tuesday it would be "a double, double bank shot" for Republicans to pass the Graham-Cassidy legislation before the Sept. 30 deadline.

The White House has also been tepid in its support for the last-ditch repeal effort, with officials suggesting the president would sign the bill, but wouldn't throw his weight into campaigning for it. "I sincerely hope that Senators Graham and Cassidy have found a way to address the Obamacare crisis," Mr. Trump said Wednesday.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**
Board

2-3 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 7:08 p.m. ET

Hillary Clinton's memoir of her presidential campaign is getting most of the media attention this week, but that's the politics of progressive nostalgia. If you want to know where the Democratic Party is going, Bernie

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Editorial : Bernie's Socialism Goes Mainstream

The Editorial

Sanders showed the way Wednesday with his proposal for a complete government takeover of health care.

"Medicare for all," the Vermont Socialist calls it, and what was once a crank idea is fast becoming a progressive litmus test for Democratic candidates. Fifteen Democratic Senators endorsed it, including possible 2020 presidential candidates Elizabeth Warren (Mass.), Kamala Harris (Calif.) and even Cory Booker (N.J.) Hard to

At a separate event, Mr. Sanders unveiled his long-anticipated "Medicare for all" legislation, which would extend Medicare-like coverage to all Americans over a four-year transition period, with the eligibility age—currently 65 and older—lowering to cover the entire population. Private insurers wouldn't be allowed to compete with the government plan for basic coverage, but consumers could purchase supplemental policies.

The proposal would offer the suite of medical benefits required for some insurance plans under the ACA and would eliminate most out-of-pocket costs for consumers.

Mr. Sanders hasn't affixed a cost estimate to his proposal. As a presidential candidate, Mr. Sanders suggested that a similar plan would cost the government about \$14 trillion over a decade, an estimate that some health analysts said is likely low.

But ahead of his official announcement, Mr. Sanders released a paper outlining possible funding mechanisms, including a 7.5% tax on employers and a 4% payroll tax on individuals.

"While your taxes may go up to pay for this publicly funded program, that expense will be more than offset by the money you are saving by the elimination of private insurance costs," Mr. Sanders said.

Polling suggests Americans are warming to the idea of a single-payer health system—53% said they supported the idea in a June Kaiser Family Foundation poll, up from roughly four in ten in 2000. But support drops significantly when people are told the plan would mean tax increases and greater government control.

Several potential Democratic presidential contenders signed on to the Sanders bill, but the party has

by no means unified around it. Numerous centrist senators, several of whom face re-election in 2018, stayed mum Wednesday as more liberal colleagues celebrated the bill's launch.

Peter Hart, a Democratic pollster, said that it would be premature for Democrats to assume widespread support for single-payer legislation, and that they should instead focus on defending the ACA, which gained popularity during the Republican efforts to dismantle it.

"I think it's more important to attack them on what is wrong with what Trump is doing, rather than necessarily get way out in front on single-payer," Mr. Hart said.

In a modest bipartisan move on health care, a top Republican and Democrat announced Tuesday night they had reached a deal to reauthorize the popular Children's Health Insurance Program for five years and phase out enhanced funding for the program allotted by the ACA.

But the Alexander-Murray proposal showed little sign of progress Wednesday, and aides said the continuing partisan activity on both sides was hampering the effort.

"With the clock ticking and a lot of energy going into very partisan health-care proposals, there's not much room for bipartisan action to stabilize the insurance market," said Larry Levitt, a senior vice president at the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

—Kristina Peterson contributed to this article.

Appeared in the September 14, 2017, print edition as 'Bipartisan Approach on Health Stumbles.'

believe, but not long ago Mr. Booker was posing as a moderate.

The Sanders bill would expand Medicare—now available to people 65 and older—to the entire U.S. population over four years. Our readers understand how expensive such "free" medical care would be in runaway costs for taxpayers and rationed care in the form of the long waiting lists that exist in other socialist systems.

But no one should think this can't happen here. The Republican

failure on health care guarantees the continuing decline of ObamaCare and that creates an opening for Democrats to escalate their designs for more government control. Barack Obama once told us that he favored such a single-payer system but America wasn't ready for it. But in an era of political tumult, anything can happen, all the more so when millennials can't remember the 1990s, much less the Cold War. All the old battles are new again.

Trump Makes Deal a Priority Over Party

Kristina Peterson

and Rebecca Ballhaus

7-9 minutes

Sept. 14, 2017 12:48 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump's negotiation toward a second agreement with congressional Democrats in a week confirmed his willingness to partner with Democrats to push his legislative agenda and further muddled the political calculus on Capitol Hill.

The emerging immigration deal Mr. Trump closed in on with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) over dinner at the White House Wednesday night made clear that Mr. Trump is prioritizing legislative progress and momentum over party alliance. The Democrats said the outlines of a deal were in place; the White House called the talks "constructive" but said no agreement had been reached.

The new dynamic left congressional Republicans uncertain how Mr. Trump would act in the coming push to overhaul the tax code, as well as the expected fight when the government's current funding expires in early December.

After an August recess marked by frequent barbs from Mr. Trump aimed at Republican lawmakers, Congress returned to Washington this month to find a president far more eager to work with Democrats after lambasting them as "obstructionist" earlier in the year. Since his return, the president has sided with the opposing party on a proposal to raise the government's borrowing limit for just three months, signaled he wants a bipartisan approach to tax reform, and invited more than a dozen Democratic lawmakers to the White House just this week.

Still, Wednesday night's agreement marked less of an undermining of congressional GOP leaders than the previous week's accord, when Mr. Trump overrode the objections of his own Treasury secretary and a group of GOP leaders in a meeting in the Oval Office to strike the short-

term deal on the debt limit.

Mrs. Pelosi and Mr. Schumer said Wednesday night they had agreed with Mr. Trump to give legal status to undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children, along with an increase in border security—largely tracking what House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) had called for as recently as Wednesday morning. Mr. Ryan didn't comment on the agreement Wednesday night.

Democrats have said their ability to unify their rank-and-file has helped boost their leverage in discussions with Mr. Trump. Mr. Ryan acknowledged that the intraparty divisions within the GOP have weakened his negotiating firepower.

"Yeah, that does affect us," Mr. Ryan said in an interview with the Associated Press streamed live Wednesday. When "I don't have 218 votes, it's hard for me to drive good bargains."

If lawmakers can quickly finalize an immigration deal, it would help Republicans avoid a divisive issue during primary season. Mr. Trump's six-month deadline for Congress to address the deportation question meant the emotionally charged issue could have been voted on next spring ahead of congressional elections in November. Many Republicans had already suggested they would be open to a deal similar to what was emerging Wednesday night.

The deal raises questions about the president and his relationship with his conservative base. During the campaign, he energized supporters in part by emphasizing his willingness to adopt hard-line stances, such as his promise to rescind deportation protections as soon as he took office, while portraying rivals as weak on immigration.

Some Trump supporters were already complaining that the president hadn't vowed to veto any

bill that included "amnesty" for the so-called Dreamers.

"Unbelievable!" Rep. Steve King (R., Iowa) tweeted in reply to one of Mr. Trump's tweets on Wednesday night. "Amnesty is a pardon for immigration law breakers coupled with the reward of the objective of their crime."

Newsmax Chief Executive Chris Ruddy, a friend of Mr. Trump's, predicted the president would be criticized in conservative media outlets, such as Breitbart News, which is run by Steve Bannon, the president's former chief strategist.

But Mr. Ruddy said that would even out if Mr. Trump could secure a robust border security plan with Democrats.

"Steve and Breitbart folks will go bananas," Mr. Ruddy said late Wednesday. "If the deal is as it seems, the president is really giving up little but he will get a much more strengthened border package with Democratic support. Support from the Republican base for the president is rock solid, that won't change."

Breitbart's website on Wednesday evening bore the headline "Amnesty Don" and said Mr. Trump had "signaled a full-fledged cave" on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA.

One person close to the president characterized Mr. Trump's renewed efforts with Democrats partly as revenge against Mr. Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.), who have sought to distance themselves from the White House at times in recent months and have been critical of the president on some issues. Mr. Trump also felt misled by GOP leaders, who assured him during the transition that he could count on the quick passage of a health-care bill, a White House official said.

But the person close to the president also said Mr. Trump, a one-time Democrat who came to Washington without deep

Republican party loyalties, is intent on notching some legislative victories and has seen in the first eight months of his presidency that Republicans haven't been able to deliver on that front.

Mr. Trump also faces fewer competing voices within his own White House. This summer saw the departure of several top aides, most notably Mr. Bannon, his chief strategist, and former chief of staff Reince Priebus. Mr. Priebus's replacement, retired Gen. John Kelly, has sought to install better protocols in the White House and has ordered top aides to stay in their respective lanes, including allowing the legislative affairs team to operate without outside interference.

Wednesday night's deal suggested that Congress, which traditionally waits until the 11th hour to pass contentious legislation, could begin acting well in advance of its deadline with Mr. Trump driving to cut deals.

Lawmakers had widely expected over the summer to be fighting over the government funding right up until its Sept. 30 deadline, and many were astonished to have struck a deal last week extending it, along with hurricane relief and a suspension of the debt limit through Dec. 8. The latest deal suggests Mr. Trump and lawmakers may hammer out an immigration compromise well ahead of the March 5 date when the program shielding young immigrants from deportation would have ended absent congressional action.

—Michael C. Bender, Siobhan Hughes and Peter Nicholas contributed to this article.

Write to Kristina Peterson at kristina.peterson@wsj.com and Rebecca Ballhaus at Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Peterson

8-10 minutes

Updated Sept. 14, 2017 6:59 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Congressional Democrats said they reached a deal with President Donald Trump to give legal status to undocumented immigrants who were brought to the

Trump Says No Deal Reached on DACA (UNE)

Laura Meckler and Kristina Peterson

U.S. as children, but Mr. Trump on Thursday morning said no deal had been reached.

In a series of tweets Mr. Trump said there had been no agreement but he repeated his desire to aid this group of young immigrants who are currently protected by a program that he moved to end last week.

On Wednesday, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) said in a joint statement that, over dinner at the

White House, they had agreed with Mr. Trump on the outlines of a deal to enshrine protections for these young immigrants into law "quickly" and to "work out a package of border security, excluding the wall, that's acceptable to both sides."

A deal, if it materializes, would mark an extraordinary moment for lawmakers who have been unable to agree on any immigration legislation for many years. It would also mark a striking latest step on immigration for Mr. Trump. He

promised a hard line against illegal migrants in last year's campaign and last week killed off a program that gave young illegal migrants safety from deportation. At the same time, he urged Congress to find a solution for those affected before the protections expire in six months.

A White House statement called the dinner meeting constructive. But White House officials later disputed the Democrats' characterization that a deal had been reached. On

Wednesday evening, Marc Short, White House director of legislative affairs, had called the Democrats' statement "misleading in a lot of ways."

"We did agree to try to address DACA quickly. That doesn't mean we reached a deal on DACA in any way," he said in an interview.

Mr. Short said that the administration was "committed" to securing funding for Mr. Trump's promised southwest border wall but wouldn't "prejudge" whether that funding needed to be included in DACA legislation.

In recent days, both sides appeared to be edging toward the formulation outlined by the Democratic leaders, with Democrats agreeing to include border-security measures, and the White House signaling it would accept the immigrant protections without insisting that the legislation also include funding for the controversial southwest border-wall package.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Trump had courted Democrats on the subject at a bipartisan meeting, and the dinner Wednesday evening was at his invitation.

On Thursday, in one of his tweets, Mr. Trump also made a case for keeping the undocumented immigrants in the country. "Does anybody really want to throw out good, educated and accomplished young people who have jobs, some serving in the military? Really!....." he tweeted. He added: "They have been in our country for many years through no fault of their own - brought in by parents at young age. Plus BIG border security."

Even before the Democrats announcement of an agreement, these overtures had conservatives worried that the president would agree to a plan without strong immigration enforcement that Republicans favor. In response to those concerns, Mr. Trump said he was hoping for a bipartisan deal and planned to continue talking.

"Some of the greatest legislation ever passed, it was done on a bipartisan manner. And so that is why we're going to give it a shot," he told reporters.

Mr. Trump also raised the subject of the young immigrants at a bipartisan meeting of lawmakers that had been billed as a discussion on a tax overhaul.

Rep. Josh Gottheimer, a New Jersey Democrat who sat next to Mr. Trump during that meeting, said in an interview afterward that Mr. Trump made "clear that he is open and eager to get bipartisan legislation" to resolve the issue of these immigrants.

Other Democrats at the meeting said Mr. Trump appeared willing to consider the border wall funding separately from the discussion of the young immigrants but suggested he may want a package to include new limits on legal immigration.

Rep. Henry Cuellar (D., Texas) said that Mr. Trump also urged quick action. "I don't want to wait six months; people forget about it in six months," Mr. Cuellar said, quoting the president.

The issue has taken on urgency since last week, when the president set an end date for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA. In March, its 690,000 participants will begin to lose their work permits and protection from deportation.

On Wednesday, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) repeated his optimism that Congress can pass protections into law, saying it would "not be in our nation's interest" to kick these people out of the country. "There's got to be a solution to this problem," he said in an interview with the Associated Press streamed live online.

On Wednesday, Mr. Ryan and Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.) met with Mrs. Pelosi and other House Democrats for what was described as a preliminary

discussion on how to advance legislation addressing DACA. Afterward, people on both sides described the meeting as productive, but declined to give details.

"Discussions among the Republican conference will continue in the coming weeks," a Ryan spokeswoman said.

Mr. Ryan has said that the protections should be paired with border-security measures, and he favors additional spending for a border wall. But he hasn't insisted on funding for Mr. Trump's border wall or mentioned any other contentious enforcement provisions in connection with legislation aiding the DACA immigrants.

As conditions appear ripe for a deal, some Republicans fear an agreement that is overly favorable to Democrats. Democrats have long pushed for passage of the Dream Act, which would provide a path to citizenship for many of these undocumented immigrants, also called "Dreamers."

Conservatives say offering legal status to any illegal immigrants should come with new immigration enforcement, including measures to find and deport people living in the U.S. illegally, not just those trying to cross the border. They argue that they have significant leverage to force Democrats to accept this since DACA protections will begin to expire in March.

"Democrats have to get on board and realize they're not going to get anything they want if they don't help us fix the border-security issues and the interior security issues," Rep. Raul Labrador (R., Idaho), said Tuesday.

Two Republican aides involved in the issue added that all talk of an agreement has conservatives wary, and predicted that most Republicans would reject a deal that doesn't include substantial enforcement provisions.

Conservatives are pushing to include requiring businesses to use the E-Verify system to check whether potential employees are allowed to legally work, or measures cracking down on "sanctuary cities" that resist cooperation with federal immigration enforcement officials.

Even if Mr. Trump reaches an agreement with Democrats, it will be up to Republicans congressional leaders to bring it to the floor and sell it to their members.

Some Republicans are open to an agreement that simply pairs the Dreamer protections with border security, which could include more electronic surveillance of the border such as sensors or drones, or additional Border Patrol officers. It is unclear, though, how many votes they would bring to the floor.

Rep. Tom Cole (R., Okla.) said this week that even a Dream Act without any enforcement provisions would pass the House if it was allowed to come to the floor. But he added that "it's a lot easier for more Republicans to vote for it" if border security measures were included.

"Clearly, we have a lot of (undocumented) folks here mainly because we don't have adequate border security," he said. "While you're fixing the problem, you want to address the underlying problem."

—Siobhan Hughes and Rebecca Ballhaus contributed to this article.

Corrections & Amplifications
An earlier version of this article omitted the last name of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.). (Sept. 14, 2017)

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Write to Laura Meckler at laura.meckler@wsj.com and Kristina Peterson at kristina.peterson@wsj.com

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Trump, top Democrats agree to work on deal to save 'dreamers' from deportation (UNE)

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

9-11 minutes

President Trump meets Sept. 6 with Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and other congressional leaders in the Oval Office of the White House. (Evan Vucci/AP)

Democratic leaders announced late Wednesday that they agreed with President Trump to pursue a legislative deal that would protect hundreds of thousands of young undocumented immigrants from deportation and enact border security measures that don't include building a physical wall.

The president discussed options during a dinner at the White House with Senate Minority Leader

Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) that also included talks on tax reform, infrastructure and trade. Trump has showed signs of shifting strategy to cross the aisle and work with Democrats in the wake of the high-profile failures by Republicans to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Trump, however, sought Thursday to reach out to his GOP base

with messages claiming his agenda would remain intact on signature issues such as the border wall.

In a series of tweets, Trump wrote that "no deal" was made on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, an Obama-era program that has allowed 690,000 dreamers to work and go to school without fear of deportation. He further wrote that agreements on "massive border security" would

have to accompany any new DACA provisions, and insisted that "the WALL will continue to be built."

President Trump's decision to rescind Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals will remove legal protections from hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. Here's a look at the "dreamers" who will be affected. Here's a look at the "dreamers" whose DACA protections are set to expire. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

President Trump's decision to rescind Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals will remove legal protections from hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. Here's a look at the "dreamers" who will be affected. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

But he again put lawmakers on notice that he favors some protections for the so-called "dreamers."

"Does anybody really want to throw out good, educated and accomplished young people who have jobs, some serving in the military?" Trump wrote in back-to-back tweets. Really! ... They have been in our country for many years through no fault of their own — brought in by parents at young age. Plus BIG border security."

A possible alliance between Trump and the Democrats on immigration would represent a major political gamble for a president who made promises of tougher border control policies the centerpiece of his campaign and pledged to build a "big, beautiful wall" along the U.S.-Mexico border. A majority of Republicans, especially in the House, have long opposed offering legal status, and a path to citizenship, to the nation's more than 11 million undocumented immigrants.

In a sign of the potential trouble for the president, Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa), an immigration hard-liner and early Trump supporter, wrote that if reports of a potential immigration deal are accurate, the president's

"base is blown up, destroyed, irreparable, and disillusioned beyond repair. No promise is credible."

Trump has vacillated over the fate of the dreamers, who have lived in the country illegally since they were children. Under mounting pressure from the right, Trump moved two weeks ago to begin dismantling the program.

In announcing the decision, the president made clear that he expected Congress to pursue a plan to protect the DACA recipients, offering a six-month delay until their two-year work permits begin to expire in March.

In a statement, the White House described the meeting as "constructive" and said the administration "looks forward to continuing these conversations with leadership on both sides of the aisle."

Congressional aides familiar with the exchange said that Trump and the party leaders agreed to move quickly on legislation to protect dreamers, though aides did not disclose whether they agreed that the goal should be for dreamers to eventually be offered a path to citizenship.

In a statement, Schumer and Pelosi said they had "a very productive meeting at the White House with the President. The discussion focused on DACA. We agreed to enshrine the protections of DACA into law quickly, and to work out a package of border security, excluding the wall, that's acceptable to both sides."

In a letter to her Democratic colleagues in the House, Pelosi said she hoped the deal could be done "in a matter of weeks."

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders confirmed that DACA and border security were discussed, but she said excluding border wall funding from a package deal was "certainly not agreed to."

Earlier in the day, Trump held a bipartisan meeting with a group of

House members. Afterward, several Democrats involved in those talks said the president also had made clear that he did not expect border wall funding to be included in a legislative deal on the dreamers. They said Trump was not giving up on the wall but that he emphasized the money could be added to another bill, though he was not specific.

"He said, the wall doesn't have to be necessary," Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Tex.) told reporters at the White House. "He said we're going to add [wall funding] somewhere else. ... We've told him we don't want to tie this [together]. He said, 'DACA, we're going to do it early. We're going to do some kind of border security.' He brought up the wall. He said that doesn't have to be on this DACA bill."

Democrats, and some Republicans, have resisted funding for a wall, saying such a structure is not worth the billions of dollars it would cost.

Breitbart, the conservative news outlet headed by former Trump adviser Stephen K. Bannon, called reports of an immigration deal a "full-fledged cave" by Trump on "amnesty" for the dreamers.

Sens. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) have introduced legislation, called the Dream Act, that would offer dreamers a path to citizenship. The number of undocumented immigrants that would potentially be covered by that bill, however, is expected to be far larger than the number of those who have DACA protections, a prospect that would probably engender more Republican opposition.

Cuellar said that he told Trump the Dream Act has sufficient bipartisan support to pass and that the White House should be pushing for a vote. Trump, Cuellar said, told the group: "Oh, it will be on the floor."

But Trump also instructed Democrats to consider tougher restrictions on legal immigration, including provisions of a bill called the Raise Act, introduced by Republican Sens. Tom Cotton (Ark.)

and David Perdue (Ga.), which would slash legal immigration levels by half over the coming decade. Immigrant rights groups are strongly opposed to such measures, but Trump endorsed that legislation during an appearance with the GOP senators at the White House last month.

The Finance 202 newsletter

Your daily guide to where Wall Street meets Washington.

And Republican leaders are already wary of the spending agreement Trump brokered with Democrats last week on a three-month spending plan to raise the debt ceiling and keep the government funded.

Pelosi and House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) met earlier Wednesday to begin discussing the broad parameters of the forthcoming immigration debate. Ryan's team signaled that despite the administration's eagerness to quickly seal the deal, it will take awhile.

AshLee Strong, Ryan's spokeswoman, said that regarding the plight of the dreamers, the speaker "reiterated that any solution needs to address border security and enforcement, which are the root causes of the problem. Discussions among the Republican conference will continue in the coming weeks."

Ryan is already facing growing pressure from House conservatives who have begun to question his leadership and have even floated names of possible replacement as speaker. An agreement between Trump and Democrats on a bill to protect dreamers could potentially put Ryan in the position of having to decide whether to bring it for a vote with the prospects that it might pass with more Democratic support than among the GOP.

Brian Murphy contributed to this report.

**The
New York
Times**

Pelosi and Schumer Say They Have Deal With Trump to Replace DACA (UNE)

Maggie Haberman and Yamiche Alcindor

8-10 minutes

Representative Nancy Pelosi of California and Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the

Democratic leaders. Tom Brenner/The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Democratic leaders on Wednesday night declared that they had a deal with President Trump to quickly extend protections for young undocumented immigrants and to finalize a border security package

that does not include the president's proposed wall.

The Democrats, Senator Chuck Schumer and Representative Nancy Pelosi, said in a joint statement that they had a "very productive" dinner meeting with the president at the White House that focused on the program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA.

"We agreed to enshrine the protections of DACA into law quickly, and to work out a package of border security, excluding the wall, that's acceptable to both sides," they said.

But on Thursday morning, the president contradicted the Democrats, saying no deal had been struck. (Read that article.)

In a statement on Wednesday night, the White House was far more muted, mentioning DACA as merely one of several issues that were discussed, including tax reform and infrastructure. It called the meeting, which came a week after the president struck a stunning spending-and-debt deal with the Democratic leaders, "a positive step toward the president's strong commitment to bipartisan solutions."

But the bipartisan comity appeared to have its limits. In a tweet, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, disputed the Democrats' characterization of Mr. Trump's stance on the border wall. "While DACA and border security were both discussed, excluding the wall was certainly not agreed to," she wrote.

Mr. Schumer's communications director, Matt House, fired back on Twitter: "The President made clear he would continue pushing the wall, just not as part of this agreement."

While Democratic leaders sought to frame the Wednesday dinner as a victory for their priorities, Republican votes will be needed for any immigration overhaul. Hard-liners in Congress were flummoxed by word of a potential deal on DACA, one that could push some of Mr. Trump's electoral base away from him.

Representative Steve King, Republican of Iowa, wrote on Twitter that if the reports were true, "Trump base is blown up, destroyed, irreparable, and disillusioned beyond repair. No promise is credible." The website Breitbart, run by Mr. Trump's former chief strategist, Stephen K. Bannon, had the headline "Amnesty Don."

Some Republicans were more receptive. Senator Jeff Flake of Arizona, a frequent critic of the president, said on Twitter: "Kudos to @POTUS for pursuing agreement that will protect #Dreamers from deportation." The young immigrants are often referred to as Dreamers.

The dinner was a follow-up to a meeting that Mr. Schumer and Ms. Pelosi had with the president in the

Oval Office last week, during which Mr. Trump agreed to the Democrats' proposal for a vote on a debt-ceiling increase and a government funding measure that also included a Hurricane Harvey aid package.

While the two top Republican congressional leaders, Senator Mitch McConnell and Speaker Paul D. Ryan, attended that meeting, they were absent from the Wednesday night dinner.

A total of 11 people were seated at the table in the Blue Room of the White House on Wednesday night, with the first 30 minutes of the meeting focused on China trade issues, according to one person briefed on the dinner. The meal served was Chinese food, an intentional nod to China trade, on which Mr. Trump and Mr. Schumer hold their closest views.

On the DACA program, Mr. Trump has given Congress six months to find a legislative solution to extend the protections that President Barack Obama granted by executive order. But before the dinner on Wednesday night, prospects for quickly enacting a replacement for DACA had appeared to be flagging in Congress.

"With all the other things going on right now, it's kind of put on the back burner," said Representative Mike Coffman, Republican of Colorado, who had pulled back a petition he had hoped to use to force the House to take up legislation on the program. Representative Bob Goodlatte of Virginia, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, has said that the program is at the end of a list of immigration priorities.

Several top Republican leaders in Congress, including Mr. Ryan, have said that they want to tackle the issue of the young immigrants in conjunction with a broader immigration reform and border security effort.

But Republicans have been mostly enraged with Mr. Trump since the Oval Office meeting last week,

where he sided with the Democratic leadership over his own party and his own Treasury secretary in favor of a December debt-ceiling vote. Mr. Ryan, who preferred a longer-term deal, had called such a three-month plan ridiculous.

Some Republicans have been concerned that the president, who has been pursuing more of a bipartisan patina as he struggles to secure major legislative achievements and his poll numbers sink over his handling of the racially charged violence in Charlottesville, Va., will go along with Democratic priorities.

A White House aide insisted that Mr. Trump had always left open the possibility of passing a DACA fix without funding for a border wall, and insisted that he had not moved away from the wall as a priority. During the Wednesday dinner, it was John F. Kelly, Mr. Trump's chief of staff, who made the more detailed case for the wall, according to a person briefed on the discussion.

The wall was a key campaign pledge by Mr. Trump, but Democrats are vehemently against it.

Mr. Trump recently began to wind down DACA, which has provided protection from deportation for roughly 800,000 young undocumented immigrants. But he has been torn about it.

The president has sent conflicting signals about his intentions regarding the program, saying he would end it but urging Congress to come up with a legislative solution during the six-month wind-down period. But he has also told people he would revisit the issue after the six-month period if Congress did not act.

That would be a difficult task, since his own attorney general, Jeff Sessions, has declared DACA unconstitutional and an overreach of authority. It is not clear what mechanism Mr. Trump thinks he might have to put the program back in place through the executive branch.

At the White House earlier on Wednesday, Mr. Trump's anti-immigration national policy adviser, Stephen Miller, told people that the administration would never allow a version of the replacement legislation, known as the Dream Act, to pass.

Mr. Trump's zigzagging statements on the program, and his drift back toward preserving it, came after days of deeply negative news media coverage over his decision to end the program. Mr. Trump, who pays close attention to the headlines, told advisers he was bothered by the seemingly endless bad press over DACA.

During the campaign, Mr. Trump promised to end DACA. But in April, he indicated that people covered under the program had nothing to fear from his administration. However, several states, led by Texas, threatened a lawsuit, which Mr. Sessions used to nudge the president toward a decision.

While Mr. Schumer and Ms. Pelosi were celebrating their apparent agreement with Mr. Trump on the "Dreamers" and border security, the president himself had nothing to say about the dinner on his favorite communication platform.

Instead, Mr. Trump renewed his attacks on Hillary Clinton, who was back in the news this week promoting her campaign memoir, "What Happened."

"Crooked Hillary Clinton blames everybody (and every thing) but herself for her election loss," he tweeted around 11 p.m. as cable news channels and news websites blared the news of his dinner with the Democratic leaders. "She lost the debates and lost her direction!"

Minutes later, he followed up with another Clinton broadside: "The 'deplorables' came back to haunt Hillary. They expressed their feelings loud and clear. She spent big money but, in the end, had no game!"

POLITICO Trump denies deal on DACA after conservative backlash

By BURGESS EVERETT, JOSH DAWSEY, RACHAEL BADE and LOUIS NELSON

8-10 minutes

President Donald Trump and Democratic congressional leaders reached a tentative deal Wednesday night to provide a

pathway to citizenship for young immigrants known as "Dreamers" — but the president backed away hours later in the face of a conservative backlash.

After a meeting with Trump at the White House, Democratic leaders Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi said they had come to terms with Trump on a plan that would provide protection for Dreamers in

exchange for beefed-up border security — but, notably, no additional funding for a border wall.

Story Continued Below

The news triggered an outcry from the right, which accused Trump of abandoning his tough-on-immigration campaign stance. And by Thursday morning, Trump denied that an agreement had been struck.

"No deal was made last night on DACA. Massive border security would have to be agreed to in exchange for consent. Would be subject to vote," Trump tweeted.

Following Trump's tweets, Schumer and Pelosi said that while the details still need to be hammered out, Trump was not directly contradicting the pact reached at dinner. They said they agreed to

forgo the wall on this deal with the president -- though he would still pursue it — and that a border security package still had to be hammered out but could include new technology and roads.

"President Trump's tweets are not inconsistent with the agreement reached last night," they said Thursday morning.

Notably the agreement from Wednesday night does not thus far include House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-Ky.), whom Trump spurned for Pelosi and Schumer on a fiscal deal last week.

Trump on Thursday morning didn't deny that building the border wall could be separate from any DACA deal. But he emphasized that the wall, which he says is currently under construction "in the form of new renovation of old and existing fences and walls, will continue to be built."

Press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders Wednesday night also pushed back on their assertion that Trump had backed off the wall.

"While DACA and border security were both discussed, excluding the wall was certainly not agreed to," she tweeted.

An aide with knowledge of the meeting said Trump made clear to Schumer and Pelosi that he would continue pushing for the wall, just not as part of this deal. The agreement came as a surprise to most Republican leaders on Capitol Hill, according to two GOP aides, the second time Trump has blindsided them this month after his deal with Pelosi and Schumer on the debt ceiling.

Republicans said they were perplexed that Trump was backing away from his core campaign promises. Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) said if the deal is true, the "Trump base is blown up, destroyed, irreparable and disillusioned beyond repair. No promise is credible."

One GOP aide said, with a sigh: "Maybe tomorrow he'll support NAFTA."

News Wednesday night that Trump had agreed to a deal with Democrats on DACA and border security prompted swift condemnation from conservatives, including from media outlets and pundits that have traditionally bolstered the president. Breitbart News, helmed by former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, featured headlines including "Amnesty Don" and "Dems declare victory as Trump caves on DACA."

Conservative commentator Laura Ingraham was similarly critical of the reported deal, slamming the president in a series of posts to her Twitter account. "BUILD THE WALL! BUILD THE WALL!...or...maybe...not really," Ingraham wrote online Wednesday night, quickly following that post with another noting that "Tonight @David_Gergen & @davidaxelrod are praising @realDonaldTrump. What does that tell you abt any 'deal' cut over#DACA?" In a third post, Ingraham labeled the reported agreement "the art of the steal," a play on Trump's book "The Art of the Deal."

"When does American working class w/out real wage increase in 15yrs & who send their kids to overcrowded public schools get amnesty?" Ingraham asked on Twitter Thursday morning.

Ann Coulter, another conservative commentator, posted her own flurry of tweets and retweets slamming the president. Just after 1 a.m. Thursday morning, Coulter wrote online that "not to keep score or anything, but the American Revolution was fought and won over vastly lesser perfidy." Hours later, she linked to Trump's Thursday morning tweet in which he wrote that dreamers "have been in our country for many years through no fault of their own," adding her own commentary, "At this point, who DOESN'T want Trump impeached?"

Trump spent all day Wednesday talking about cutting such a deal, floating a similar framework while huddling with bipartisan members of the House Problem Solvers Caucus. Three sources in the room from both sides of the aisle said

Trump suggested he would accept new border security measures for a fix of the Dreamer program he sought to rescind — and that he'd let his demands on the wall pass, for now.

One lawmaker present said Trump specifically suggested he could accept the DREAM Act, which includes a path to citizenship for those who migrated to the U.S. as minors.

"He said, 'We got to get the wall done but maybe we could do them separately,'" one person in the room told POLITICO on Wednesday afternoon, several hours before Trump's meeting with Democratic leaders. "He said maybe we do border security, but maybe not the wall."

The sources briefed on the meeting declined to estimate how much border security would be provided under the plan or what the specifics would entail, a key part of any agreement, given the wide range of possibilities that border security could contain. This spring Congress approved more than \$1 billion in new border security.

The legislative fix for the dreamers would be passage of the DREAM Act.

The leaders and the president also did not agree on when such a package would be passed; both chambers of Congress are controlled by Republicans. But one person briefed on the meeting said Trump and the Democrats want it done "sooner rather than later."

Another person at the Problem Solvers Caucus meeting earlier Wednesday said: "He's not giving up on the wall, and we're not giving up on the wall. But it doesn't have to be on DACA."

Trump may still push later for the border wall in a spending bill in December, according to congressional Republican aides, but White House staff publicly backed off that path this week as well. Instead, Trump focused on cutting a deal with the political opposition on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, an action by former President Barack Obama that currently offers legal

protections to nearly 700,000 undocumented immigrants who came to the country.

"We had a very productive meeting at the White House with the president," Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Schumer (D-N.Y.) said in a joint statement. "The discussion focused on DACA. We agreed to enshrine the protections of DACA into law quickly, and to work out a package of border security, excluding the wall, that's acceptable to both sides."

A statement from a White House official did not mention the deal Democrats say they hatched. The unnamed official said the leaders, Trump and several of his top aides discussed tax reform, border security, infrastructure and trade.

"President Donald Trump had a constructive working dinner with Senate and House minority leaders," the official said. "This is a positive step toward the president's strong commitment to bipartisan solutions for the issues most important to all Americans. The administration looks forward to continuing these conversations with leadership on both sides of the aisle."

In an earlier meeting between House leaders, Pelosi told Ryan that Democrats want to see action on DACA in the next few weeks — a deadline most congressional Republicans consider unrealistic.

House Republican leaders insist they have six months, until March, to codify protections for Dreamers. But Democrats want to see a legislative solution by Oct. 5, the deadline for current DACA recipients whose permits expire during the six-month period to renew their applications.

The meeting kicked off with a long discussion of trade and China, a second aide briefed on the meeting said.

Heather Caygle contributed to this report.

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The Four Seasons of Kremlingate

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

8-10 minutes

There were a lot of major political stories this past summer amid the continuing disintegration of Donald Trump's presidency. The defeat of

the Senate health care bill. The end of the DACA program for early childhood arrivals. The pardon for disgraced former Sheriff Joe Arpaio. The deadly chaos in Charlottesville, Virginia, and its dismal aftermath. The North Korea crisis. The Afghanistan policy decision. The arrival of John Kelly in the White House. The departure of Stephen

Bannon, Sebastian Gorka, Reince Priebus, Sean Spicer, and, after just 10 days on the job, the foul-mouthed Anthony Scaramucci. But amid these consequential events, let's not lose sight of the Kremlingate scandal, which could conceivably dwarf all of them in significance.

The evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin — and of Trump's attempts to cover up that fact — grows more damning by the week. The summer began, you may recall, with the news on July 11 that when the Trump campaign had been approached by Russian representatives offering to provide

dirt on Hillary Clinton, the senior-most campaign honchos had been eager to take a meeting. "I love it," Donald Trump Jr. wrote in a now infamous email. As usually happens, the attempt to cover up these incriminating facts has opened the president to fresh legal jeopardy, especially since it has emerged that he personally crafted a mendacious statement claiming that the Trump Tower meeting had been only about "adoption."

But what does entering a country without documents mean for his case?

And how did the summer end? With the news that while running for president, in October 2015, Trump had signed a letter of intent to build a tower in Moscow — a combination of condominiums, a hotel, and office space that was even supposed to include a spa named after his daughter Ivanka. This latest twist in the scandal has produced an email almost as damning as Trump Jr.'s "I love it." This is what Felix Sater, a Russian-American associate of Trump's with a long criminal record, wrote to Trump's lawyer, Michael Cohen, in selling the deal: "Buddy our boy can become President of the USA and we can engineer it. I will get all of Putins team to buy in on this, I will manage this process." Sater even said he had lined up financing from VTB Bank, a financial institution that has close ties to the Kremlin and is under American sanctions. (Not to be confused with VEB, another sanctioned Russian bank, whose CEO met with Jared Kushner after the election.)

The fact that the Moscow project was subsequently abandoned in no way diminishes the importance of this revelation, which shows that Trump was hoping to benefit financially as well as politically from his sycophancy toward Vladimir Putin. This information also further exposes one of Trump's most persistent lies:

the claim that he has "nothing to do with Russia." As he tweeted on Jan. 11, "NO DEALS, NO LOANS, NO NOTHING!"

In fact, Trump has a history dating back to 1987 of chasing deals in Russia. The most prominent outcome of his zeal for rubles was his hosting of the Miss Universe pageant in Moscow in 2013 — arranged by the very same Russian developers, the Agalarovs, who steered the Kremlin's emissaries to the Trump campaign in 2016. But there is also cause to suspect that Trump received significant financing from wealthy Russians linked to the Kremlin. At the very least, they have been major buyers of his properties and quite possibly more than that. In 2008, Trump Jr. said: "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets.... We see a lot of money pouring in from Russia."

That brings us to the infamous Steele dossier, which purports to show that the Kremlin had compromised Trump and was compiled by former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele. When the 35-page memo was published by BuzzFeed in January, including the headline-grabbing allegation that Trump had hired Russian hookers to pee on a hotel bed where President Barack Obama had stayed in Moscow, it was widely denounced by Trump and his defenders as "fake news." Even the veteran investigative reporter Bob Woodward called it "garbage." But given what we now know, some smart espionage experts are taking another look at the dossier's findings — and are discovering that at least some of the allegations are pretty credible.

The veteran British intelligence writer Ben Macintyre, in a *New York Times* conversation with John le Carré, offered this take: "I can tell you what the veterans of the S.I.S. [the British Secret Intelligence Service, or MI6] think, which is

yes, *kompromat* was done on [Trump]. Of course, *kompromat* is done on everyone. So they end up, the theory goes, with this compromising bit of material and then they begin to release parts of it. They set up an ex-MI6 guy, Chris Steele, who is a patsy, effectively, and they feed him some stuff that's true, and some stuff that isn't true, and some stuff that is demonstrably wrong. Which means that Trump can then stand up and deny it, while knowing that the essence of it is true. And then he has a stone in his shoe for the rest of his administration. It's important to remember that Putin is a K.G.B.-trained officer, and he thinks in the traditional K.G.B. way."

Le Carré, who was a spook before he became a novelist, chimed in: "As far as Trump, I would suspect they have it, because they've denied it. If they have it and they've set Trump up, they'd say, 'Oh no, we haven't got anything.' But to Trump they're saying, 'Aren't we being kind to you?'"

John Sipher, a 28-year veteran of the CIA's National Clandestine Service, also thinks the Steele dossier, produced on behalf of the London-based Orbis Business Intelligence, is "generally credible" despite some "factual inaccuracies" of the kind that you would expect to see in any raw intelligence product. "Well before any public knowledge of these events," Sipher writes on the Just Security blog, "the Orbis report identified multiple elements of the Russian operation including a cyber campaign, leaked documents related to Hillary Clinton, and meetings with Paul Manafort and other Trump affiliates to discuss the receipt of stolen documents. Mr. Steele could not have known that the Russians stole information on Hillary Clinton, or that they were considering means to weaponize them in the U.S. election, all of which turned out to be stunningly accurate."

If Macintyre, le Carré, and Sipher are right, it would certainly help explain Trump's otherwise inexplicable failure to say one negative word about Putin, even when doing so would be politically advantageous to him.

Of course, it will ultimately be up to special counsel Robert Mueller and his Untouchables to decide whether there is real evidence of wrongdoing here or just the appearance thereof. But even if Mueller can't prove collusion directly between Trump and Putin, he still has a good shot to nail the president for obstruction of justice because of the firing of FBI Director James Comey — an act that Bannon has rightly described as one of the worst mistakes in "modern political history." All signs are that Mueller's investigation is headed in precisely that direction, given his requests to question current and former White House aides who were involved in the Comey dismissal and his acquisition of an impolitic letter Trump and a top aide drafted to explain this calamitous decision.

Potentially even more worrisome for Trump is the knowledge that Mueller is digging into his business history with the assistance of the IRS's elite criminal investigations unit, experts in financial crimes who of course have access to the president's top-secret tax returns. The information that is already public is damning enough. Just imagine what else Mueller must now know or will soon learn. The summer of Kremingate is likely to turn into the fall of Kremingate, then into the winter, the spring, and so on.

This scandal won't end until Trump leaves the presidency and maybe not even then.

Photo credit: BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/Getty Images



Raj and O'Brien: Sessions wants a leak investigation rule-change. That could cripple the free press.

Paul O'Brien

5-6 minutes

Attorney General Jeff Sessions. (Susan Walsh/Associated Press)

By Kiran Raj and Paul O'Brien September 13 at 7:38 PM

Kiran Raj was senior counsel to the deputy attorney general at the Justice Department from 2013 to 2016 and deputy general counsel of the Department of Homeland

By Kiran Raj and

Security from 2016 to 2017. He is now a partner at O'Melveny & Myers. Paul O'Brien was deputy assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Criminal Division from 2012 to 2016.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions recently announced that the Justice Department would review his agency's media guidelines, reportedly looking to make it easier to obtain information from members of the media in leak investigations. This includes more aggressively

going after unauthorized disclosures of classified information.

Such a move is unnecessary for successful prosecutions, and it could have long-term negative consequences on the free press.

Federal prosecutors and agents have an obligation to aggressively pursue the unlawful disclosure of classified information even if the disclosure is made to a journalist. But when the government's interest in identifying leakers conflicts with journalists' need to protect their

sources, the government must carefully balance both its interest in delivering justice as well as the legitimate and crucial newsgathering function of the media.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

Striking that delicate balance is not easy. We should know — this was the task we undertook at the Justice Department from 2013 to 2015. We led a team that, after a nearly two-

year review, updated the department's media guidelines to allow prosecutors to do their jobs effectively while simultaneously safeguarding the free press and its role in government accountability.

We are confident we developed a process that respects the concerns of journalists while allowing prosecutors to investigate national security concerns. Indeed, our review included input from stakeholders both inside and outside the department, including career prosecutors and representatives of the news media.

The changes to the media guidelines we implemented in 2015 were long-overdue. The Justice Department last made major revisions in 1980 after the Supreme Court upheld the government's power to execute a warrant on a newspaper. Indeed, the debate over the department's subpoena of Associated Press phone records prompted President Barack Obama in 2013 to ask Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. to review the media

guidelines.

The resulting changes we made were both significant and necessary. The new policy expressly stated that a member of the news media will be notified before the department uses legal process — such as subpoenas and warrants — to obtain records, unless the attorney general determines that such notice would pose a substantial threat to an investigation's integrity, risk grave harm to national security or present an imminent risk of death or serious bodily harm. Even if the attorney general makes that determination, notice can be delayed for only 90 days — a rule intended to recognize that news media records should be sought only as a last resort.

The guidelines also added higher-level approvals and reviews of legal process served on the media. Senior Justice leaders — including the chief privacy and civil liberties officer and the director of the Office of Public Affairs — now must pressure-test the necessity of

issuing subpoenas for journalists' records, assuring that the entire department leadership has considered both the need and the potential harm before any subpoena is issued.

In some cases, the revisions made it easier on prosecutors. For example, the guidelines do not apply if there is reason to believe that an individual or entity is working for a foreign power or providing material support for a terrorist organization. In such rare instances, the individuals or entities in question do not deserve the protection we afford to members of the news media.

The department also improved transparency by committing to release statistical data on an annual basis regarding the use of media-related process.

The current media guidelines reflect the belief that there are tough choices to make among oft-competing values. The updated guidelines ensure that any attempt to obtain information from

journalists in significant leak investigations occurs in extreme cases where all other reasonable options have failed. At the conclusion of our review, we were gratified that the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press issued a statement to welcome the changes and praise the process by which we arrived at our revisions.

Sessions is well within his authority to order another review of the media guidelines, but it is difficult to see a legitimate need for additional changes. If the department does move forward with a review, any changes should include discussions with key stakeholders, including members of the news media. In any case, Sessions must work to preserve the department's long-standing respect for freedom of the press.



Editorial : The Senate finally does what it failed to do for a decade and a half

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

4 minutes

Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.). (Bryan Woolston/Associated Press)

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 13 at 7:33 PM

ON WEDNESDAY, the Senate did what it had previously failed to do for the past decade and a half: vote on authorizing the use of force against U.S. enemies. The proposal to withdraw congressional authorization for U.S. military operations abroad failed — as it should have. But the debate was an important first step toward the legislative branch's taking

responsibility for the nation's wars.

The deployment of U.S. forces abroad has long been authorized under two statutes: one giving approval to efforts in Iraq, and one to military operations against al-Qaeda, the Taliban and their associated forces. Two presidencies and more than 15 years later, the shape of the battle against terrorism has changed but the legal authorization hasn't. An effort by President Barack Obama to gain explicit congressional approval for efforts against the Islamic State went nowhere. Congress was all too happy to keep its hands clean, while the administration tried to have its cake and eat it too by arguing that it already had the authority to battle the Islamic State under the 2001 authorization of military force (AUMF) against al-Qaeda.

The amendment voted down by the Senate on Wednesday would have solved none of these problems. Sponsored by Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), a longtime critic of U.S. efforts

abroad, it called for the repeal of the 2001 AUMF and the 2002 authorization of force in Iraq on a six-month delay. While the amendment's supporters argued that the ticking clock would have forced lawmakers to collaborate in drafting an improved, revised AUMF, there's no guarantee that a gridlocked Congress would have been able to produce a bill in time. And stripping away congressional authorization without a replacement would have hampered the executive branch's ability to prosecute an ongoing conflict — or led to a concerning expansion of presidential power if the Trump administration sought to continue counterterrorism efforts in the absence of Congress's blessing.

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So it's good news that Mr. Paul's amendment to the annual defense spending bill failed. But it's also good news that it reached the Senate floor and garnered as many

votes as it did — including from Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), who proposed a revised AUMF with Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) this year. Notably, several of the senators who voted against the amendment — among them Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) — indicated that they supported AUMF reform but were unwilling to risk withdrawing the authorization without a replacement in hand. The debate and vote showed a welcome willingness on the part of the Senate to finally shoulder its duty of oversight.

The Senate must now do the hard work of following through — particularly the Foreign Relations Committee, which Mr. Kaine has asked to take up the debate. Mr. Kaine and Mr. Flake's draft AUMF provides a place from which the committee can begin its work. Now that the vote on Mr. Paul's amendment has opened the door for a bipartisan effort to reform the authorization, there is no excuse not to walk through it.



Editorial : The Justice Department goes out of its way to side against a gay couple

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

4 minutes

Jack Phillips poses near a display of wedding cakes. (Matthew Staver/For The Washington Post)

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 13 at 7:32 PM

SHOULD A Colorado baker have the right to turn away a gay couple seeking a custom wedding cake if he disapproves of their upcoming marriage? According to the Justice Department, the answer is yes.

The Supreme Court will soon hear arguments over the conduct of this unwilling baker in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*. Though the federal government isn't a party to the case, the Justice Department has made a point of weighing in on the side of Jack Phillips, the "cake artist" whose religious opposition to same-sex marriage led him to refuse to design a cake for a gay couple. (The pair eventually obtained a rainbow-layered cake.)

The Justice Department's legal brief has — rightly — faced criticism from civil rights groups appalled by the government's argument that Mr. Phillips's religious beliefs grant him

a constitutional right to discriminate against gay customers, despite a Colorado public-accommodations law prohibiting unequal treatment on the basis of sexual orientation. Indeed, the brief is a dispiriting signal of Attorney General Jeff Sessions's priorities. The government went out of its way to side with Mr. Phillips, but it has been quiet on any number of other significant cases before the Supreme Court this term.

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The best conversations on The Washington Post

In one sense, the Justice Department has clarified the stakes. The brief frames the case as a matter of free expression rather than free exercise of Mr. Phillips's

religious beliefs. That's because *Masterpiece Cakeshop* isn't really a religious-freedom case at all — though Mr. Phillips's attorneys do point to their client's constitutional rights on that front. Because Colorado lacks legislation raising the standard for state infringement on religious belief — unlike many states and the federal government — Mr. Phillips is left with what's likely a losing argument.

That's why both Mr. Phillips and the Justice Department focus on the baker's freedom of expression, arguing that crafting a cake for a same-sex wedding would force Mr. Phillips to celebrate a ceremony of which he disapproves. Yet there is little reason to believe that wedding guests would attribute to the cake baker an endorsement of the festivities as a whole — or that a reasonable guest might believe that of the baker rather than of the

wedding hairdresser, the caterer or the hotel providing the venue.

The Justice Department's effort to craft a narrow exception to public-accommodations law risks blowing a hole through the fabric of that law entirely. Mr. Phillips is providing a service to his customers for pay. While he does so, he should be subject to anti-discrimination laws like every other business is.

Strangely, the government's brief closes by quoting the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, in which the court held that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry. Two years after *Obergefell*, cases such as *Masterpiece Cakeshop* have been relatively unsuccessful and few and far between — a sign of a nation moving forward. The Supreme Court should now resist the Justice Department's effort to turn back the clock.

**The
New York
Times**

Sharma : What Trump Can Do to Prevent the Next Crash

Ruchir Sharma

7-9 minutes

The Federal Reserve arguably has more influence on the daily lives of Americans than any other government agency. In the coming year President Trump has a chance to appoint or replace five of the central bank's seven governors, including the vice chairman, Stanley Fischer, and possibly the chairwoman, Janet Yellen.

Few presidents have had so many seats to fill this quickly, and it's time to pay attention to how Mr. Trump will use the opportunity. The heavy hitters vying for seats are talking — often vaguely — about reforming the Fed, which has been praised for preventing a depression after the financial crisis of 2008, but questioned for failing to anticipate the crisis itself.

The Fed missed the crisis in part because it has a dual mandate to keep unemployment and consumer price inflation low — and both were low before 2008. Real reform would add a third mandate: maintaining financial stability, and in particular stabilizing prices for assets like houses and stocks, which are not counted as "consumer prices" but now have a bigger influence on the economy.

Consumer price inflation has largely disappeared, in part because central bankers have been fighting it effectively since the 1970s, and in part because heightened global competition began restraining prices for consumer goods from TVs to

toys. Meanwhile, asset prices are getting pushed in the opposite direction.

To ease the Great Recession after 2008, central banks adopted zero to negative interest rates and provided huge amounts of cash, effectively giving investors free money. In a world with few barriers to the flow of capital across borders, this is spurring buying sprees, and thus bidding up prices for stocks, bonds and real estate in markets from New York to Shanghai.

Today, global financial assets (including just stocks and bonds) are worth over \$250 trillion and amount to about 330 percent of global gross domestic product, up from \$12 trillion and just 110 percent in 1980. Traditionally, economists have looked for trouble in the economy to cause trouble in the markets. But the ocean of money in financial markets is now so large, it's possible that ripples on its surface could trigger the next big downturn.

In the postwar era, finance has grown enormously as a share of the global economy, often feeding debt-fueled bubbles. In 2015, the economist Alan M. Taylor and his colleagues looked at data going back 140 years for 17 leading economies. Before World War II, there were 78 recessions — including only 19 that followed a bubble in stocks or housing or both. After the war, there were 88 recessions, a vast majority of which, 62, followed a stock or housing bubble or both.

Since 1990, every major economic shock has been preceded by a

collapse in prices for houses, stocks or both, including Japan's crash in 1990, the Asian crisis of the late 1990s, the dot-com crash of 2000-01, and the global financial crisis of 2008.

The Fed has changed with the world before. After the Great Depression, it focused on fighting unemployment. Amid crippling consumer price inflation in the 1970s, it shifted its focus to fighting this scourge. Now, amid looming market bubbles from China to Norway, central bankers are tentatively starting to recognize that they can't ignore asset price inflation. At the Federal Open Market Committee, its key policy-making body, financial stability rarely came up before 2012 but has come up at 27 of 39 meetings since.

Of course, even market insiders can't spot when asset prices are ready to crash, so skeptics say the Fed can't be expected to either. Better to let bubbles pop and "mop up" after. However, the painfully slow recovery from 2008 shows how ineffective mess-mopping can be: Losses after the crash tend to be much bigger than gains on the way up. The Fed need not try to predict the market's peak; it needs only to identify signals of crises, so that it can act early to forestall them, controlling asset price inflation by raising rates or reducing cash infusions into the economy.

Thanks to post-mortem research done since 2008, we know much more about these signals. The key is to be on alert when markets are rising much faster than the underlying economy. Normally, for

example, home prices rise around 5 percent a year; the International Monetary Fund has found that rate more than doubles in pre-crisis periods.

Traders at the New York Stock Exchange on Sept. 15, 2008, when in afternoon trading the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell more than 500 points. Spencer Platt/Getty Images

At least equally telling is the pace of increase in debt. When asset prices collapse, the owners suffer instant pain. But when debt used to buy those assets collapses, the resulting defaults ripple through banks and become a drag on the economy. The longest and deepest recessions tend to follow real estate busts, because homes are almost always purchased on credit, and during booms, so many buyers are tempted to borrow excessively for that dream house.

Nonetheless most economists — even conservative deficit hawks who worry about the Fed "blowing bubbles" — still look mainly for economic threats to the financial markets, rather than the threat that overgrown markets pose.

They thus don't recognize fully that the world has changed, and the tail now wags the dog. Many mainstream economists still argue that the economy can't be overheating if consumer price inflation is quiet, and they want to keep rates lower for longer, hoping that easy money will stoke growth in the economy, and jobs, for the poor and the working class.

However, since 2008, easy money has produced an unusually weak economic recovery alongside an unusually long and strong run-up in prices for stocks, bonds and housing. The rich own the fattest share of these assets, so wealth inequality is increasing. In addition, easy money is fueling monopoly power by helping entrenched companies borrow.

**The
New York
Times**

4-6 minutes

Laurie Cumbo, a New York City councilwoman, emerged from a voting booth in Brooklyn on Tuesday with her 6-week-old son. Cumbo won the Democratic primary. Holly Pickett for The New York Times

Women have led New York's City Council — two of them in a row as speaker — for almost 12 years. Some people may be tempted to say it means that female lawmakers in America's largest city finally have a solid grip on political power. It's a temptation to be resisted.

The reality is that women in New York City government struggle to be heard in numbers anywhere near their share of the population. They fare badly enough now, filling but 13 of 51 seats — barely 25 percent. After Tuesday's Democratic primary races, there are bound to be fewer of them in the Council that convenes in January.

Given that Democratic primaries in the city are

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

3-4 minutes

Sept. 13, 2017 7:06 p.m. ET

Americans have received little good news lately, but a new U.S. Census Bureau report offers some economic hope: Last year real median household income rose 3.2%, the second consecutive increase, as 2.5 million Americans rose out of poverty.

These gains might not be notable late in an economic expansion save for the fact that real median incomes declined while poverty increased during most of the Obama Presidency. In 2014 the real median household income was \$54,398, down from \$55,683 in

Liberals who question the value of promoting monopolies and the superrich might also question their fondness for easy money. Instead, to stabilize financial markets, most favor upholding tough post-2008 regulations — but regulation alone can't contain the ocean of money in financial assets. From Australia to Canada to Sweden, central banks are keeping rates low because consumer price inflation is weak, thus fueling housing bubbles.

usually the main event and the November general election is an afterthought, there will probably be, at most, 12 councilwomen. And since the current speaker, Melissa Mark-Viverito, must leave office under the city's term-limits law, her leadership position may wind up in male hands.

Glass ceilings are hardly exclusive to New York. In the four next largest American cities, women's hold on local councils comes, collectively, to just over that same 25 percent. In Los Angeles, they account for 2 of 15 councilors; in Chicago, 13 of 50; in Houston, 4 of 16; and in Philadelphia, 6 of 17. And they're no better off in most American legislative bodies.

But women in the New York City Council are sliding backward. A decade ago, they held 18 seats, the most ever. Term limits partly account for the subsequent decline. Those limits forced some women to leave, and men ended up being elected in their stead. The dwindled numbers impelled members of the Council's women's caucus to warn in a report last month that "we face a systemic crisis of representation."

Editorial : Americans Get Richer

- The Editorial Board

2009. By contrast, during the Reagan expansion from 1982 to 1988, poverty fell 2.4 percentage-points while real household incomes rose \$4,905.

Only in 2015 and 2016 did Americans experience real income growth. As a result, there are now about six million fewer people living in poverty than in 2014. Minorities have reaped the biggest gains. Between 2015 and 2016, the median income for blacks and Hispanics climbed 5.7% and 4.3%, respectively, compared with 2% for whites. As a caveat, the Census Bureau says a change in its survey methodology in 2014 could have increased incomes.

Liberals can't credit welfare programs whose growth has slowed thanks in part to reforms imposed by Congress. According to the most

Regulatory attempts to contain those bubbles are failing.

Central bankers are starting to recognize that when loose monetary policy is driving up asset prices to potentially unstable levels, it sows the seeds of a recession and hurts everyone. But only a minority are prepared to lean against the wind now. Asset prices from stocks to real estate have never been this expensive simultaneously.

That the very nature of a legislature can be shaped by gender balance is self-evident. This is true on a broad range of issues, but conspicuously so on matters like child care, maternity leave and preventive cancer screenings. At the federal level, how could heads not shake in May when Mitch McConnell, the Senate majority leader, formed his working group on health care? He initially thought it was fine to go with 13 men and no women.

"Women legislators bring with them lived experiences and crucial viewpoints that allow them to identify and take on the unique challenges that women face," the New York women's caucus aptly said.

Women's light presence in government is not a case of their faring worse than men at the ballot box. The CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance, a research group at the City University of New York, found that the sexes win or lose elections nationwide at about the same rates. The issue, the institute said in a report last September, is that women tend not to run for office in the first place.

recent data, the Social Security disability rolls fell by 25,000 in 2015 after growing by 1.3 million between 2009 and 2014. The number of food stamp recipients dropped by 3.4 million between 2013 and 2015. In 2014, 99 weeks of unemployment benefits finally ceased.

Most of the recent income growth has been due to more Americans working—and Americans working more. Between 2015 and 2016, the number of people with earnings—i.e., income from employment—rose by 1.2 million. Meanwhile, the number of full-time, year-round workers increased by 2.2 million as many people moved out of part-time jobs.

Labor force participation hasn't much budged since its nadir two years ago, but unemployment among minorities and less-educated

In general, government agencies, including the Fed, change their ways only after crises. The big threat is that the Fed will fully commit to preserving financial stability only after instability in the markets has triggered the next crisis. Mr. Trump should be looking for governors who are willing to commit now.

Why is that? Some social scientists cite traditional family arrangements that limit women's career choices. Researchers at the Brookings Institution have found what might be called an ambition gap, with women underestimating their abilities and chances for success. It makes them less likely than men to even consider seeking public office, or to have political professionals encourage them to run.

This week's voting in New York may have reflected that. Out of the 113 Democrats running in contested Council districts, only 38 were women. Of the 33 districts with Democratic primaries, 11 had not a single woman on the ballot. (In contrast, two districts had only female candidates; both seats are already held by women.)

Political parties and advocacy groups, like the recently formed 21 in '21, need to do their utmost to recruit women if there's to be any chance of closing that ambition gap. Getting young women engaged politically, in college or even earlier, is especially important. The way things stand, women may hold up half the sky, as a saying goes, but politics is proving to be a heavier lift.

workers has dropped sharply amid a tightening labor market. Job growth is a function of an improving economy and lower infra-marginal taxes on work as government welfare has been scaled back.

Liberals are bemoaning that the Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, didn't post a significant decline last year. But income inequality drops principally during recessions as the wealthy lose a larger share of their earnings than everyone else. As we learned in the Obama years, the preoccupation with inequality leads to economic policies that reduce growth, which leads to more inequality.

The left also overlooks that millions of middle-class Americans are moving into higher income brackets, as Mercatus Center researcher Dan

Griswold points out. The share of Americans earning less than \$35,000 (in real 2016 dollars) fell to 30.2% from

38.2% between 1967 and 2016 while the proportion earning more than \$100,000 has roughly tripled to 27.7%.

All of this is worth celebrating, but more business investment and productivity growth will be needed to keep the expansion going and

incomes rising. The most effective way would be for Congress to reform the tax code.

**The
New York
Times**

Eight Dead From Sweltering Nursing Home as Florida Struggles After Irma (UNE)

Neil Reisner, Sheri Fink and Vivian Yee

11-14 minutes

Emergency workers at Memorial Regional Hospital in Hollywood, Fla., on Wednesday, where residents of a sweltering nursing home were taken. Jason Henry for The New York Times

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. — The first patient was rushed into the emergency room of Memorial Regional Hospital around 3 a.m. on Wednesday, escaping a nursing home that had lost air-conditioning in the muggy days after Hurricane Irma splintered power lines across the state.

Another arrived at 4 a.m. After a third rescue call, around 5 a.m., the hospital's staff was concerned enough to walk down the street to check the building themselves.

What they found was an oven.

The Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills needed to be evacuated immediately. Rescue units were hurrying its more than 100 residents out. Dozens of hospital workers established a command center outside, giving red wristbands to patients with critical, life-threatening conditions and yellow and green ones to those in better shape.

Checking the nursing home room by room, the hospital staff found three people who were already dead and nearly 40 others who needed red wristbands, many of whom had trouble breathing. The workers rushed them to Memorial's emergency room, where they were given oxygen. The rest went to other hospitals nearby.

Four were so ill that they died soon after arriving. In the afternoon, the authorities learned that another had died early in the morning, and was initially uncounted because the person had been taken directly to a funeral home.

In all, eight were dead.

"We had no idea the extent of what was going on until we literally sent people room to room to check on people," said Dr. Randy Katz, the hospital's chairman of emergency medicine.

Three days after the hurricane had howled through South Florida, some of the most vulnerable people in the state were dying, not of wind, not of floods, but of what seemed to be an electrical failure.

Florida was still staggering to its feet on Wednesday, and millions of people across the Southeast were facing days or weeks without power in temperatures that, in the Fort Lauderdale area, climbed to as high as 92 degrees in recent days. The nursing home appeared to have electricity, but the hurricane had knocked out power in a critical spot: A tree had apparently hit the transformer that powered the cooling system, intensifying the subtropical heat from oppressive to fatal.

State officials, utility executives and the Rehabilitation Center spent Wednesday trading blame over why and how its patients were left to endure such conditions, even though state and federal regulations require nursing home residents to be evacuated if it gets too hot inside.

The Hollywood Police Department opened a criminal investigation into the deaths of the eight residents, who ranged in age from 71 to 99, and investigators from the state attorney general's office were also involved. Gov. Rick Scott ordered a moratorium on admissions at the nursing home.

By day's end, the unanswered questions were still outstanding, even as the deaths magnified scrutiny on other facilities for the old and disabled.

More than three million customers in Florida still lacked power Wednesday, including roughly 160 nursing homes, according to the state's tracking system. After generators fizzled at the Krystal Bay Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, in North Miami Beach, 79 people were evacuated as a precaution.

"I am going to aggressively demand answers on how this tragic event took place," Mr. Scott said in a statement. "Although the details of these reported deaths are still under investigation, this situation is unfathomable. Every facility that is charged with caring for patients must take every action and precaution to keep their patients

safe — especially patients that are in poor health."

Dr. Katz said Memorial's emergency room had been busy for days treating chronically ill patients who were not coping well with the loss of electricity; some were having trouble breathing in the heat, while others needed access to dialysis. At least one came in from the Rehabilitation Center on Tuesday.

The Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills, which was evacuated on Wednesday. Eight of its residents died. Jason Henry for The New York Times

But not until Wednesday morning was there any hint that others there might be in trouble.

"I don't know how many more I'm going to get," said Craig T. Mallak, the chief medical examiner for Broward County, referring to the rising death toll, in an interview. "These are really sick people."

The home's administrator, Jorge Carballo, said in a statement that the transformer connected to the air-conditioning system had experienced a "prolonged power failure," prompting the staff to contact Florida Power & Light. While waiting for a fix, he said, they set up mobile cooling units and fans and tried to make sure residents were hydrated and comfortable.

"We are devastated by these losses," he said. "We are fully cooperating with all authorities and regulators to assess what went wrong."

He did not say whether the home had considered evacuating its residents sooner.

Mr. Scott said that the Rehabilitation Center was responsible for the safety of its patients, and that state health officials had told the home's administrators to call 911 if they believed patients' health was at risk.

One relative who visited on Tuesday afternoon said she had been so alarmed by the conditions inside that she herself called Florida Power & Light four times. The relative, Eli Pina, said the power company told her that help was on the way. But none came.

"It felt like 110 degrees," said Ms. Pina, whose 96-year-old mother, Mirelle Pina, was evacuated from

the nursing home on Wednesday. "I think it's the fault of FPL," she added. "They said they were going to come but they didn't."

In an interview with the local ABC station, Dave Long, who worked for an air-conditioning company that serviced the nursing home, said he had been asking Florida Power & Light since Monday to fix a fuse in the system that had "popped" out because of damage from the hurricane.

"We've been calling and calling," Mr. Long said. "I can't do anything until we get that fuse popped back in."

Rob Gould, a spokesman for the power company, said at a news conference Wednesday that the company met in March with Broward County officials to discuss hurricane preparations, but that the officials had not flagged the nursing home as "top-tier" critical infrastructure that would need power first. Memorial Regional Hospital, where many residents were taken, was in the top tier.

Broward County officials, though, said in a statement that they had relied on a Florida Power & Light document saying that nursing homes were "non-critical, but play a decisive role in community recovery," suggesting they were considered a high priority for restoration but not the highest. On Tuesday morning, after the nursing home reported that the air-conditioning was out, county officials asked the utility to make it, along with other nursing homes, a higher priority, the officials said.

The utility "said there were too many to escalate all of them," Barbara Sharief, the Broward County mayor, said in an interview.

Kristen Knapp, a spokeswoman for the Florida Health Care Association, an advocate for nursing homes, said she was encouraging other facilities to "go ahead and think about moving" residents if they did not think they could keep them safe from the heat.

Florida requires nursing homes to ensure emergency power in a disaster as well as food, water, staffing and 72 hours of supplies. A new federal rule, which takes effect in November, adds that the alternative source of energy must

be capable of maintaining safe temperatures.

In general, nursing homes are required to keep temperatures between 71 and 81 degrees, according to the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. That rule applies to nursing homes certified for the first time after October 1990. However, facilities certified before that time "still must maintain safe and comfortable temperature levels," the agency's guidance says.

The causes of death had not been determined Wednesday. Medical professionals said there could be other reasons besides intense heat. Portable generators, as well as other appliances, can cause fatal carbon monoxide poisoning if used indoors.

"It is reasonable to suspect," said Dr. Beau Briese, an emergency physician at Houston Methodist Hospital who has treated many cases of carbon monoxide poisoning.

One of those who died on Wednesday, Carolyn Jo Eatherly, 78, was living at Rehabilitation Center because of Alzheimer's she

developed many years ago, a close friend, Linda Carol Horton, 65, said Wednesday.

"She couldn't be by herself, no way," especially under extreme circumstances, Ms. Horton said. "She would die."

Carolyn Jo Eatherly, left, with her friend Linda Horton in a photo provided by Ms. Horton. Ms. Eatherly, a resident of the Hollywood nursing home, died Wednesday.

As Ms. Eatherly's dementia progressed, Ms. Horton took her in for as long as she could. But about 10 years ago, Ms. Eatherly had to go into nursing care. Ms. Horton took care of her friend's four cats until they died.

She hated thinking of Ms. Eatherly helpless in the overwhelming heat.

"I'm really saddened at what happened," she said.

The 152-bed nursing home was acquired in 2015 by Larkin Community Hospital, a growing Miami-area network that includes hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Florida officials had cited a deficiency related to the building's generator as recently as February 2016. An inspection called for backup power systems to be "installed, tested and maintained" by March 2016, records show.

While praising the nursing home for above-average staffing, Medicare assigned it an overall "below average" rating, with two of five stars. A health inspection report dated from March raises issues with housekeeping, food service and resident cleanliness, but not with the heating or cooling system.

Dr. Jack Michel, the health-care network's current chairman, did not respond to requests for comment. Dr. Michel and Larkin Community were among defendants who paid \$15.4 million in 2006 to settle federal and state civil claims that the hospital paid kickbacks to doctors in exchange for patient admissions.

Elsewhere in Florida, the grim work of clearing debris and identifying people who had died during the storm was continuing. President Trump planned to visit the Naples area on Thursday.

Besides the nursing home deaths, at least 14 deaths in Florida have been tied to the storm and its aftermath, with six more in South Carolina and Georgia. Across the Caribbean, 38 had died.

At least eight died in the Florida Keys, and authorities feared that many more had drowned as they tried to ride out the storm in their boats. One man died of a stroke while emergency services were unavailable and the hospital was closed.

Among the dead from the Hollywood center was Gail Nova, 71, who had worked as an X-ray and mammography technician before her own health declined.

Her son, Jeffrey Nova, 48, said they had chosen the Rehabilitation Center for its round-the-clock skilled nursing care and proximity to the hospital.

"People died under circumstances where it could have been prevented," he said. "I want accountability. I think that's something everyone will want."



Editorial : Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and global warming

The Editorial Board, USA

TODAY

4-5 minutes

EPA chief and other leaders burying their heads in the sand, now that's 'insensitive' to hurricane victims: Our view

A destroyed construction crane in Miami on Sept. 10, 2017. (Photo: Jack Gruber, USA TODAY)

This is no time to discuss climate change and deadly hurricanes, Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt argued to CNN last week. Such a conversation would be "insensitive" to hurricane victims, he explained.

Actually, this is precisely the time to have that discussion.

In the wake of devastating Hurricanes Irma and Harvey, Americans hunger to know whether global warming — something they once regarded as a distant threat involving polar bears and melting glaciers — is a here-and-now part of their daily lives.

OPPOSING VIEW: Don't exploit hurricanes

Irma became the second Atlantic Category 4 hurricane to strike the U.S. in a single season, the first time in 166 years of weather records. As South Florida braced for the storm, the Republican mayor of Miami, Tomas Regalado, said there was no better occasion to understand the threat global warming poses to the region's future. Pope Francis heralded the twin storms as warnings to mankind.

The reality is that there is almost certainly a connection between a warming planet and the growing severity of storms. The only question is to what degree. Climate change doesn't create hurricanes, but scientists largely agree it makes them worse. Sea levels are rising, and this increases storm-related flood damage in coastal cities such as Miami, Jacksonville and Charleston.

Harvey dropped more than 4 feet of water onto part of southeastern Texas, record rain from a storm over the continental United States, damaging or destroying 100,000 homes in Texas and Louisiana.

Irma spun so powerfully into the Caribbean's Leeward Islands as a Category 5 that it sustained 185-

mph winds for 37 hours, longer than ever recorded worldwide.

AccuWeather founder Joel Myers estimates the storms will cost the U.S. \$290 billion.

And while the nation is transfixed by the hurricanes, more than 100 wildfires burn across the Northwest, consuming 2 millions acres of forests and grasslands, and threatening to make 2017 the worst ever wildfire season. Scientists see warming temperatures across the West as a contributing factor.

It's small wonder that Americans might look to leadership to connect whatever dots exist between global warming and intensifying natural disasters. But they're met with the moral equivalent of a vacant stare.

Pruitt shushes up the issue even as his agency is cleansing mention of climate change from its website and dismantling Obama-era regulations aimed at curbing greenhouse gases that are gushing into the atmosphere, warming the planet. He acts at the behest of a president who has labeled global warming a hoax, has stocked his administration with climate skeptics, and is pulling America out of the Paris climate accord.

The planet has a problem. The storm-intensification impact of climate change might very well have landed on America's doorstep in recent days in the wreckage of Florida and flooded homes of Texas. The circumstances cry out for more study and attention, not less.

Now is the time to talk about climate disruption, adapt to it, mitigate it, and take steps to keep it from getting worse. It's not the time for leaders to stick their heads in the sand.

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Ebel : Global warming alarmists shouldn't exploit hurricanes

Myron Ebell Published 7:05 p.m. ET
Sept. 13, 2017

3 minutes

Focus on coastal infrastructure, not greenhouse gas emissions: Opposing view

Miami on Sept. 11, 2017. (Photo:
Jack Gruber, USA TODAY)

The outcry over global warming crowds out and obscures the real issues with hurricanes that should be considered by elected officials at all levels.

The notion that Hurricanes Harvey and Irma should cause President Trump to reconsider withdrawing from the Paris climate treaty and dismantling the Obama climate

agenda is preposterous. Did the fact that no hurricanes of Category 3 or above made landfall in the United States from 2006 until this year cause global warming alarmists to reconsider their ruinously expensive and utterly ineffectual policies?

It's no surprise that former vice president Al Gore shamefully tries to exploit every weather disaster, or that many in Congress are going to use the death and destruction caused by Harvey and Irma to push energy-rationing policies that will do nothing to prevent similar disasters.

OUR VIEW: Harvey, Irma and global warming. Let's talk.

The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 5th Assessment Report expresses "low

confidence" in predicting increases in the intensity and duration of tropical hurricanes and typhoons worldwide over the long term and in predicting a human contribution to any trend.

To take one example, 10 hurricanes of Category 4 or 5 hit the U.S. from 1920 through 1969. From 1970 through this past week, only five hit. Thus, if there is any causal connection, it looks like warming produces fewer major hurricanes.

Although improvements in forecasting, infrastructure, emergency response and building methods have cut fatalities from hurricanes dramatically since more than 6,000 people died from the hurricane in Galveston, Texas, in 1900, many more people are at risk.

And the costs of property destruction have gone up exponentially as beach shacks have been replaced in many areas by large housing tracts.

Rather than wasting hundreds of billions of dollars on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, much smaller amounts should be spent on improving the infrastructure that protects the Gulf and Atlantic coasts.

Myron Ebell is director of the Center for Energy and Environment at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, which has received donations from fossil fuel interests.

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Editorial : After Irma, America Should Scrap the Jones Act

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Cui bono?

Photographer: Goodney/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Chris Getty

Another big hurricane, another temporary waiver of the Jones Act -- the 1920 law mandating that goods and passengers shipped between U.S. ports be carried in U.S.-flagged ships, constructed primarily in the U.S., owned by U.S. citizens, and crewed by them or by U.S. legal permanent residents.

Circumstances did indeed demand a new stay on this dumb law -- but it would be better to get rid of it altogether, as Senator John McCain and others have argued.

The Jones Act was meant to ensure that the U.S. has a reliable merchant marine during times of national emergency. It has devolved into a classic protectionist racket that benefits a handful of shipbuilders and a dwindling number of U.S. mariners. It causes higher shipping costs that percolate throughout the economy, especially penalizing the people of Alaska, Guam, Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

Despite the law, the U.S. merchant fleet has continued to shrink. Today there are only about 100 large ships that meet its requirements -- and many of them are past their best. In part because of the high cost of using Jones Act vessels, coastal shipping has steadily declined, even though it would otherwise be more efficient in many cases than trucks and railroads. The act distorts trade flows, giving imports carried by foreign ships an edge over goods shipped from within the U.S. Proposed extensions of the law

could threaten the development of offshore energy resources as well as exports of U.S. oil and natural gas.

Defenders of the law say its effects are uncertain because there's too little data. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York suggests a way to put that right: Give a five-year Jones Act waiver to Puerto Rico. That would provide data for a more rigorous analysis while giving the island's battered economy a lift. Short of outright repeal, Congress could also revisit the law's ancient, burdensome rules on crew sizes and much else. If the law remains, its focus should be on restoring the vibrancy of coastal maritime commerce, not on counting ships and sailors.

Economics aside, one might ask, isn't the Jones Act vital for national security? Hardly. Much of the U.S. Ready Reserve Fleet is foreign-built. Very few Jones Act ships are

the roll-on, roll-off kind that the military wants. To be sure, the U.S. has sound strategic reasons for maintaining some shipbuilding capability -- but smarter support narrowly directed to that purpose would be cheaper and fairer than a trade law that does so much pointless collateral harm.

The latest waiver is slated to expire this week. Modernizing the law would be a step forward. But the best thing to do with the Jones Act is scrap it.

-- Editors: James Gibney, Clive Crook.

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