

Revue de presse américaine

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



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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Lundi 18 septembre, réalisation : Josselin Brémaud



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FRANCE – EUROPE



Macron Wants to Remind the World France Is a Nuclear Power Too

@gviscusi More stories by

Gregory Viscusi

6-8 minutes

- France already weighing in on North Korea, Syria, Libya

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By

September 18, 2017, 12:00 AM EDT

Emmanuel Macron is aiming to show France can still punch its weight.

- President says France can become a ‘great power’ with reforms

After North Korea tested a nuclear weapon this month, the French President took time out of a state visit to Greece to lobby China’s Xi

Jinping on ratcheting up sanctions. He’d already spoken to the leaders of Germany, the U.K. and Italy on the issue and in August he discussed it with U.S. President Donald Trump. Within three days of the underground detonation, he was on the phone to assure South Korea’s Moon Jae-in of France’s support.

North Korea may be on the other side of the world and 8,000 kilometers away from the closest French territory, but that didn’t stop the 39-year-old president from

wanting to get involved. As the United Nations will hear when he addresses the General Assembly on Tuesday, Macron wants to be involved in everything.

With Trump’s erratic behavior, Britain preoccupied with Brexit and Germany perennially lacking a serious military, there’s a vacuum where the world has become used to seeing a western power take the lead on security. For Macron, who leads a nuclear-armed nation that is one of just five veto-wielding members of the UN Security

Council, that represents an opportunity to re-establish France's traditional postwar position as a serious player.

"It's not just optics -- there's a void," said Nicholas Dungan, senior fellow at the Atlantic Council and a professor at Paris-based institute Sciences Po. "Macron is positioning to fill it."

Talk of Grandeur

While the president may have devoted most of his energy so far to the economy and the euro area, enhancing France's global standing is another part of his plan. He has sketched out the possibility of a virtual circle with a stronger economy, a more unified European Union and a more assertive global presence feeding into each other.

"France must become a great power, full stop," Macron said in an interview with *Le Point* magazine last month. "I accept this rhetoric of grandeur. But we can only play this role if we have the means. Without an economic and social transformation, you can forget grandeur."

After four months in office, Macron has already weighed in on crises

from Qatar to Yemen and this week in New York he'll hold meetings about ongoing conflicts in Libya and Syria, which flooded the EU with refugees in 2015, opening rifts between member states and straining their commitment to open borders. Macron's advisers say in his UN speech he'll call for France to leverage its influence in a reinvigorated EU to shape global issues.

Previous French presidents weren't exactly wallflowers. Nicolas Sarkozy ordered French forces to oust Cote d'Ivoire strongman Laurent Gbagbo and then led an intervention in Libya, while Francois Hollande sent troops into Mali and the Central African Republic, bombed Islamic State and helped broker a cease-fire in Ukraine. But in Macron's view, they too easily accepted playing second fiddle to Germany or the U.S.

Syria Talks

Martin Quencez, senior program officer at the German Marshall Fund of the U.S., detects a more pragmatic approach from Macron than his predecessor Hollande, particularly in his acceptance that President Bashar al-Assad's exit is

not a pre-requisite for peace talks in Syria. Indeed, Syria is one area where Macron's intervention might be productive in a conflict that involves a complex matrix of regional and global players like Russia's Vladimir Putin, who Macron hosted at the Chateau de Versailles in May.

"The U.S. under Trump has a strange client relationship with the Saudis, it doesn't talk to Iran and Turkey is going its own way. But they are all a part of any solution and France talks to all of them," Dungan said. "It was a success to have Putin at Versailles and tell him off."

Still, there are potential pitfalls for a former investment banker and economy minister launching into the geopolitical chess game with little direct experience.

A July 25 meeting with Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj and military leader Khalifa Haftar succeeded in riling Italy, which sees itself as pointguard on Libya, and North Africa experts puzzled at why Haftar was being granted such legitimacy by a founding member of NATO and the EU. Months later, the country remains split between Sarraj's

government in the west and Haftar's militia in the east. Though that's not deterring Macron from his other initiatives.

Dinner in Paris

Perhaps nothing encapsulates his poise more than his handling of Trump.

While Macron led the global criticism of Trump's decision to quit the Paris climate accord in June, he then went out of his way to embrace the U.S. leader. On June 27 he called Trump to say France would join air strikes in Syria if Assad used chemical weapons and invited him to join the Bastille Day parade. The night before France's national celebration they had dinner at the Eiffel Tower. On Monday afternoon they'll meet again, one-on-one, in New York.

"He's marked a few points on Trump, making their disagreements on climate very clear, but then showing on July 14 how closely they can work together," Quencez said. "Macron's working relationship with Trump is a card to play."

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CNBC : Ivanovitch : France should vigorously defend its euro zone reform proposals

Dr. Michael Ivanovitch

11-14 minutes

Charles Platiau | Reuters

French President Emmanuel Macron listens as Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo delivers her speech during a ceremony at the Hotel de Ville in Paris.

Anybody investing in euro-denominated assets should know that the currency's future, just as was the case with its origin, crucially depends on a French-German agreement — so far on Germany's terms.

The latest such bargain is falling apart. An implied deal around French economic and political (i.e., structural) reforms, demanded by Germany, and France's quest for eurozone institutional changes, was spurned by the EU Commission last Wednesday, Sept. 13, in a widely suspected, and highly probable, double act with Berlin.

Indeed, one could see a diligent rush by Germany's pro-government center-right media to highlight Berlin's full support of the EU Commission's reform program.

That is a serious blow to French efforts to even out the playing field with Germany by establishing a legislative and executive control over the euro area, with common fiscal policy to run public debt, budget balances and the monetary union's investment projects.

Paris could have seen that coming. As soon as the French euro area reform proposals were announced last spring, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel issued a statement that she would take a look at French ideas to see "whether the reforms were needed" and "what to do with them."

France now has Germany's answer, dutifully delivered, in German, by the president of the EU Commission so that Merkel does not have to bother with minutiae in the run-up to Sept. 24 elections.

Don't be a pushover

How important is all this for people currently operating, or contemplating, euro area portfolios?

The short answer is this: If, as widely expected, Merkel remains the head of government and retains Wolfgang Schaeuble to serve as finance minister, Germany will be in no hurry to initiate euro area reforms. Germany's only euro area

problem at the moment is the expansionary monetary policy run by the governing board of the European Central Bank. Berlin's big issue now is how to get a lock on the ECB by putting in a German, or a suitable (North European) surrogate, as the bank's next president.

By contrast, France faces serious problems in its attempts to reform the economy and to set its public finances on a path consistent with the eurozone's criteria.

Executive decrees to, as the French say, increase the "labor market fluidity" — essentially to make it easier and cheaper to fire people — are being met with street demonstrations and political warnings not to aggravate the country's existing social tensions.

The first protest marches organized on Sept. 12 are estimated by the government to have gathered 220,000 people. The unions claim a much bigger participation. The next two events are announced for this week (Sept. 21 and 23), with larger crowds and broader political, economic and social agenda espoused by center-left parties.

The French government is putting up a brave face on all that, ready not to yield on labor market reforms and

other politically flammable issues in the pipeline.

One of those will be public spending cuts to bring the budget deficit to 3 percent of GDP (from 3.4 percent last year), a borderline euro area requirement, and a far cry from the German proviso to get, with dispatch, balanced budgets throughout the monetary union. The French public debt of 96 percent of GDP (in 2016), compared with Germany's 68.3 percent of GDP, is another problem Paris will be asked to deal with in the months to come.

All that is happening in a situation where the approval rating of the French President Emmanuel Macron went into a free fall during his first 100 days in office to 36 percent at the latest count — the lowest ever for any of his predecessors in the Fifth Republic at the same time of their tenure.

Don't kill the recovery; stand up for euro reforms

Still, Macron is a man in a hurry, sending his prime minister to Germany last week to convince the Germans: "Please, believe me, I can do cyclically inappropriate and politically destabilizing structural reforms you are asking for."

That is absurd, but that's the way it is: Macron is forgoing his large parliamentary majority to govern by executive decrees in order to make it easier to fire people in an economy where the unemployment rate rose, on his watch, to 9.8 percent in July from 9.5 percent in April, with a quarter of the French youth without jobs and a meaningful future.

All these entreaties to Berlin will come to naught. As in the past, Germany will take France's economic problems and its militant body politic as a negotiating ploy to impose its views. That was the case with Macron's immediate predecessors Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande.

The Germans are trying the same thing with Macron. Using their typical put-down zingers, German media called out Macron's "pompous grandstanding" on Europe's renewal during his excellent speech in Athens on September 5 from the hill of Pnyx, the birthplace of Western democracy, where ancient Greeks gathered to discuss public policies.

Macron is facing difficult options.

If he caves in to pressure from Berlin and Brussels and abandons his reform proposals, he will be mercilessly steamrolled by Germans, like his predecessors, and will expose

himself as a weakling to ferocious attacks at home. Remember, in the first round of presidential elections last April, nearly half of French voters supported parties asking for more assertive French policies in defense of economic interests. They blamed the euro as an instrument of German austerity policies that led to rising poverty, soaring unemployment, deep recession and a sub-par economic recovery.

As the mass demonstrations are showing, these political forces have not disappeared; they are regrouping now and getting ready to pounce on what they see as a weak and disoriented government.

The second option for Macron, a man with deep sense of French history assailed by pressures from all sides, might be to get some guidance from the message Marshal Ferdinand Foch sent during the Battle of Marne in WWI: "My center is giving way, my right is retreating, situation excellent, I am attacking."

Macron's best bet could be to stand up and stick to his Eurozone reform proposals. Stand up indeed, because he got it right: An appropriate legislative and executive authority he is proposing is an absolute essential condition to frame sovereignty transfers for a common euro area fiscal policy. That would create a quasi-federal institutional environment to prevent policy

domination by any single member country.

There is no need for French confrontation with Germany, although, true to form, Berlin seems to be pushing in that direction. Paris can easily demonstrate, and defend, that a rigorous institutional architecture must be put in place if key functions of a sovereign state are to be ceded and transferred to a supranational euro area entity.

Investment thoughts

The pending Eurozone reform issues won't materially affect the short-term outlook — a one-year investment horizon — for euro-denominated assets. The ECB is firmly in charge as the main driver of the European economic growth, employment creation and price stability.

Further down the road, a tightly coordinated fiscal policy, or, ideally, a fiscal union will become necessary to run a cyclically appropriate policy mix for the Eurozone as a whole. That delicate and politically sensitive step toward European integration is inevitable. It will unfold as a gradual and contentious process of radical change.

The French plan looks to me well thought out to accommodate that next phase of the European project. Paris should have no trouble winning the day against the vague,

inept and sloganeering integration rhetoric put forward by an apparently German-sponsored EU proposal presented last week.

People ready to sink their savings into euro assets should keep an eye on that, and think of this: The Europeans have put in place an infernal machine that is supposed to lead them to a united continent of peace and prosperity. Brexit is an example of how difficult it is to get off that wild ride.

And then keep this in mind, too: That machine gave Germans a captive European market that generates 62 percent of their massive trade surplus (\$280 billion in 2016), with export sales that account for nearly one-third of Germany's 3.1 trillion euro GDP.

Will Germans kill their golden goose? They aren't crazy.

France has a chance to make a crucially important contribution — if it stands up firmly for itself and the rest of Europe.

Commentary by Michael Ivanovitch, an independent analyst focusing on world economy, geopolitics and investment strategy. He served as a senior economist at the OECD in Paris, international economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and taught economics at Columbia Business School.



Acid Attack in France Injures at Least 2 American Students (online)

Aurelien Breeden
4-5 minutes

police prefecture in Marseille said. "For now, nothing suggests that this was a terrorist attack."

women had "recently arrived to start the fall semester."

also had a criminal record for violent theft, according to France 3.

Passengers at the Saint-Charles Station in Marseille, France, last month. Four American women were reportedly attacked with acid at the station on Sunday, the local police said. Bertrand Langlois/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The four American women, all in their early 20s, were in front of the Saint-Charles train station when a woman threw hydrochloric acid on them shortly before 11 a.m., the police said.

In the college's statement, he added, "It appears that the students are fine, considering the circumstances, though they may require additional treatment for burns."

In 2013, two American women, Kirstie Trup and Katie Gee, both 18, who were teaching on the island of Zanzibar, were attacked with acid by two men on a moped who stopped, smiled and doused them, severely burning their faces, chests and hands, before speeding away.

PARIS — Four American college students were attacked with acid by a woman on Sunday at a train station in southern France, injuring at least two of them, according to the local police.

Two of the women were burned, and the other two appeared to have escaped injury, but they were in a state of shock, according to police. All four were treated at a hospital on Sunday.

The prosecutor's office could not be reached for comment, but told France 3 that one of the women had been hit in the eye with acid and had trouble seeing.

In London this year, two teenage boys went on a violent, 72-minute spree in the northeast, spraying acid on five people, the authorities said. The teenagers were arrested on suspicion of robbery and of causing grievous bodily harm.

The assailant, a 41-year-old woman, was quickly arrested in the Mediterranean port city of Marseille. The police prefecture said they were not treating the attack on the American women as a terrorist assault.

Boston College said in a statement on Sunday that the four women were students at the college and were enrolled in study-abroad programs. They were identified as Courtney Siverling, Charlotte Kaufman, Michelle Krug and Kelsey Kosten, all juniors.

France has been on high alert for terrorism since 2015, after a series of attacks killed more than 230 people. There have also been a number of attacks by psychologically unstable residents who have sometimes imitated terrorist acts, officials say.

Correction: September 18, 2017

Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article misstated the length of time during which five people were sprayed with acid in London. It was 72 minutes, not hours.

The suspect has "a psychiatric history," a spokeswoman for the

Nick Gozik, who directs Boston College's Office of International Programs, said in an email that the

La Provence, the main local newspaper, quoted police sources as saying that after the attack, the suspect had displayed pictures of herself with burns on her body. The prosecutor's office said the suspect

Four American college students are attacked with acid at France train station, authorities say (online)

https://www.facebook.com/kristineaguerra
5-6 minutes

Passengers look at information monitors at the Saint-Charles Station in Marseille, France, in August. (Bertrand Langlois/Agence France-Presse/Getty Images)

Four American college students were hospitalized Sunday after a woman sprayed them with acid at a train station in Marseille, a city in southern France, authorities say.

The victims, who are juniors at Boston College, were treated for burns and have been released, according to a statement from the college. Two had facial injuries, one of whom possibly suffered an eye injury, a spokeswoman for the Marseille prosecutor's office told the Associated Press.

Investigators are not considering the attack a terrorist act, although that could not be ruled out early in the investigation. The spokeswoman told the AP that the suspect did not make extremist threats.

The attack happened about 11 a.m. at the Marseille-Saint Charles train station. Fourteen

firefighters in four rescue vehicles responded, according to media reports.

Boston College said the young women are enrolled in the school's international programs. Three, Courtney Siverling, Charlotte Kaufman and Michelle Krug, are attending school in Paris; Kesley Kosten is a student at the Copenhagen Business School in Denmark.

"It appears that the students are fine, considering the circumstances, though they may require additional treatment for burns," Nick Gozik, director of Boston College's office of international programs, said in the statement. "We have been in contact with the students and their parents and remain in touch with French officials and the U.S. Embassy regarding the incident."

La Provence, a newspaper in Marseille, reported that police described the attacker as mentally unstable and that she remained at the scene to show officers pictures of herself with burns. Authorities did not release her name.

[As Britain cracks down on weapons, criminals turn to acid attacks]

Alex Daniels, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Paris, told the AP that the embassy is not commenting on the incident, citing privacy reasons. He said the U.S. consulate in Marseille is in contact with investigators.

The port city of Marseille, about 500 miles southeast of Paris, has been the site of at least two other attacks in recent months.

In August, a man driving a van crashed into two bus stops in the Vieux-Port area, a popular tourist spot. One person was killed and another was injured, French media reported. Officials did not think it was a terrorist act.

In January, authorities said a 15-year-old Turkish Kurd attacked a Jewish teacher with a machete and claimed he did so on behalf of the Islamic State. The teenager struck the teacher's shoulder and fled before police came.

One attack, which was supposed to happen in April leading up to the French presidential election, was thwarted. Authorities said two French nationals were arrested in Marseille before they were able to carry out what Paris prosecutor

Francois Molins called an "imminent, violent action."

[Van crashes into bus stops in Marseille, killing 1 amid heightened street security]

In Britain, authorities said acid attacks have tripled in the past three years, stoking fears that anyone in a public area could be a victim. The alarming rise comes amid a clampdown on weapons and fears of a frightening new crime fad involving teenage motorbike thieves using corrosive substances, in part because they are relatively easy to obtain, The Washington Post reported last month.

Nearly 460 acid attacks were reported in London in 2016, according to London police. Deputy Metropolitan Police Commissioner Craig Mackey said investigators think the spike reflects an emerging trend among criminal gangs.

"We are seeing some links — although it has to be treated with caution because it's a small data set — of a growing feature between named suspects in acid attacks who also feature in our gang matrix," Mackey said.



Acid Attack France: Boston College Students Hospitalized

Jennifer Calfas
2-3 minutes

The Four American tourists attacked with acid in France on Sunday are all female Boston College students in their early 20s, according to the Associated Press.

The women were attacked at the Saint Charles train station in Marseille, a coastal city in southern France, Sunday morning. All four of the women were hospitalized — two of them suffering

from shock — and later released, according to the Associated Press. Two of the young women were "slightly injured" in the face by the acid, with one of them potentially having an eye injury, the AP reported.

"It appears that the students are fine, considering the circumstances, though they may require additional treatment for burns," Nick Gozik, director of the college's Office of International Programs, said in a statement, according to the AP. "We have been in contact with the

students and remain in touch with French officials and the U.S. Embassy regarding the incident."

Representatives from Boston College did not immediately respond to request for comment from TIME.

French authorities are not considering the incident a terrorist attack, the AP reported. A 41-year-old woman has been taken into custody as a result of the incident.

The students who were attacked were Courtney Siverling, Charlotte Kaufman and Michelle Krug, who

are studying at the college's program in Paris. Kelsey Korsten, the fourth victim, is studying at the Copenhagen Business School in Denmark.

The incident comes after another attack in Marseille in late August. A man driving a van rammed into two bus stops, killing one person and injuring another. Marseille police did not believe the incident was a terror attack, and the suspect was treated for psychological problems, according to the Associated Press.



Such attacks growing more common in Europe

Mark Nichols and Jane Onyanga-Omara, USA TODAY
Published 6:25 p.m. ET Sept. 17, 2017

4-5 minutes

Police say four young female U.S. tourists were attacked with acid Sunday in Marseille, France by a woman who has been arrested.

Motorcycle delivery drivers and motorcyclists take part in a demonstration in Parliament Square in central London on July 18, 2017, following a spate of acid attacks on July 13. A 16-year-old boy was charged by police investigating five linked acid attacks in London. (Photo: Niklas Halle'n, AFP/Getty Images)

Acid attacks, similar to the one injuring four U.S. women Sunday at a French train station, are escalating

across Europe, and authorities are concerned that corrosive substances may become more of a "weapon of choice" for potential terrorist attacks.

Sunday's attack in Marseille against four Boston College students studying abroad is not being considered a terrorist attack, French authorities said. The female suspect, 41, has a history of mental health problems and was arrested at the scene.

Boston College said the students are all juniors. "It appears that the students are fine, considering the circumstances, though they may require additional treatment for burns," said Nick Gozik, director of the college's Office of International Programs.

The Paris prosecutor's office said its counter-terrorism division, which has responsibility for all terror-related incidents in France, had not assumed jurisdiction for the attack.

More: 4 U.S. female college students attacked with acid in France; terrorism not suspected

More: Moped mayhem: UK attackers on scooters target victims with thefts, acid

More: Acid attacks against women in India on the rise; survivors fight back

But police and academic researchers say acid-related attacks — many involving terrorism — are spreading across Europe and have occurred recently in the United States. Toxic substances, including drain cleaner, are used as weapons more frequently partly as a result of a crackdown on guns and knives overseas in recent years.

An assault in east London this year at the Mangle nightclub left two people blind in

one eye from what police called a "corrosive fluid." Witnesses said the attack followed a fight in the club.

In April, police in Manchester in northern England, said a pregnant woman and a man suffered "severe discomfort" when someone threw bleach in their eyes from a passing car.

Assaults involving corrosive substances have more than doubled in England since 2012, according to police data obtained by the British Broadcasting Company.

The vast majority of attacks were in London, with at least 208 since 2016. The data show that at least 38 of those incidents have caused serious injuries, and at least one was fatal.

The attacks have become so acute that advocates of some victims have

called on the British Parliament to make it illegal to purchase strong acid products without a license.

Other acid incidents have been reported in Berlin and in Italy, where a former Miss Italy finalist was reportedly attacked by a former boyfriend.

In the U.S., two women were attacked just a week apart in 2010 in separate incidents in Mesa, Ariz., and Vancouver, Wash.

In England, acid attacks have been rising as a percent of all violent attacks, but the actual number of incidents was "tiny" compared to attacks with other weapons, according to Assistant Chief Constable Rachel Kerton, who is the National Police Chiefs Council lead for corrosive attacks.

Simon Harding, a criminologist and expert on gangs at London's Middlesex University, told the BBC that acid is becoming "a weapon of first choice."

"Acid throwing is a way of showing dominance, power and control ... building enormous fear among gang peer groups," he said.

Harding noted that gang members know charges against them may not be as serious in an acid-throwing incident, as opposed to other weapons, and that acid-throwing cases are harder to prosecute because there's rarely DNA evidence.

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2:34 PM ET

4-5 minutes

Young American Women Attacked in France with Acid as Similar Attacks Increase Across Europe

Erin Zaleski09.17.17

PARIS—The crime is nightmarish for its brutality and all the worse because it seems so random.

Four young American women, Boston College students, were sitting on a bench at Marseille's bustling Saint-Charles station Sunday morning waiting for their train to Paris when a stranger approached. Then, suddenly the assailant is alleged to have sprayed hydrochloric acid in the faces of the unsuspecting tourists.

Two of the women, both in their early 20s, suffered burns and were rushed to the hospital. One victim was released Sunday afternoon, but the other remains hospitalized. According to reports in the French press, the acid badly damaged her eyes, costing her 50 percent of her vision.

A statement issued by Boston College quoted its director of international programs, Nick Gozik: "It appears that the students are fine, considering the circumstances, though they may require additional treatment for burns. ... We have been in contact with the students and their parents and remain in touch with French officials and the U.S. embassy

regarding the incident."

All four of the students were juniors, according to the statement. Three were enrolled in the Boston College Paris program, and one in the Copenhagen Business School in Denmark.

French police have ruled out terrorism, and here is where the horrifying story takes a turn for the truly bizarre. The 41-year-old alleged perpetrator is reported to be another woman. Described as "mentally unstable" by police sources, the suspect allegedly lingered at the scene, where she showed officers pictures of what she said were her own burn scars. She herself was a victim of an acid attack years ago, she claimed—as though her own victim status somehow excused her actions.

Acid attacks are rare in France, but they are not unheard of. Last month, a 14-year-old boy was arrested for hurling three bottles of acid at a café terrace in the chic 16th arrondissement of Paris, just steps away from the storied Arc de Triomphe. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Related in World News

Meanwhile, attacks have been rising in several other European countries.

As The Daily Beast reported in August, acid attacks in London doubled in 2016 to 431, and over 500 attacks have been reported this

year alone. In July, for instance, two teens embarked on an acid-spraying spree, perpetrating five attacks in a single night.

Attacks are also increasing in Italy, often by jilted former lovers leaving their ex-girlfriends physically disfigured and mentally scarred.

"They use acid because it takes just a tiny dose to corrode and ruin someone's life," Michele Marzano, a center-left politician told The Daily Beast in 2013. "The aggressor often chooses a woman's face because it embodies her beauty and her identity. The acid removes the shape of her face. It is a way to cancel her out."

Outside of Europe, acid attacks are an enormous problem, as shown in Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy's 2012 Oscar-winning film "Saving Face" about the atrocities committed in Pakistan.

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share your email with anyone for any reason.

The ease with which acid can be purchased (it's the main ingredient in many basic household cleaning products) makes such attempts to "cancel someone out" frighteningly easy.

Unlike other deadly weapons, such products are neither illegal, nor is their sale in any way regulated. The 14-year-old would-be attacker in Paris, as well as the teenage London assailants, are proof of just how easy it is to get your hands on such substances, regardless of how young (or how mentally unwell) you may be.

As for the suspect in today's train station attack, her claim that she was victimized herself has yet to be verified. However, police report that the young Americans abroad were chosen at random, not based on their nationality.

In short, it seems to be a wrong place at the wrong time scenario that has echoes of a dark fairytale— young women in a strange land brutalized by a someone twice their age who may have been bearing a grudge about the way her own youth was snatched from her.



U.K. Police Focus on Suburban Home in Connection With London Subway Bomb

Georgi Kantchev and Jason Douglas

6-7 minutes

Updated Sept. 17, 2017 5:19 p.m. ET

SUNBURY-ON-THAMES, ENGLAND—Investigators probing a bomb blast that injured more than two dozen people in London's subway last week combed through a house in this suburban town owned by elderly foster parents who neighbors said had recently been caring for two "refugees."

Armed police descended on the neighborhood on Saturday after the arrest of an 18-year-old man in connection with the Friday attack, in which an improvised explosive device aboard a train erupted in flames, burning some passengers and sending others fleeing in panic.

Police also arrested a second man, age 21, late Saturday in a different suburb west of the capital. Both were being questioned on Sunday, police said.

In the wake of the bombing, the latest in a series of terrorist assaults in Britain this year, the government raised the national terror-alert status to critical, its highest level, before lowering it on Sunday afternoon, a sign authorities no longer fear another attack is imminent.

U.K. Home Secretary Amber Rudd said the move indicates "good progress has been made" in tracking down the culprits behind Friday's blast.

Mrs. Rudd also said investigators haven't found evidence of

involvement by Islamic State, which said a detachment of its fighters was responsible for the attack. The extremist group has been losing its grip on territory in the Middle East under military pressure from the U.S. and others.

Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley, the U.K.'s top counterterrorism officer, said the search in Sunbury and another in Stanwell, near London, had given law-enforcement agencies "a greater understanding of the preparation of the device" used in Friday's attack. Police said the search in Sunbury is related to the arrest of the 18-year-old man and the search in Stanwell is related to the 21-year-old's arrest.

On Sunday, police were still working in the Sunbury home. Yellow tents had been set up outside and the street was blocked off with a gray fence. Property records indicate the house is owned by Ronald and Penelope Jones. The couple couldn't be reached for comment.

Neighbors said the Joneses were veteran foster parents who most recently were caring for two males that neighbors described as refugees. One of the men was an 18-year-old Iraqi, a member of the district's governing council said.

Dave Solway, 44, who lives across the street, said he saw Mr. Jones arguing with one of the men in the middle of the road about two weeks ago. The man said "he didn't want to stay here. He wanted to go to London," Mr. Solway said.

About two weeks ago, Mrs. Jones told friends and neighbors that she couldn't cope with the 18-year-old

man anymore, a local councilor and neighbors said.

"This boy had issues. Penny said she's having too much trouble with him," said Alison Griffiths, the local councilor, who said she is a friend of the Joneses.

When armed police showed up on Saturday, Mr. Solway said, they banged on the Jones's door. "When Penny opened, they quickly pulled her and Ron out. They shouted at me, 'Get away from the window.' It was quite mad."

Another neighbor, Jim Adaway, said the Joneses "have done so much good," for foster children over the years. "I couldn't think of a nicer couple."

In 2009, Mr. and Mrs. Jones were named members of the Order of the British Empire, an honor bestowed by the queen, in recognition of their services to children and families.

In an April interview with Elmbridge CAN, which describes itself as a community group helping refugees, Mrs. Jones said she and her husband have fostered 268 children over the years.

She said she has cared for children from Iraq, Eritrea, Syria and Afghanistan and that fostering refugee children has been rewarding.

"They're all children, it doesn't matter if they're sky blue or with pink dots on them. They just need to be loved," Mrs. Jones was quoted as saying, adding that her fostering career has had "its ups and downs."

Ms. Griffiths, the local councilor, said she would put forward a plan to

train caregivers and foster parents how to spot signs of radicalization.

"All of those attackers are young and vulnerable so we need to spot them before it's too late," she said.

Police haven't identified the arrested men, or described them apart from giving their ages.

The 18-year-old was arrested in the port area of Dover on the English Channel. Dover is a major hub for ferry transport between the U.K. and Europe. Officers searching near the ferry terminal recovered a number of items, police said.

The U.K. has suffered a spate of attacks this year. In March, an Islamist terrorist killed five, including a policeman, in a van and knife attack in and around Parliament. That was followed by a suicide bombing in May that killed 22 people at a pop concert in the northwestern British city of Manchester.

In June, three Islamist extremists rammed pedestrians with a van on London Bridge and stabbed others, killing eight people and injuring dozens before they were shot and killed by police.

That assault was followed by an attack targeting Muslims leaving Ramadan prayers. One man died and eight others were rushed to the hospital when an assailant plowed a rented van into a crowd outside an east London mosque.

Write to Georgi Kantchev at georgi.kantchev@wsj.com and Jason Douglas at jason.douglas@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 18, 2017, print edition as 'Foster Home Searched in London Probe.'



U.K. Proposes Treaty With EU on Security and Law Enforcement

Jason Douglas
3 minutes

Sept. 16, 2017 7:01 p.m. ET

LONDON—The U.K. government proposed Sunday that London and Brussels sign a new treaty to ensure cooperation on security and law enforcement after Britain leaves the European Union.

The proposal, to be laid out in a paper to be published Monday, highlights the close ties between the U.K. and other EU member states in matters of criminal justice that officials are eager to preserve in the final withdrawal agreement.

It comes a day after the British capital was struck by the latest in a

string of terrorist attacks in Europe this year, when 29 people were injured by a homemade bomb left on a packed subway train.

A new treaty would provide a legal basis for continued collaboration on security, law enforcement and criminal justice following the U.K.'s exit from the EU, according to a statement from the U.K.'s Department for Exiting the European Union.

The U.K. said a treaty would establish formal channels for agencies to cooperate after the 2019 divorce and include a method for settling disputes.

"Effective international cooperation is absolutely crucial for both the U.K. and the EU if we are to keep our citizens safe and bring criminals to

justice," U.K. Brexit Secretary David Davis said in the statement.

EU member states and their law enforcement agencies routinely share data and intelligence on at-large wanted criminals in Europe and work together to combat organized crime and terrorism. National police forces cooperate through Europol, the EU's police office, and the bloc has developed streamlined procedures to share evidence and arrest and extradite suspects.

The U.K. said it would call for a comprehensive agreement on security collaboration with the EU as part of the "deep and special partnership" it wants to forge after Brexit.

Prime Minister Theresa May is due to lay out the government's latest thinking on Brexit in a speech in Italy on Friday before divorce talks between London and Brussels resume near the end of this month.

The U.K.'s proposal on security highlights how London is eager to move on in talks toward negotiating the terms of the partnership, especially with regard to trade. But Brussels has been adamant that agreement must first be reached on a trio of thorny issues: Citizens' rights, the Irish border and settling any unpaid commitments by Britain to the EU.

Write to Jason Douglas at jason.douglas@wsj.com

Horowitz

12-15 minutes

Italy, Going It Alone, Stalls the Flow of Migrants. But at What Cost?

Declan
and
Walsh
Jason

Migrants trying to reach a rescue boat in the Mediterranean Sea, north of Sabratha, Libya, in July. Santi Palacios/Associated Press

CAIRO — As they scrambled to curb the flow of migrants, Europe's leaders wrestled with a vexing question: How to stop the ruthless Libyan militias that control the human-trafficking trade from dispatching countless boats across the Mediterranean?

Now Italy, after striking out on its own, appears to have found a solution — one that, though wildly successful for the moment, is provoking questions about its methods and the humanitarian costs.

Arrivals of migrants in Italy have plunged in recent months. In August alone, they fell 85 percent, leading some to charge that Italy was paying off Libya's most rapacious warlords at the risk of further destabilizing the fractured North African country, while condemning migrants to misery.

Human rights activists liken the grimy conditions at militant-run detention centers inside Libya to concentration camps, while the top United Nations human rights official, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, recently warned that the Italian-led tactics were "very thin on the protection of the human rights of migrants inside Libya and on the boats."

Italian ministers deny giving even a single euro to Libya's armed militias. Instead, they attribute their success to painstaking diplomacy and other inducements, like the possibility of rejoining a regularly paid, national army.

"We approached the issue slowly, slowly, Italian style," Mario Giro, deputy foreign minister, said in an interview. "We spoke to everyone."

Many are skeptical: Money and the threat of brute force are the usual considerations when it comes to persuading the fractious militias that hold sway across Libya. But if Italy's aggressive new approach to migration includes dealing with unsavory strongmen, it would not be the first time.

Such unpalatable compromises hark back to the era of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the Libyan dictator who effectively extorted tens of millions

of dollars in assistance from Italy in return for keeping a lid on migration.

That arrangement came apart when Colonel Qaddafi was ousted and killed in a bloody uprising in 2011, an event that presaged the migrant crisis that has since bedeviled Europe.

Libyan Coast Guard officers at a graduation ceremony in Malta in February after completing an Italian training program. Gianni Cipriano for The New York Times

"This is basically what Italy did with Qaddafi, but on a much wider scale, because instead of a single dictator, you have to pay 10 warlords," said Mattia Toaldo, a Libya expert at the European Council on Foreign Relations, referring to Italy's new approach.

"Even if no money is paid," Mr. Toaldo added, "the idea that these groups are the gatekeepers to Europe gives them huge leverage."

Italian officials say they had little choice but to act.

For years, Rome channeled its antimigration efforts under the umbrella of the European Union, cooperating with programs to train the flimsy Libyan Coast Guard and offering aid to the African countries where many migrants come from.

Yet the number of migrants continued to explode, to more than 180,000 arrivals last year, with over 5,000 people dying at sea.

Italian officials say they felt abandoned by their European neighbors, especially France, which refused to take a greater share of the migrants.

This spring, Italian voters voiced their frustration by electing conservative candidates at local elections, sending a jolting message to the governing center-left coalition. The Italians decided to go it alone.

Marco Minniti, the interior minister and a former spymaster, has introduced a range of initiatives that reach far and wide into Libya, which still has no central authority.

In April Mr. Minniti hosted feuding tribesmen in Rome, mediating a peace deal between groups that controlled the desert trafficking trails from Algeria, Chad and Niger.

Italian Coast Guards trained their Libyan counterparts and sent a naval ship to repair the Libyan service's boats. Italy curbed the sea operations of aid groups that rescue migrants, forcing them to work further from the Libyan coast.

But the turning point for Mr. Minniti's efforts came in July, after Italy persuaded the clan-based militias that control the migrant trade along a stretch of the lawless Libyan coast, west of the capital, Tripoli, to keep their boats onshore.

A member of the Libyan Coast Guard helped rescue migrants off the coastal town of Zawiyah, Libya, in June. Taha Jawashi/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Just how Mr. Minniti turned human traffickers into gatekeepers is a contentious matter — he has flatly denied making cash payments — but the results have been striking.

Migrant arrivals from Libya fell 50 percent in July. In August, just 2,729 landed on Italy's shores, down from over 18,000 a year earlier, according to the United Nations refugee agency.

Fewer people died at sea, too — 11 in August compared with 42 in the same period in 2016.

But a policy that tackles human trafficking by relying on the same armed groups that have profited from the trade has obvious pitfalls.

Those traps, too, have been demonstrated in the past.

In early 2011, furious that Italy had sided with the rebels trying to overthrow him, Colonel Qaddafi threatened to retaliate by sending floods of migrants across the Mediterranean, recalled Franco Frattini, then Italy's foreign minister.

"He said, 'We'll make them aware of the blood in the sea,'" said Mr. Frattini, citing a phone call intercepted by Italian intelligence.

As the Libyan uprising closed in on Colonel Qaddafi, his security forces did just that: They loaded hundreds of African migrants onto a rickety fishing vessel in Tripoli.

The boat was so overloaded that it capsized in a storm before it even set out. Dozens of African migrants drowned: Their bodies were fished from the water, months later, on the day that Colonel Qaddafi was killed.

This time, there is the risk that migrant boats could still set off, requiring a sweetening of whatever inducements Rome is providing.

The stakes are vividly illustrated in Sabratha, a port town and major node of the human trafficking trade about 40 miles west of Tripoli.

Here, the flare from an offshore gas plant guides boats packed with migrants headed to Europe, many of which are controlled by the

Dabbashis, a powerful local clan that has also profited handsomely from smuggling cheap Libyan fuel.

Migrants at a detention center in Zawiyah. Many of those turned back at sea have been held in filthy conditions where abuse and exploitation are rife. Tyler Hicks/The New York Times

Human trafficking is not the Dabbashis' only link to Italy: Their largest militia, known as Al Ammu, has a contract to protect the nearby Mellitah Oil and Gas plant, which is operated by the Italian state-controlled energy giant Eni.

Despite the chaos that has engulfed Libya since 2011, Mellitah, which pipes gas directly across the sea to Italy, is one of the few energy plants to have operated virtually uninterrupted, which experts say reveals much about Eni's deep reach inside Libya.

After the boats filled with migrants suddenly stopped leaving Sabratha, the clan indicated it had done a deal.

The leader of the main militia, Ahmed Dabbashi, told The Times of London that the United Nations-backed unity government in Tripoli had promised him vehicles, boats and salaries in exchange for cooperation.

That assistance, financial or otherwise, was being channeled through the United Nations-backed unity government in Tripoli, which in turn is funded by Italy. Speaking by phone, several unity government officials said Rome had stepped up payments and supplies of equipment to militias in Sabratha, Zuwarah and other coastal smuggling hubs.

"We met the Italians today, and we expect to get 200 million euros, which we will distribute according to our needs," said Tarek Shanbour, head of the coastal security department in Tripoli. That is about \$240 million.

Mr. Giro, the Italian deputy foreign minister, acknowledged that some former traffickers had received medicine, funds for hospitals, and other forms of assistance.

But he insisted that no money changed hands and that the militias were motivated by the possibility of having a stake in political decisions, rejoining a future Libyan national army, and of benefiting from a return of Italian business.

"I can't speak for others, but I would rule it out," he said, when asked if

Italy's secret services could be funding such groups.

Most Libyans, though, see the overtures in a more cynical light.

Mohamed Eljarh, an analyst with the Atlantic Council, said that while promises of official recognition were certainly attractive to some armed groups, money was their principal incentive.

The Mellitah Oil and Gas plant near Sabratha, Libya, which is operated by the Italian state-controlled energy giant Eni. The installation is one of the few energy sites to have operated virtually uninterrupted since the uprising in Libya in 2011. Ismail Zitouny/Reuters

"I don't think they would give up on huge amounts of cash just like that," he said. "Without money, these groups don't have power in their areas."

Others warn that Rome is inadvertently arming a new generation of gunmen and traffickers, and say that it might be a matter of time before those groups revise the price for cooperation, much as Colonel Qaddafi once did.

"We know the greed of these groups," said Mohamed Dayri, foreign minister for one of the Libya's three rival governments, who described the Italian policy as a disaster. "They will use the money to buy more weapons," he said.

Italy's success in slashing migrant arrivals on its shores has brought a sharp sigh of relief across Europe, where fury over migration has driven a populist revolt. On Tuesday, European Union interior ministers gathered in Brussels signaled their approval for Italy's tactics.

But the ministers also agreed to new funding for United Nations programs to help the estimated 400,000 migrants stranded in Libya, many of whom are being kept in filthy detention centers where abuse and exploitation are rife. The International Organization for Migration has documented cases of enslavement in some places, while Doctors Without Borders recently decried in an open letter the awful condition in the camps.

The extra funding announced Tuesday was taken as a tacit recognition of what one senior European official termed "unacceptable, inhumane treatment and human rights violations" for migrants in Libya.

Even as Italian politicians have eagerly sought to claim a piece of the recent success, already this

weekend there were ominous signs their jubilation could be short-lived.

According to La Stampa, a Turin-based newspaper, the Italian Coast Guard and boats operated by aid groups like Save the Children in waters near Libya have brought to Sicily more than 1,000 migrants in the last few days.

And on Saturday the Libyan Coast Guard intercepted 1,074 migrants in at least eight boats that departed from beaches in and around Sabratha on Saturday, the service said on its Facebook page.

So some Italian officials are cautious about declaring victory over a problem that has long vexed Europe.

"Why did the flow of migrants stop?" Mr. Giro said. "The real question is, 'Has it really stopped?'"

INTERNATIONAL

**The
New York
Times**

Gladstone

8-10 minutes

Miroslav Lajcak, the president of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, opened the session's first official meeting last Tuesday. Mary Altaffer/Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — When the 193-member United Nations convenes this week for the annual General Assembly speeches and high-level meetings, world leaders will be paying closest attention to the words and gestures of the most unconventional — and powerful — leader among them.

What President Trump says, whom he may offend, please or surprise and how other international leaders react at the world's largest diplomatic gathering are topics that are likely to dominate the chatter at the United Nations, which, in its 72nd year, is barely older than Mr. Trump.

Here are five issues to watch:

The Trump effect

While this will be Mr. Trump's first visit to the United Nations as president, he has castigated the organization as an elitist "club" and proposed what amount to drastic cuts in voluntary contributions from

What We're Watching at This Year's United Nations General Assembly

Somini Sengupta
and Rick

the United States, the single-biggest donor.

Mr. Trump has taken issue with what much of the world regards as one of the most significant achievements at the United Nations, the Paris climate accord to curb greenhouse gases and arrest global warming. His administration also has objected to other positions advocated by the United Nations: protecting the rights of refugees and migrants; the Iran nuclear agreement; and a new treaty that many members are expected to sign on Wednesday that would outlaw all nuclear weapons.

Why Trump Is the Most Interesting Part of the U.N. General Assembly

Representatives from 193 nations are set to gather for the 72nd annual General Assembly. All eyes will be on President Trump as he juggles diplomatic tensions in countries like North Korea and Iran.

By NILO TABRIZY and RICK GLADSTONE on September 17, 2017. Photo by Doug Mills/The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

On Monday, Mr. Trump will host a meeting to discuss what his ambassador, Nikki R. Haley, has described as badly needed reforms at the United Nations to make it more efficient and responsive. What will he demand from an organization he has pilloried? How will he treat

the new leader of the United Nations, Secretary General António Guterres, who told reporters last week that he had been trying to build a "constructive relationship" with Mr. Trump? What, if anything, will Mr. Trump say about global warming in his speech to the General Assembly on Tuesday morning?

North Korea's continued defiance

By now, North Korea's defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions banning its tests of ballistic missiles and atomic bombs has become almost routine. Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, launched a missile on Friday that flew longer than any others previously tested — just four days after the most recent raft of sanctions was adopted and just as General Assembly preparations were getting underway.

In an undated image distributed on Sept. 3 by the North Korean government, North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, inspected what were said to be components of a nuclear bomb. KCNA, via KNS, via Associated Press

What will he do when world leaders converge in New York? (Mr. Kim is not coming.) Mr. Trump, who has vowed a "fire and fury" response if North Korea threatens the United States, is expected to make North Korea a major theme in his General Assembly speech. Whether he will

engage in what critics have described as rash talk remains unclear.

Addressing atrocities in Myanmar

Tasmida, 18, a Rohingya refugee, wept as she crossed the Naf River separating Myanmar and Bangladesh early this month. Adam Dean for The New York Times

Mr. Guterres and his top human rights official have both described the killings and persecution of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim minority as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing. With nearly a half-million Rohingya refugees now in Bangladesh and daily evidence of atrocities in Myanmar, what will world leaders say? Will the Security Council, which is empowered to do something to halt the killings, maintain its conspicuously mild response despite increased pressure to act quickly?

China, Myanmar's main patron, is reluctant to issue any statement calling for an end to military operations. On Monday, Britain's foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, is scheduled to lead a meeting of foreign ministers on Myanmar.

Tensions around the Iran nuclear deal

Mr. Trump and his ambassador, Ms. Haley, have both sought to vilify Iran as a sponsor of terrorism and have suggested that the United States may abandon the 2015 deal

negotiated by the Obama administration and five other major powers that limited Iran's nuclear activities. So far Mr. Trump — who is expected to make Iran another theme of his General Assembly speech — has grudgingly accepted the nuclear agreement despite having described it as one of the worst ever negotiated.

Will he go forward with threats to repudiate it and risk isolation? Western diplomats have expressed worry about the administration's hostility to the accord, saying that it could create more nuclear uncertainty at a time when the world

is trying to deal with North Korea.

John Kerry, then the secretary of state, talked with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of Iran last year in Vienna after the International Atomic Energy Agency verified that Iran had met all conditions under the nuclear deal. Pool photo by Kevin Lamarque

A meeting of the parties that negotiated the deal with Iran — Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States — will take place on the sidelines of the General Assembly on Wednesday. But there is no expectation that Mr. Trump's secretary of state, Rex W.

Tillerson, will meet his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif. Nor is there any expectation of direct communication between Mr. Trump and President Hassan Rouhani of Iran, who is expected to give a news conference on Wednesday.

Global warming and the Paris climate deal

President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence traveled to Naples, Fla., last week to inspect areas affected by Hurricane Irma. Evan Vucci/Associated Press

The General Assembly is taking place against a backdrop of apocalyptic droughts, floods and hurricanes, including two that have ravaged parts of Texas, Florida and the Caribbean in the past few weeks. What will world leaders say about these disasters and the Paris climate deal? Will the Trump administration be swayed to rethink its decision to withdraw?

Mr. Trump reiterated his climate-change skepticism after a visit to Florida on Thursday. "We've had bigger storms than this," he told reporters.



Donald Trump: President to Speak at U.N. General Assembly

Darlene

Superville / AP

4-5 minutes

(NEW YORK) — President Donald Trump is making his debut at the United Nations and taking his complaints about the world body straight to the source.

In his first appearance as president, Trump on Monday was addressing a U.S.-sponsored event on reforming the 193-member organization he has sharply criticized.

As a candidate for president, Trump labeled the U.N. as weak and incompetent, and not a friend of either the United States or Israel. But he has softened his tone since taking office, telling ambassadors from U.N. Security Council member countries at a White House meeting this year that the U.N. has "tremendous potential."

Trump more recently has praised a pair of unanimous council votes to tighten sanctions on North Korea over its continued nuclear weapon and ballistic missile tests.

Trump and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will speak at the meeting. The U.S. has asked

member nations to sign a declaration on U.N. reforms, and more than 100 have done so. The president wants the U.N. to cut spending and make other operational changes.

Related

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., said Trump's criticisms were accurate at the time, but that it is now a "new day" at the U.N. An organization that "talked a lot but didn't have a lot of action" has given way to a "United Nations that's action-oriented," she said, noting the Security Council votes on North Korea this month.

Guterres has proposed a massive package of changes, and Haley said the U.N. is "totally moving toward reform."

"We said that we needed to get value for our dollar and what we're finding is the international community is right there with us in support of reform. So it is a new day at the U.N.," she said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union." She said Trump's pleas had been heard and "what we'll do is see him respond to that."

Trump also planned to hold separate talks Monday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and French President Emmanuel Macron. U.S. national security adviser H.R. McMaster said the conversations would be wide-ranging, but that "Iran's destabilizing behavior" would be a major focus of Trump's discussions with both leaders.

Breakthroughs on a Middle East peace agreement are not expected. Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser on the issue, recently returned from a trip to the Middle East.

Trump told Jewish leaders on a conference call last week that his team is working very hard to achieve a peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians and that he hoped to see "significant progress" on a deal before the end of the year. Trump is scheduled to meet later this week with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Trump was also hosting a dinner for Latin American leaders. Venezuela, which has been gripped by economic and political turmoil, will be discussed, McMaster said.

The United States is the largest contributor to the U.N. budget,

reflecting its position as the world's largest economy. It pays 25 percent of the U.N.'s regular operating budget and over 28 percent of the separate peacekeeping budget — a level of spending that Trump has complained is unfair.

"We need the member states to come together to eliminate inefficiency and bloat, and to ensure that no one nation shoulders a disproportionate share of the burden militarily or financially," Trump told the security council ambassadors as they dined at the White House in April. "This is only fair to our taxpayers."

The Trump administration is conducting a review of the U.N.'s 16 far-flung peacekeeping operations, which cost nearly \$8 billion a year. Cutting their costs and making them more effective is a top priority for Haley.

Guterres has said he is totally committed to reforming the U.N. and making it more responsive to the needs of the 21st century world. As for the peacekeeping budget, he said last week that his intention is to do everything possible to make the missions "the most effective" as well as "cost-effective."



Zelizer : Huge stakes for Trump, and US, at the UN

Julian Zelizer, CNN Political

Analyst

7-9 minutes

Story highlights

- Julian Zelizer: In the face of North Korean tensions and climate change, Trump's UN speech will matter

- He might want to take a page from presidents past, Zelizer says

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

(CNN) Donald Trump is set to speak to the United Nations General Assembly this Tuesday. And with this, the "America First" President will try to appeal to an institution that he has insulted, demeaned, and attacked over and over again.

The world will be closely paying attention; much is at stake.

Tensions with North Korea have reached a boiling point. The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, one of the sober voices in the administration,

has warned

that if diplomatic measures fail, Secretary of Defense James Mattis "will take care of it."

Thus, with the possibility of a major military conflict on the table, Trump's ability to strengthen an international coalition of support through this speech will be vital.

There will likely also be great interest in the question of climate change and what the United States will ultimately do about it. Indeed,

the speech comes in the wake of flip-flop statements about whether the President will

withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord

; 195 nations, including the United States, have signed on to the pact, which is widely seen as critical to reversing damage from global warming.

We don't know what Trump will say, how he'll present himself, and the overall message he'll deliver. But it will be a speech that matters.

Many presidents have used their speeches before the UN to either outline a vision for America's role in the world or pursue a specific policy objective.

Though he is not really a student of history, the President might want to look back at some of these presidential speeches that made a difference.

President Truman was the architect of America's Cold War policy. With the head of the Russian delegation sitting right in front of his podium, Truman used his speech at the opening session of the UN General Assembly to explain what this policy meant for the United States and the world. "This meeting of the Assembly symbolizes the abandonment by the United States of a policy of isolation. The overwhelming majority of the American people, regardless of party, support the United Nations."

The speech took place at a critical moment in US history, when the nation was still deciding what its post-war posture would be on the global stage. Although there were still powerful voices in Washington, such as Ohio Senator Robert Taft,

fighting to limit US involvement overseas, Truman firmly put himself behind liberal internationalism. The US would not go it alone.

Five months after the Bay of Pigs fiasco that left US forces humiliated on the shores of Cuba, JFK stood before the United Nations. Kennedy was no dove, but he delivered a powerful piece of oratory that pointed to the need for nonmilitary solutions to the US-Soviet tension. He explained that the UN was the institution that best embodied this objective. "For in the development of this organization rests the only true alternative to war -- and war appeals no longer as a rational alternative. Unconditional war can no longer lead to unconditional victory."

He called for a "peace race" to replace the arms race, and called for disarmament negotiations, as well as a "realistic" plan to achieve it. "Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculating or by madness." While Kennedy's legacy would come to be associated with the early escalation of the war in Vietnam, the speech provided an important alternative view of how international cooperation offered the world the only viable path forward.

In his first term, Ronald Reagan's hawkish rhetoric and refusal to enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union created a tense atmosphere where there were real fears of the possibility of nuclear war. When ABC broadcast the film "The Day After" on November 20, 1983, about the impact of a nuclear war on a town in Kansas,

Americans were terrified because many felt this was a real possibility. Realizing that the situation had deteriorated, Reagan started to "pivot" when he spoke to the UN in September 1984. The President pointed to the Soviet and US representatives sitting in front of him and said, "In this historical assembly hall, it's clear that there's not a great distance between us." The speech was the start of a new attitude for the President, one that resulted in the historic Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces -- or INF -- arms agreement in 1987.

George H.W. Bush was commander in chief at a critical moment in world history: the Soviet Union literally crumbled during his tenure. Thus, in his remarks at the UN, he needed to maintain a delicate balance. If the President said too much and appeared to be boasting, his words could easily backfire. Bush also faced the burden of outlining to the world how the United States would handle international affairs now that it had been victorious against communism.

All of this became especially pertinent after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, triggering an international crisis. During a speech to the UN, Bush made it clear that the United States remained firmly committed to working through international alliances. He outlined his vision for what he called a "New World Order," which he had discussed with Congress.

"We have a vision of a new partnership of nations that transcends the Cold War: a partnership based on consultation, cooperation, and collective action, especially through international and regional organizations." The speech

affirmed his commitment to the world to work through institutions such as the UN. He put his money where his mouth was by stitching together an unprecedented coalition against Iraq, through which he conducted military operations.

In September 2016, just three months before the election that would rock the United States, Obama seemed to be reading the writing on the wall. He delivered his last speech to the UN, and warned of the dangers that the nationalist impulses sweeping Europe and the United States posed to global stability. Referring to candidate Trump's campaign rhetoric, he said: "A nation ringed by walls will only imprison itself. At this moment, we all face a choice. We can choose to press forward with a better model of cooperation and integration, or we can retreat into a world sharply divided and ultimately in conflict along age-old lines of nation and tribe and race and religion."

The speech remains a powerful injunction against the risks the nation faces if President Trump continues along his path of nationalism.

When presidents speak to the UN, their words have great consequence, ringing through the corridors of history. This week, the words Trump chooses, his demeanor, his meaning and his message can be pivotal in determining whether he can maintain the international alliances that the US desperately needs to achieve its objectives -- or whether President Obama was much more prescient than he ever hoped to be.

The New York Times

Sanger

9-12 minutes

Footage of a rocket launching was shown in Pyongyang on Saturday. Intelligence officials believe that North Korea's program has advanced to the point where it is no longer as reliant on outside suppliers of a rocket fuel, and that it may be making the fuel itself. Kim Won-Jin/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

When North Korea launched long-range missiles this summer, and again on Friday, demonstrating its ability to strike Guam and perhaps the United States mainland, it powered the weapons with a rare,

The Rare, Potent Fuel Powering North Korea's Weapons (UNE)

William J. Broad and David E.

potent rocket fuel that American intelligence agencies believe initially came from China and Russia.

The United States government is scrambling to determine whether those two countries are still providing the ingredients for the highly volatile fuel and, if so, whether North Korea's supply can be interrupted, either through sanctions or sabotage. Among those who study the issue, there is a growing belief that the United States should focus on the fuel, either to halt it, if possible, or to take advantage of its volatile properties to slow the North's program.

But it may well be too late. Intelligence officials believe that the North's program has advanced to the point where it is no longer as reliant on outside suppliers, and that

it may itself be making the potent fuel, known as UDMH. Despite a long record of intelligence warnings that the North was acquiring both forceful missile engines and the fuel to power them, there is no evidence that Washington has ever moved with urgency to cut off Pyongyang's access to the rare propellant.

Classified memos from both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations laid out, with what turned out to be prescient clarity, how the North's pursuit of the highly potent fuel would enable it to develop missiles that could strike almost anywhere in the continental United States.

In response to inquiries from The New York Times, Timothy Barrett, a spokesman for the director of national intelligence, said that

"based on North Korea's demonstrated science and technological capabilities — coupled with the priority Pyongyang places on missile programs — North Korea probably is capable of producing UDMH domestically." UDMH is short for unsymmetrical dimethyl hydrazine.

Some experts are skeptical that the North has succeeded in domestic production, given the great difficulty of making and using the highly poisonous fuel, which in far more technically advanced nations has led to giant explosions of missiles and factories.

In public, at least, the Trump administration has been far more focused on ordinary fuels — the oil and gas used to heat homes and power vehicles. The United States

has pushed to cut off those supplies to the North, but it settled last week for modest cutbacks under a United Nations resolution.

Nonetheless, on Sunday the president made a case that those sanctions were having an effect. He wrote on Twitter that he had spoken with South Korea's president, Moon Jae-in, and tossed out a new nickname for the North's leader, Kim Jong-un.

"Asked him how Rocket Man is doing," President Trump wrote. "Long gas lines forming in North Korea. Too bad!"

But inside the intelligence agencies and among a few on Capitol Hill who have studied the matter, UDMH is a source of fascination and seen as a natural target for the American effort to halt Mr. Kim's missile program.

"If North Korea does not have UDMH, it cannot threaten the United States, it's as simple as that," said Senator Edward J. Markey, Democrat of Massachusetts, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "These are the issues that the U.S. intelligence community has to answer: from which countries they receive the fuel — it's probably China — and whether North Korea has a stockpile and how big it is."

Today, the chemical is made primarily by China, a few European nations and Russia, which calls it the devil's venom. Russia only recently resumed production of the fuel, after Western supplies were cut off over its annexation of Crimea.

But the Russians are leery of the propellant: It triggered the worst disaster of the space age, in 1960, when scores of Soviet workers and spectators died during a test firing of one of Moscow's early intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The United States no longer produces the fuel — NASA warned

of its toxic and explosive dangers as early as 1966, producing a video that opens with a spectacular explosion. Long ago, the American nuclear fleet turned to more stable solid fuels, a move the North Koreans are now trying to replicate. But it may be a decade, experts say, before the North masters that technology to power intercontinental missiles.

The White House and American intelligence agencies declined to answer questions about what, if anything, they were doing to cut off North Korea's supplies, citing the highly classified nature of their effort to disrupt the North Korean missile program. Those efforts have included cyberattacks authorized by President Barack Obama in 2014.

But in interviews with four senior American officials who served as the North advanced its program, none could recall any specific discussion of how to disrupt North Korea's access to the one fuel that now powers its long-range missiles. All four said that while there were wide-ranging discussions about how to penalize the North, they could not remember any that focused specifically on the propellant.

Twice — in 2012 and 2014 — the fuel was included in United Nations Security Council lists of prohibited export items. Experts say few paid attention to that fine print.

"All sorts of things banned for export to North Korea find their way in," said Vann H. Van Diepen, a former State Department official who was at the center of many American efforts to control the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

But the public and involuntarily public record of American efforts to track North Korea's progress shows a growing concern dating back a decade that the North was obtaining Russian-designed engines to power its missiles, and the fuel to pour into them. A memo designated "secret" and signed in October 2008 by

Condoleezza Rice, then the secretary of state, warned allies that the North had obtained an engine powered by UDMH that "represents a substantial advance in North Korea's liquid propellant technology," adding that it "allows North Korea to build even longer-range missiles."

The memo, which was included in documents later released by WikiLeaks, was evidence of early efforts to get countries that had signed the Missile Technology Control Regime to keep such technologies out of the hands of North Korea, Iran and other nations.

When Hillary Clinton succeeded Ms. Rice in 2009, she issued a similar warning. "North Korea's next goal may be to develop a mobile ICBM that would be capable of threatening targets around the world," she wrote to member states in the missile control group.

The missile launch that took place on Friday, in which the projectile was lofted over northern Japan, was from one of those mobile launchers, fueled by UDMH, spy satellites showed.

The North's growing dependency on the fuel was reinforced after a military parade in late 2010, when Pyongyang unveiled an intermediate-range missile known as the Musudan. Most of its flight tests failed, some in enormous fireballs.

Federal officials, congressional aides and rocket scientists say emerging clues suggest that, over the years, Pyongyang obtained the fuel, its precursors, its secret formula and its manufacturing gear from China, the North's main trading partner. Beijing still uses UDMH to loft satellites and warheads and has long exported the toxic substance around the globe.

China has always denied aiding North Korea's missile program, and the fuel is included on a 15-year-old

list of missile-related materials that Beijing has put on an export control list. But a secret report from 2008 that was included in the WikiLeaks disclosures found evidence of an "uneven track record in enforcing its missile-related export controls."

One senior administration official acknowledged that, as a matter of politics, winning a specific ban on the fuel should not be difficult. While cutting off access to oil would raise fears of a humanitarian disaster as 25 million North Koreans freeze through the winter, the missile fuel is not a petroleum product, instead being made from a family of chemicals used in high explosives.

The question now is whether the North Koreans have developed their own capabilities to produce the fuel. Given the country's determination — and success — in proving it could launch a nuclear attack on the United States, experts believe it is just another hurdle to be surmounted.

Eckhart W. Schmidt, who has written a two-volume textbook on fuels like UDMH and toured fuel plants around the globe, said his own judgment was that North Korea could learn how to achieve industrial production "if the supply from China or Russia is cut off."

Mr. Van Diepen, the former State Department official, said that in the quarter-century that the North Koreans have worked on increasingly sophisticated missiles, they have gone through many stages of foreign assistance in obtaining the fuel, the precursors, the formula and the manufacturing gear. He said the North was likely to have achieved some ability to make the volatile fuel — even if that resulted in occasional tragedies.

"My guess," Mr. Van Diepen said, "is that the North Korean tolerance for casualties is probably pretty high."



U.S. warns that time is running out for peaceful solution with North Korea (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/anne.gearan>

8-10 minutes

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson says if diplomatic efforts with North Korea fail, a military option will be the only one left. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson says if diplomatic efforts with North Korea fail, a military option will be the only one left. (Reuters)

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson says if diplomatic efforts with North Korea fail, a military option will be the only one left. (Reuters)

NEW YORK — The Trump administration escalated its rhetoric against North Korea on Sunday, warning that time is running out for a peaceful solution between Kim Jong Un's regime and the United States and its allies.

Administration officials said the risk from North Korea's nuclear

weapons program is rising, and they underscored that President Trump will confront the looming crisis at the U.N. General Assembly this week. Trump, who spoke by phone with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Saturday, referred to Kim on Twitter as "Rocket Man" and asserted that "long gas lines" are forming in the North because of recent U.N. sanctions on oil imports.

[In a tweet, Trump sticks North Korea's Kim Jong Un with a nickname: 'Rocket Man']

Though Trump's top aides emphasized that the administration is examining all diplomatic measures to rein in Pyongyang, they made clear that military options remain on the table.

"If North Korea keeps on with this reckless behavior, if the United States has to defend itself or defend its allies in any way, North Korea will be destroyed," Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union." "None of us

want that. None of us want war. But we also have to look at the fact that you are dealing with someone [in Kim] who is being reckless, irresponsible and is continuing to give threats not only to the United States, but to all of its allies. So something is going to have to be done." This undated picture released from North Korea's Korean Central News Agency on Sept. 16, 2017, shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspecting a launching drill of the medium-and-long-range strategic ballistic rocket Hwasong-12 at an undisclosed location. (STR/AFP/Getty Images)

The question remains, however, how realistic the Trump administration's threats are as the North quickly advances its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities. Trump's latest tweets came two weeks after North Korea tested a nuclear device that experts said measured at 250 kilotons, 17 times the force of the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in World War II.

[North Korea tested another nuke. How big was it?]

Trump warned Kim last month that the North would feel the "fire and fury" of the United States if the regime continued its threats and destabilized the Korean Peninsula and East Asia. But Kim promptly responded with new threats and a round of new weapons tests.

Trump is scheduled to join Moon and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at a working lunch Thursday in New York, on the sidelines of the U.N. meetings, to discuss North Korea, White House aides said. Yet Trump will not have the opportunity to meet with Xi

Jinping of China and Vladimir Putin of Russia; both leaders are skipping the annual gathering.

Last week, Haley touted the U.N. sanctions on the North, saying that, if enacted, they would cut off 30 percent of oil imports and curtail 90 percent of Kim's exports, putting a major economic pinch on a government that has long struggled to provide for the nation's estimated 25 million people.

Yet Trump said last week that he and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson are skeptical that the sanctions will have a significant impact on North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Administration officials reaffirmed the United States' long-standing policy that the North must agree to relinquish its nuclear arsenal as a prerequisite for direct diplomatic talks.

"He's going to have to give up his nuclear weapons, because the president has said that he is not going to tolerate this regime threatening the United States and our citizens with a nuclear weapon," national security adviser H.R. McMaster said on ABC's "This Week."

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in and President Trump agreed to exert stronger pressure through sanctions on North Korea Sept. 17. South Korea's President Moon Jae-in and President Trump agreed to exert stronger pressure through sanctions on North Korea Sept. 17. (Reuters)

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in and President Trump agreed to exert stronger pressure through sanctions on North Korea Sept. 17. (Reuters)

Trump, McMaster added, has "been very clear about that, that all options are on the table."

At the same time, the administration signaled that it is not pursuing regime change, a position that could help persuade Beijing to play a stronger role in pressuring Kim. China facilitates about 90 percent of North Korea's trade and provides its oil.

Yet Tillerson said North Korea does not appear to be interested in denuclearization talks.

"I'm waiting for the regime in North Korea to give us some indication that they're prepared to have constructive, productive talks," he said on CBS's "Face the Nation."

"We have tried a couple of times to signal to them that we're ready when they're ready," Tillerson added, "and they responded with more missile launches and a nuclear test. All they need to do to let us know they're ready to talk is to just stop these tests, stop these provocative actions, and let's lower the threat level and the rhetoric."

Many U.S. allies in Europe and elsewhere are strongly opposed to any use of force that could further destabilize the Korean Peninsula and East Asia. The two unanimous U.N. Security Council votes for sanctions in recent weeks have marked a new level of alarm from those allies, as well as Moscow and Beijing.

[For Trump and his team, a 'time to be serious' at United Nations debut]

But McMaster said Washington isn't assuming the sanctions will work or buy time.

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"We all have our doubts about whether or not that's going to be enough," he said, "and so we have to prepare all options. We have to make sure all options are under development to ensure that this regime cannot threaten the world with a nuclear weapon."

Analysts have said the North has shown rapid improvements in its ballistic missile and nuclear technologies. Recent missile tests have demonstrated the range to potentially strike the continental United States, along with the technical capacity to mount a miniature nuclear device on a missile, analysts said.

That has accelerated the urgency in Washington, at the White House and on Capitol Hill. Asked on CNN whether the Trump administration should continue to deny the North diplomatic talks until it ends its nuclear program, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said no.

"I think that North Korea is not going to give up its program with nothing on the table," she said. "I think that what could happen is that we could have reliable verification of a freeze of both the nuclear program and the missile arsenal, and that we could conceivably talk China into supporting that kind of a freeze, because it would carry with it no regime change and no war."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Leubsdorf

5-6 minutes

Updated Sept. 17, 2017 9:12 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The White House on Sunday reiterated its position that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un must give up his nuclear weapons, days after President Donald Trump hinted again at a military strike on the North.

White House National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster said Sunday the U.S. policy remains that North Korea must denuclearize. Pyongyang shows no signs of halting the country's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, launching several missiles and testing a

U.S. Orders 'Rocket Man' Kim Jong Un to Ditch Nuclear Weapons

Gordon Lubold and Ben Ben

nuclear device as recently as this month.

"He's going to have to give up his nuclear weapons, because the president has said that he is not going to tolerate this regime threatening the United States and our citizens with a nuclear weapon," Mr. McMaster, an Army three-star general, said on ABC's "This Week."

Asked if Mr. Trump would strike North Korea if Mr. Kim doesn't give up his weapons, Mr. McMaster said: "He's been very clear about that, that all options are on the table."

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley warned North Korea would be "destroyed" if it "keeps on with this reckless behavior."

"We have economically strangled North Korea at this point," Ms. Haley said.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis have suggested that talks with North Korea could take place if the regime halts weapons and missile tests.

Critics of the administration position and many Asia policy analysts dismiss the likelihood that Mr. Kim will easily give up his nascent nuclear-weapon program.

"I think that North Korea is not going to give up its program with nothing on the table," Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D., Calif.) said on CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday. "I think that what could happen is that we could have reliable verification of a freeze of both the nuclear program and the missile arsenal, and that we could

conceivably talk China into supporting that kind of freeze."

Mr. Trump's advisers, including Messrs. Tillerson and Mattis and Ms. Haley, have been working to pressure China to coerce North Korea into halting its nuclear and missile programs.

But those efforts thus far have fallen short. Last week, Mr. Kim launched a missile that traveled more than 2,000 miles over Japan and landed in the Pacific Ocean. The North claimed Sept. 3 that it had conducted a nuclear test, the country's sixth.

Mr. Tillerson said he has seen no indication that the North is responding to sanctions by halting its testing of nuclear weapons or missiles.

"I'm waiting for the regime in North Korea to give us some indication that they are prepared to have constructive, productive talks," Mr. Tillerson said Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation."

"We have tried a couple of times to signal to them that we are ready when they are ready, and they have responded with more missile launches and a nuclear test," he said, adding: "I've said in the past that we'll know it when we see it in terms of their seriousness."

Mr. Trump on Saturday spoke with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, tweeting later about the meeting in which he asked Mr. Moon about "Rocket Man," referring to the North Korean leader. Asked on Fox's "Fox News Sunday" about the tweet, Mr. McMaster referred to a 2006 cover of the Economist magazine that used the same appellation for the dictator's father, Kim Jong Il.

"That's a new one, I think, maybe for the president, but it reminds me of a cover of the Economist a few

years ago, portraying him as 'rocket man,'" Mr. McMaster said, chuckling. "But of course, that's where the rockets are coming from—rockets, though, that we ought to probably not laugh too much about, because they do represent a grave threat to everyone."

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Corrections & Amplifications
On Friday, Kim Jong Un launched a missile that traveled more than 2,000 miles over Japan and landed in the Pacific Ocean. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that the missile had landed in the Sea of Japan. (Sept. 17, 2017)

Appeared in the September 18, 2017, print edition as "Trump Officials Warn North Korea on Nuclear Arms."



Ban on North Korean clothing exports will hurt women the most, experts say

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

8-10 minutes

The Washington Post traveled to North Korea in May 2016 and visited a silk factory in Pyongyang. Recent sanctions have targeted the North Korean garment industry, which employs thousands of North Korean women. The Washington Post traveled to North Korea in May 2016 and visited a silk factory in Pyongyang. (Jason Aldag, Anna Fifield, Joyce Lee/The Washington Post)

The Washington Post traveled to North Korea in May 2016 and visited a silk factory in Pyongyang. Recent sanctions have targeted the North Korean garment industry, which employs thousands of North Korean women. (Jason Aldag, Anna Fifield, Joyce Lee/The Washington Post)

SEOUL — There are few areas in the North Korean economy, outside its nuclear weapons program, that could be called booming. But the garment industry has been one of them.

Over the past few years, North Korea has been sending increasing numbers of seamstresses to China to sew clothes for international buyers, and it also has been encouraging the expansion of the garment industry at home.

There are factories around the country producing suits, dresses and children's clothes — almost all of which are labeled "Made in China."

That should all theoretically come to an end now, after the U.N. Security Council unanimously decided last week to prohibit North Korea from exporting labor and textiles, adding to existing sanctions on coal, iron ore and seafood.

"Today's resolution bans all textile exports," Nikki Haley, the United

States' ambassador to the United Nations, said Monday when the resolution passed. "That's an almost \$800 million hit to its revenue." Workers monitor newly harvested silk thread in the first stage of processing at the Kim Jong Suk Silk Mill in Pyongyang, North Korea, in 2016. (Linda Davidson/The Washington Post)

North Korea exported about \$725 million worth of clothing last year, according to South Korea's trade-promotion agency, making it a significant source of income for the cash-strapped country.

Adding textiles to the sanctions list means that more than 90 percent of North Korea's publicly reported exports last year are now banned, Haley said. Coal, iron ore and seafood exports were prohibited in a previous resolution.

[U.N. agrees to toughest-ever sanctions against North Korea]

While diplomats have been describing the ban as being on "textiles," economists say it should more accurately be called a "garment" ban. North Korea does not export bolts of fabric but instead produces labor-intensive articles of clothing.

"When you make simple clothes like T-shirts, the machinery is important. The labor is not so important. So it makes no sense to do things like this in North Korea," said Paul Tjia, a Dutch consultant who helps businesses operate in North Korea, especially in the garment industry.

"But for garments that require a lot of manual work, like bras or winter sports clothes, it makes a lot of sense to make those in North Korea, because the price-to-quality ratio is very attractive," said Tjia, who most recently went to Pyongyang in May.

Tjia helps mainly European companies outsource sewing to North Korea and espouses the selling points of North Korean labor.

At one conference in Seoul, he showed photos of intricately made dresses that he said North Korean workers had made for a major European fashion label — although he declined to say which one. A worker monitors machinery at the Kim Jong Suk Silk Mill. (Linda Davidson/The Washington Post)

He also declined to say who his current clients are, for fear of attracting unwanted attention to the provenance of their clothes. The Australian surfing label Rip Curl found itself in hot water last year when it was revealed that some of its clothes had been made not in China, as the company thought, but in North Korea.

With almost all of the North Korean-made clothes leaving through China, the effectiveness of this crackdown will depend on Beijing's willingness to enforce it.

"If a container coming from North Korea says it contains sweet potatoes, is the Chinese customs department going to crack it open to check that it does not contain underpants?" asked Andray Abrahamian, a visiting scholar at the Center for Korean Studies at the University of California at Berkeley.

[Why haven't sanctions on North Korea worked? Two very different theories.]

Although China supported the new U.N. resolution, its implementation of previous sanctions has been spotty at best, analysts say.

But if Beijing is serious about stopping North Korea's exports of apparel and workers to sew garments in Chinese factories, it would have a significant impact on the North's economy, said Marcus Noland of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"The reason that this is important is not only because apparel exports are a significant number, but because it's the one non-resource area that's really growing," Noland

said, differentiating apparel exports from mineral exports such as coal and iron ore. "So it's not just the static number that's important. It's the fact that this sector was emerging as an area of comparative advantage."

There is another thing that makes the crackdown on clothing exports different from previous actions against North Korea.

Previously, governments had stressed that the sanctions were targeting the regime and were aimed at cutting off its access to the money or equipment it needed for its nuclear weapons program.

This effort to shut down North Korea's garment industry is one that will have wide-reaching ramifications across North Korean society.

"Assuming that the ban is enforced, it will have a huge impact," said Abrahamian, who visited North Korean garment factories several times while working for Choson Exchange, an NGO focused on business training for North Koreans.

"Tens of thousands, possibly even hundreds of thousands, of North Koreans are employed in this industry, and 98 percent of them are women. That's the demographic that's clearly going to suffer as a result of this," he said.

[U.N. imposes new sanctions on North Korea following missile tests]

Noland agreed with the assessment that the sanctions would hurt ordinary people and especially women, but he said this is a toll that the United Nations should be prepared to inflict to punish the regime.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

It is not known how much the women working in garment factories

are paid. In North Korea, wages paid by the state are paltry. But as joint ventures have developed, the regime has been allowing workers to keep a share of earnings — while taking the majority for itself.

While Tjia, the consultant, does not know how much

the workers in these factories are paid, he said that workers in factories that export products and have contracts with foreign clients are much better off. He reported seeing an increasing number of seamstresses with cellphones.

For that reason, outsourcing to North Korea should be seen in a wider context, he said.

"If you want to see a change or an improvement in North Korea, the only way is to see economic development in the country, like we have seen in China over the last 40

years," Tjia said. "Only when an economy grows and a middle class emerges — that's when we will see change."



U.S. Flies Warplanes Over North Korea in Show of Force

Associated Press

4-5 minutes

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The U.S. military flew advanced bombers and stealth jets over the Korean Peninsula and near Japan in drills with South Korean and Japanese warplanes on Monday, three days after North Korea fired a missile over Japan.

The United States often sends powerful military aircraft in a show of force in times of heightened animosities with North Korea. The North launched its latest missile as it protested against tough new U.N. sanctions over its sixth nuclear test on Sept. 3.

Monday's flyovers over the Korean Peninsula involved two B-1Bs and four F-35Bs from the U.S. military and four F-15K fighter jets from South Korea, according to the South Korean and U.S. militaries. The U.S. and South Korean planes practiced attacks by releasing live weapons at a firing range in South Korea, the U.S. Pacific Command said in a statement.

Related

The U.S. warplanes also conducted formation training with Japanese fighter jets over waters near the southern island of Kyushu, according to the Pacific Command.

Since Kim Jong Un took power in North Korea in late 2011, his nation has tested weapons at a torrid pace. The country flight-tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles in July. Its nuclear test in September was its most powerful to date.

Many experts say it's only a matter of time until Kim achieves his stated objective of possessing reliable nuclear-tipped missiles capable of striking anywhere in the mainland U.S.

State media on Saturday quoted Kim as saying that North Korea's final goal "is to establish the equilibrium of real force with the U.S. and make the U.S. rulers dare not talk about military option" for the North.

Alarmed by North Korea's advancing weapons programs, many conservatives in South Korea have called for the reintroduction of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in the

South. But the liberal-leaning government of President Moon Jae-in said it has no intention of requesting that the U.S. bring back such weapons.

South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo told lawmakers on Monday that it is "not proper" to reintroduce U.S. nuclear weapons. He previously said the idea should be "deeply considered" by the allies, inflaming already-heated debate on the issue.

Meanwhile, China's Communist Party newspaper on Monday criticized the United States for demanding that Beijing put more pressure on North Korea to rein in its weapons programs.

"The so-called 'China's responsibility theory' is essentially moral kidnapping," the People's Daily said in a commentary. It also noted that sanctions should not harm "legitimate economic and trade exchanges between North Korea and the outside world" and the lives of everyday people.

China accounts for about 90 percent of North Korea's trade and sends largely free crude oil shipments to the North. Beijing has been increasingly frustrated with

North Korea's nuclear drive, but it still doesn't want the North to collapse and cause a wave of refugees to cross the border into China and American troops to move into North Korea.

China's foreign ministry said Monday that military threats being made by North Korea and the U.S. were counterproductive.

"Some related parties keep sending threatening messages both in words and deeds that include warnings of military actions to each other," ministry spokesman Lu Kang told reporters at a regular briefing. "But actually, these kinds of actions didn't help solving the problem but further complicate the situation, which do no good to the resolution of the peninsular issue."

Instead, he said, the international community should strictly implement the sanctions imposed on North Korea by the U.N. Security Council.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel also said in comments reported Monday by the Bild daily that the world should wait for the sanctions to bite, but that "visions and courageous steps" such as direct negotiations with North Korea are also needed.



Shinzo Abe: Solidarity Against the North Korean Threat

Shinzo Abe

6-7 minutes

TOKYO — The whole world confronts an unprecedented, grave and imminent threat from North Korea. On Sept. 3, the regime carried out a reprehensible nuclear test. Late last week, it launched a ballistic missile over my country, Japan, only two weeks after a similar missile launch. By repeatedly testing missiles — in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions — Pyongyang has shown its reach now extends to the United States and Europe.

North Korea's actions are an outright challenge to the international community. On Sept. 11, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution on a new round of strict

sanctions that restrict member states from selling oil to the North, ban North Korean textile exports and ban member states from authorizing North Koreans to work abroad.

They are an important step, but the leadership in Pyongyang has consistently ignored previous resolutions. The international community must stay united and enforce the sanctions.

Here in northeast Asia, the North Korean threat has been real for more than a quarter-century. We face the threat of missiles — short and medium range — together with the possibility of chemical weapons attacks.

North Korea has targeted Japan in particular by abducting many innocent Japanese citizens, including a 13-year-old girl who was abducted in 1977. Most of them

have been held in North Korea since the 1970s and 1980s.

A television screen in Tokyo's Akihabara district showing a report on North Korea's ballistic missile test over northern Japan. Toru Yamanaka/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Everyone aspires to a peaceful solution to these challenges. And global solidarity is of utmost importance. Still, prioritizing diplomacy and emphasizing the importance of dialogue will not work with North Korea. History shows that concerted pressure by the entire international community is essential.

In the early 1990s, North Korea's announcement to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency was a wake-up call. In response, Japan, the United States

and South Korea engaged in dialogue with North Korea and agreed to construct two light-water reactors and to provide heavy fuel oil in exchange for freezing and ultimately dismantling its nuclear program. Japan, the United States and South Korea shouldered most of the financial burden, with the cooperation of Europe and other Asian countries.

We know what happened next: Several years after the heavy fuel oil was delivered and construction started on the light-water reactors, North Korea admitted to having a uranium enrichment program in violation of the agreement.

By the end of 2002, North Korea expelled I.A.E.A. inspectors, followed by an official withdrawal from the NPT in 2003. China and Russia then joined Japan, the United States and South Korea to create the six-party talks with the

North. Pyongyang again agreed to the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. But instead, it declared itself a nuclear power in 2005 and carried out a nuclear test in 2006. The five countries' attempt to solve the problem through dialogue failed.

In short, while the international community provided North Korea with sanctions relief and support as "compensation" for its pledges, the regime ignored most of its commitments.

Considering this history and its continuing missile launches and nuclear tests, more dialogue with North Korea would be a dead end. Pyongyang would see more talks as proof that other countries succumbed to the success of its missile launches

and nuclear tests. Now is the time to exert the utmost pressure on the North. There should be no more delays.

How could North Korea relentlessly pursue missile development and nuclear tests over almost half a century? How could North Korea, under successive United Nations sanctions for a decade, acquire enormous resources to obtain crude materials, components and powerful engines? Statistics show that there are countries, mainly in Asia, that continue trading with North Korea; and for some, as recently as in 2016, their trade even exceeded that of the previous year. According to the United Nations, foreign-made parts have been used in North Korea's ballistic missiles. There are countries buying products and

services from North Korea or accepting its workers. Front companies established in Asia enable North Korea access to foreign currencies.

Japan has responded by reaffirming the ironclad Japan-United States alliance, and Japan has coordinated in lock step with the United States and South Korea. I firmly support the United States position that all options are on the table.

As a response to the latest nuclear test, I value the swift and unanimous adoption of Security Council Resolution 2375 on Sept. 11, which puts significantly tougher sanctions on North Korea. But I stress that we must not be simply complacent with the adoption of these sanctions. We must thoroughly enforce the successive

resolutions in order to prevent North Korea from obtaining the goods, technologies, funds and people to further develop its missiles and nuclear program.

North Korea poses a serious threat and challenge to our world, and its actions flout the international nonproliferation regime. As swiftly as possible, we must make North Korea end its provocations, abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile development, and return the abductees in North Korea to their homes.

Solidarity and concerted effort among the international community, together with the effective role of the United Nations, are more vital than ever.

**The
New York
Times**

When U.N. Envoy Nikki Haley Talks, Does President Trump Listen?

Somini Sengupta
8-10 minutes

President Trump with Nikki R. Haley, the American ambassador to the United Nations, last month. Al Drago for The New York Times

WASHINGTON — On a Friday in August, the president of the United States casually said at a televised news briefing that his administration could not rule out a "military option" to respond to the crisis in Venezuela.

A look of bewilderment washed over the face of the woman standing next to him: Nikki R. Haley, President Trump's ambassador to the United Nations. She knit her brows, looked at him briefly, looked down at her hands.

Twitter reacted immediately. "Nikki Haley's face," wrote one.

"We are all Nikki Haley right now," wrote another.

"Hey, she accepted the job," wrote a third.

That moment embodied the challenge that confronts Ms. Haley in her role as the United States ambassador.

She represents Mr. Trump to the world. But she has also shown herself to be an ambitious politician, quick to voice her own opinions on the big policy issues that are high on her agenda like Iran and North Korea. And she has cast herself as someone who can sway her mercurial boss on everything from Russia sanctions to refugee resettlement to the value of the United Nations itself.

A crucial test of her influence on him will come this week during Mr. Trump's maiden visit to the United Nations, the organization he has repeatedly pilloried and whose very reason for being — international cooperation — he has dismissed with his promise of "only America first."

Ms. Haley predicted with confidence at a White House news conference on Friday that Mr. Trump would make "quite an impact" at the world body. What impact she has had on his approach to the world is still unknown.

On Monday, Mr. Trump, who proposed a drastic funding cut to the United Nations, is expected to host an event dedicated to a still-vague, American-led effort to overhaul the organization. On Tuesday, he is scheduled to deliver his address to the General Assembly and have lunch with the secretary general, António Guterres (Mr. Trump had declined for months to schedule a customary meeting), but he is not expected to attend a meeting hosted by Mr. Guterres on climate change. Mr. Trump said in June that he would withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accord, to the dismay of most American allies.

Many credit Ms. Haley for leading what Richard Gowan, a fellow at the European Council for Foreign Relations, called "the administration's grudging but growing recognition of the U.N.'s significance."

"It shows Trump engaging with the U.N. rather than bombing it from afar," added Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "Undoubtedly, Nikki Haley gets part of the credit. Destroying

the U.N. doesn't play to the political mainstream."

At the Friday news conference with Mr. Trump, in remarks that immediately made headlines, Ms. Haley showered her boss with praise. "I personally think he slaps the right people, he hugs the right people, and he comes out with the U.S. being very strong in the end," she said.

Ms. Haley, 44, the daughter of Indian immigrants, has reinvented herself many times.

Sikh to Methodist. Accountant to politician. Anti-union, anti-abortion Southern Republican star to South Carolina governor well known for pulling down the Confederate battle flag from the State House.

Ms. Haley is nothing if not a deft politician. Her public remarks are addressed to her home crowd and delivered in folksy language, even if they are occasionally flimsy on the facts. She often refers to her staff as #TeamHaley in her Twitter posts, a shrewd bit of personal branding.

The French ambassador to the United Nations, François Delattre, singled out "strong political instincts" as Ms. Haley's trademark.

Mr. Delattre recalled how Ms. Haley had orchestrated a White House lunch for the other 14 Security Council diplomats and their spouses in April. And he credited her for using her political connections on Capitol Hill to push back against the proposals to radically cut funding for the United Nations.

"She is a master in bringing these very different worlds together, and for that, you indeed need quite exceptional political instincts and skills," he said.

Behind the scenes, Ms. Haley has pushed back against the nationalists in the Trump camp by lobbying for relatively higher ceilings for refugee resettlement. She has publicly praised Mr. Trump's decision to abandon the climate agreement, but she has also acknowledged the fact of climate change.

She has said little, publicly, about the president's handling of the white supremacy rally in Charlottesville, Va., saying on Twitter only that she knows "the pain hate can cause." But she issued a far more forthright letter to her staff. "Those who march spewing hate are few, but loud," she wrote. "We must denounce them at every turn, and make them feel like they are on an island and isolate them the same way they wish to isolate others."

Later, she said in a television interview that she had had "a private conversation" with the president about it.

Her office did not respond to numerous requests for an interview. She is a frequent guest on Sunday morning network television shows, though, and she favors news conferences at the White House, rather than at the United Nations.

She plays to Republican concerns about the United Nations by referring, frequently, to the need to cut "fat" from its budget. She is often the first in the administration to speak out on what she recognizes as the most high-profile foreign policy issues for her Republican base: including Israel and Iran, even if it means glossing over facts.

On Friday, for instance, she asserted that the latest sanctions stop North Korea from earning

money by exporting its workers; the sanctions, in fact, stop countries from increasing how many North Korean laborers they can bring in.

In the case of Iran, she said in a speech at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative research group, that Mr. Trump would be entirely justified if he decided to decertify the nuclear accord, even though the International Atomic Energy Agency has said Iran is complying with its obligations under the deal.

Her biggest success, diplomats say, has been to engage with the United

Nations system, rather than to bludgeon it, as many had feared.

"There was a perception that this was a relationship cruising for a bruising," said Stewart M. Patrick, an analyst at the Council for Foreign Relations. "She has been a skillful politician."

She has faced tough negotiations. Her efforts to cut the peacekeeping budget met with a great deal of pushback from France, and Ms. Haley had to settle for an approximately \$600 million cut to a budget of nearly \$8 billion.

She tempered her push to get United Nations forces to disarm Hezbollah in Lebanon even though she had excoriated the force commander of the Interim Force in Lebanon as being "blind" to Hezbollah's weapons buildup near the Israeli border.

Her broadsides against the United Nations Human Rights Council have been massaged down to more modest calls for change, including for countries to demonstrate, through competitive elections, that they uphold human rights.

Nor did she get the most ambitious North Korea sanctions she fought

for after the North tested an extremely powerful nuclear device. She had proposed a full oil embargo; after speedy, intense negotiations with Russia and China, she agreed to a cap of two million barrels of refined petroleum products and a complete ban on natural gas. That led to an uncomfortable public exchange with her boss.

Mr. Trump described the sanctions as "no big deal."

So it fell to Ms. Haley to smooth it over. "I think what the president is saying is this is just the beginning of what we can do," she said.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

7-9 minutes

Updated Sept. 17, 2017 8:01 p.m. ET

Islamic State has formed a number of clandestine cells in Libya a year after losing its main stronghold in the chaotic North African country, part of the militant group's efforts to regroup on Europe's doorstep.

The small cells, comprising up to several dozen fighters, have set up new bases outside Libyan towns in the past several months and started making money by hijacking commercial trucks and extorting migrant-smuggling rings, according to Libyan and European security officials.

Islamic State has also told fighters to go to Libya from Syria, where a U.S.-led coalition is pushing the terror group from its de facto capital of Raqqa, according to a defector and European security officials.

"They consider Libya to be the main entrance to Europe," said Abu Baara al-Ansari, a Syrian who says he defected from Islamic State in June. Mr. al-Ansari said he worked in Raqqa for Islamic State in the office that tracked visitors to the group's territory. He is now in Turkey and was interviewed via the Telegram messaging system.

The group's efforts to stage a comeback in Libya after losing control of the coastal city of Sirte last year have sparked concern among European officials. Attackers who traveled from Syria to Europe have taken part in a number of deadly terrorist attacks in recent years, including in Paris and Brussels.

A resurgent Islamic State "is definitely becoming a problem in

In Libya, Islamic State Seeks Revival in Gateway to Europe (UNE)

Hassan Morajea in Tunis, Tunisia, and Benoit Faucon in London

Libya," a European security official said. The terror group can raise revenue in Libya by tapping lucrative rackets and take advantage of weapon stockpiles in a country that is both vast and politically unstable, he said.

Members of Libya's Presidential Council, which presides over the Tripoli government, didn't respond to requests for comment about Islamic State's activities in the country.

Islamic State said two years ago that it planned to infiltrate migrant groups and carry out attacks in Europe. Tens of thousands of migrants have crossed the Mediterranean Sea from Libya and arrived in Italy this year.

Salman Abedi, a British citizen of Libyan descent, blew himself up outside a concert in Manchester in May, killing 22 people. Abedi had recently returned from a trip to Libya, and European security officials say the type of bomb he used indicates he may have been trained by Islamic State fighters there.

Since the death of Col. Moammar Gadhafi in 2011, warring factions have carved Libya into fiefs and fought over its oil fields, leaving the economy in tatters.

"Daesh is exploiting the security vacuum," said an intelligence officer from the city of Misrata who works with forces loyal to Tripoli, using the Arabic acronym for Islamic State.

Militias from Misrata—who support the United Nations-backed Government of National Accord in the capital, Tripoli—led the successful campaign to oust Islamic State from Sirte.

An estimate by the U.S. Africa Command, which oversees American military operations on the continent, indicates there are only 500 Islamic State members active in

Libya now. That is down from a peak of about 3,000 fighters when the group held Sirte in 2016.

But other officials said it is difficult to know how many Islamic State fighters are currently in Libya. And they say the group's ability to operate relatively unhindered around the country raises concerns.

Since driving Islamic State out of Sirte, the U.S. has seen "a marked decrease" in the number of foreign fighters traveling to or from the conflict in Libya, according to a U.S. State Department official.

European security officials and the Islamic State defector say the group's fighters—including Syrians and Iraqis, as well as Libyans—have been trying to enter Libya in hopes of reaching Europe to launch attacks.

Islamic State members have in the past flown from Turkey to Sudan before going overland to Libya, according to European security officials. Meanwhile, Libyan forces in the south are monitoring a group of Islamic State recruits who made their way to Sudan from Syria and are trying to cross into Libya, according to a security official from the area with forces loyal to Tripoli.

Sudan is aware some fighters have taken advantage of its porous western border to infiltrate Libya, according to Rabie Abdelaty, who heads the political bureau at Sudan's ruling National Congress Party. He says the government has deployed forces to stem the infiltration and to crack down on cross-border crime.

Libyans were among those who trained at Islamic State's weapons lab in Raqqa, according to another Islamic State defector. Some of the devices were intended both for battlefield use and for carrying out attacks in Europe, said the defector, who said that he was involved in their design and that he left the

group in 2016. Components are cheap and easy to get, and Islamic State videos show how to assemble them, he added.

In Libya, a rival government operates in the east of the country, where a group allied with Islamic State was ousted earlier this year from the city of Benghazi. In late May, around the time of the ouster, two members of the allied group were dispatched by Islamic State from Benghazi to go to Istanbul, according to a third person who said he had defected from Islamic State and who said he remains in contact with the group in Raqqa.

They were directed to make their way from Istanbul to Athens and to wait for orders about carrying out an attack in Europe, the defector said. A European security official said last month the movements of the two men were being monitored.

Islamic State fighters who escaped Sirte fled to other parts of Libya such as Bani Walid, west of Sirte. The fighters remained hidden in the surrounding valleys for months, but now have started to "set up checkpoints at times and hijack trucks and any goods in them," said the intelligence officer from Misrata.

Other fighters escaped to the southwestern town of Ghat, near the Algerian border. The group has since expanded its presence in that part of the country to the desert oasis of Ubari, with fighters holding regular meetings in the town and moving freely in the vicinity of Libya's largest oil field, according to the security official from southern Libya.

In May, Islamic State seized three fuel trucks en route to Jufra, a district between Sirte and Ubari, according to an Aug. 22 report from the U.N. Security Council.

Islamic State has forged business ties in the area with a local Islamist warlord who specializes in fuel

smuggling, according to a European security official.

Islamic State also has a presence in other Libyan cities and towns, and groups that can range from five to 50 fighters roam outside urban areas, the intelligence officer from

Misrata said. Those groups often travel in a small number of cars to try to avoid becoming a target, he said.

In January, the U.S. launched airstrikes on Islamic State training camps southwest of Sirte and other

targets in Libya, killing dozens of militants, the Pentagon said.

—Ben Kesling, Nicholas Bariyo, Nour Malas, Nour Alakraa and Jenny Gross contributed to this article.

Write to Benoit Faucon at benoit.faucon@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 18, 2017, print edition as 'ISIS Seeks Revival in Libya, Gate to Europe.'



Reports of Civilian Casualties in the War Against ISIS Are Vastly Inflated

7-9 minutes

Having commanded the Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve effort to defeat the Islamic State over the past year, I would like to offer Foreign Policy's readers some perspective on the execution of the campaign. Specifically, I would like to address some points raised by Airwars's Samuel Oakford in his recent article on civilian casualties in Syria.

The global Coalition to defeat the Islamic State shares Oakford's concern for the welfare of civilians, but commanders must also equally protect our partner forces and Coalition service members who are putting their lives at risk every day to protect and free civilians in Raqqa and throughout Islamic State-held Iraq and Syria.

The United States could decide to keep up the charade in Geneva, but if we want to see greater stability in the years...

In accordance with the law of armed conflict, the Coalition strikes only valid military targets after considering the principles of military necessity, humanity, proportionality, and distinction. I challenge anyone to find a more precise air campaign in the history of warfare. The Coalition's goal is always for zero human casualties. We apply rigorous standards to our targeting process and take extraordinary efforts to protect non-combatants.

Assertions by Airwars, along with claims by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and media outlets that cite them, are often unsupported by fact and serve only to strengthen the Islamic State's hold on civilians, placing civilians at greater risk. The civilian casualty numbers quoted in Oakford's article are based on unsubstantiated allegations rather than facts. The Coalition deals in facts, so here they are.

We conduct a detailed assessment of each and every allegation of possible civilian casualties.

We hold ourselves accountable with an open and transparent process to assess allegations of civilian casualties, and we publish these findings on a monthly basis for the world to see.

We hold ourselves accountable with an open and transparent process to assess allegations of civilian casualties, and we publish these findings on a monthly basis for the world to see.

Our critics are unable to conduct the detailed assessments the Coalition does. They arguably often rely on scant information phoned-in or posted by questionable sources. The Coalition would be pilloried if we tried to use similar supports for our assertions. Still, their claims are often printed as fact and rarely questioned.

That said, the Coalition does not shy away from the accountability placed on us by our leaders, the media, and human rights organizations. Oakford fails to mention that as of this summer, the Coalition has worked directly with Airwars to ensure we assess every allegation of possible civilian casualties available.

Out of the 270 allegations obtained from Airwars that have been assessed thus far, 258 have been assessed as non-credible. Of those, 119 were assessed as non-credible because the Coalition did not conduct a strike near the area of the allegation. Another 60 of those allegations were so vague in regard to the date and location of the alleged casualties that they were impossible to assess. The remaining 79 allegations were found to be non-credible due to lack of sufficient evidence or are still being assessed.

To date, based on data collected between August 2014 and July 2017, the Coalition conducted a total of 24,160 strikes that included 51,038 separate engagements.

The percentage of all Coalition engagements that resulted in a report of possible civilian casualties is 2.29 percent. The percentage of

engagements that resulted in a credible report of civilian casualties was 0.32 percent.

Not since World War II has there been a comparable urban assault on a city like Mosul or Raqqa.

Not since World War II has there been a comparable urban assault on a city like Mosul or Raqqa. The Islamic State had nearly three years to prepare for the defense of these cities and then cowardly used civilians as human shields to protect themselves even further. They booby trap houses, they weld doors shut to hold civilians hostage, and they shoot civilians that attempt to flee to the safety of our partners' lines. The Islamic State has tortured, beheaded, and burned those that did not agree with them and they have gunned down women and children fleeing Mosul and Raqqa. They post the evidence of their evil for the world to see on social media.

There is no doubt that civilians are at risk every day from the Islamic State, our partner forces' operations to defeat the Islamic State, and Coalition strikes in support of them. As the battle intensifies in the heart of Raqqa, more civilians will be at risk as the Islamic State holds them hostage and refuses to let them flee. However, if they are not liberated they will also surely die, either at the hands of the Islamic State or from starvation.

The Coalition has done, and continues to do, everything within its power to limit harm to non-combatants and civilian infrastructure. But let us be clear: the Islamic State brought misery and death to this region, and it is responsible for the plight of civilians in the areas its fighters hold. The Coalition was invited to this region with the full knowledge that if the Islamic State is not defeated, the human cost will be even higher; it will be paid not just in Iraq and Syria, but in our homelands across the globe.

The assertion that the Coalition should reduce strikes or pause

operations to enable the evacuation of civilians treats the Islamic State as an actor that respects human rights. In reality, the Islamic State repeatedly demonstrates complete disregard for human life.

Any pause in operations will give the Islamic State more time to strengthen their defenses and take the initiative from our partners, putting more people in harm's way.

Any pause in operations will give the Islamic State more time to strengthen their defenses and take the initiative from our partners, putting more people in harm's way. A pause will also further reinforce the Islamic State's tactic of using civilians as human shields, prolonging the fighting and increasing the danger to non-combatants.

This is exactly what the Islamic State wants — to attack the strength of the Coalition, create doubt, and diminish support for a just mission against an evil enemy.

As we saw in Mosul, a prolonged battle in dense urban terrain is devastating for ground forces and civilians alike. This is something only the Islamic State wants to see. Although a commander's imperative is to accomplish the mission and protect his own troops, he constantly and conscientiously manages the pace and intensity of operations, balancing the need to accomplish the mission with the risk to his own forces and the protection of non-combatants and infrastructure.

The only way to save the people of Raqqa is to liberate them from the Islamic State. The Coalition will continue to take great care in our targeting to protect civilians from harm but we must maintain our course. We must maintain the initiative and we must liberate the people of Iraq and Syria from this real and mortal danger.

Photo credit: DELIL SOULEIMAN/AFP/Getty Images



U.S. Says Russia Attacked Site Near American-Led Coalition in Syria

Ben Kesling in Baghdad, Nathan Hodge in Latakia, Syria and Felicia Schwartz in Washington

3-4 minutes

Updated Sept. 16, 2017 7:10 p.m. ET

Russian military forces on Saturday attacked a location in Syria where they knew troops from the U.S.-led coalition and allied Syrian rebels were operating, the U.S. military said.

The strike injured several Syrian Democratic Forces troops but didn't wound any members of the U.S.-led coalition, according to the statement from the Combined Joint Task Force--Operation Inherent Resolve, after the Russian forces hit a target east of the Euphrates River near Deir Ezzour.

Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, a spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry, said such an incident wasn't possible but didn't elaborate.

American and Russian forces have an open communications line to discuss operations that could overlap, especially air operations, to prevent midair collisions or the targeting of troops incorrectly. The communications line apparently wasn't used in this instance.

"Coalition officials are available and the deconfliction line with Russia is open 24 hours per day," said the top-ranking American officer in the coalition, Lt. Gen. Paul Funk, in the statement released Saturday.

The coalition didn't respond to requests to clarify whether the attack was an airstrike and provided no further details on the matter.

The statement didn't say whether the coalition troops threatened to fire at the Russian forces, but it reiterated that "coalition forces and partners always retain the right of self-defense."

Russia has recently stepped up its military efforts in Deir Ezzour where Islamic State still has a stronghold. The Russians have taken journalists on one of their Navy frigates to watch the launch of cruise missiles into Deir Ezzour as a public demonstration of their capabilities and as a rebuke to U.S.-led coalition forces, who Russians say aren't doing enough.

Russian forces have also ramped up their air campaign, sending more sorties into Syria to bomb Islamic State-held areas and to show their support for the regime of Bashar al-Assad. That has included actions against moderate groups opposed to Mr. Assad, not just Islamic State.

"The recent U.S.-Russian de-escalation deal in southwest Syria, which gave the regime and Shiite militias a chance to fight ISIS, was supposed to come with greater Russian commitments to deconflict with the U.S. and its proxy the SDF along the Euphrates River," said Andrew Tabler, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Middle East Peace who focuses on Syria. "Today's strike, as well as Russian announcements in last few days that it and the regime intend to cross over the Euphrates, has called the deal into question."

—Ben Leubsdorf contributed to this article.

Write to Ben Kesling at benjamin.kesling@wsj.com and Felicia Schwartz at Felicia.Schwartz@wsj.com



U.S. and Iran accuse each other of backsliding on nuclear deal

By Carol Morello

5-6 minutes

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson speaking at a press conference in London on Thursday. (Photo by Leon Neal/Getty Images) (Leon Neal/Getty Images)

Iran and the United States on Sunday tore into each other's behavior regarding the 2015 nuclear deal as America's top diplomat and Iran's supreme leader traded accusations of backsliding on agreed-to commitments.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson acknowledged that Iran is in "technical compliance" with its obligations under the pact negotiated by the Obama administration and five other world powers. But he faulted Tehran for its non-nuclear activities in the Middle East — backing militias in Yemen and Syria, supporting terrorist groups and testing ballistic missiles.

"We have a lot of issues with Iran," Tillerson said on CBS's "Face the Nation." "They're a yard long. The nuclear issue is one foot of that yard. We have two feet of other issues that we must deal with. And it has to do with Iran's destabilizing activities."

For his part, Supreme Leader Ali

Khamenei, the ultimate power in Tehran's theocracy, took to his English-language Twitter account to label Washington as, in turn, domineering, bullying, oppressive, hounding and cruel — and corrupt and lying to boot.

"Every day US govt. exposes a new side of its viciousness & proves Imam Khomeini's words true: U.S. govt. is the great Satan," he tweeted.

The criticisms were lobbed at a critical moment for the Iran deal, which eased economic sanctions in return for Iran agreeing to restrictions on its nuclear program.

It is being kept alive for the time being, after President Trump put aside his disdain for the deal on Thursday and waived U.S. sanctions that were suspended under the agreement and must be revisited every 120 days. If he hadn't, the United States would have been in breach of its promises.

But the administration is still reviewing its policy toward Iran and the nuclear deal, and Trump has said he is inclined to say next month that Iran is not complying with its commitments. If he does, Congress will have 60 days to decide whether to reimpose sanctions, in effect breaking the U.S. commitment.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has said eight times that

Iran is complying with the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as Tillerson allowed on Sunday.

The administration contends that Iran is violating the "spirit" of the deal, because in its preface it is stated that the nations negotiating it "anticipate that full implementation of this JCPOA will positively contribute to regional and international peace and security."

Tillerson said that sentence explains, in a nutshell, why sanctions were lifted.

"But since the nuclear deal has been concluded, what we have witnessed is Iran has stepped up its destabilizing activities in Yemen, it stepped up its destabilizing activities in Syria, and exports arms to Hezbollah and other terrorist groups, and it continues to conduct a very active ballistic missile program," Tillerson said. "None of that, I believe, is consistent with that preamble commitment."

Supporters of the deal say it was never intended to solve every issue between the United States and Iran. The diplomats who negotiated said at the time that the deal was narrowly focused on Iran's nuclear program because it was considered better to confront Tehran without the possibility of nuclear weapons.

Iran, which has always denied seeking to build nuclear weapons, has complained it has not received the economic benefits it expected from the deal because the United States has not done enough to convince the business community that it will remain in effect so long as Iran keeps its promises.

Iran's sense that it was shortchanged in the deal was behind a series of tweets by Khamenei on Sunday, in between congratulating graduating police cadets and criticizing Aung San Suu Kyi's silence on the plight of Burma's Rohingya.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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

Calling the U.S. approach to the nuclear deal "totally oppressive hounding & cruel" in one tweet, Khamenei in another tweet accused "corrupt, lying U.S. officials" of hypocrisy.

"Enemies must know if bullying works elsewhere in world, it won't work for Iran," he said in another tweet. "Retreat has no place when it comes to our national interests."

And he suggested that any move to decertify Iran's compliance or withdraw from the deal will not go unanswered.

"The Iranian nation stands strong."



Tillerson, Iranian Foreign Minister to Talk Nuke Deal Next Week

5-6 minutes

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is preparing to take part in nuclear talks next week with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and

representatives of other key powers, according to several diplomatic sources, marking the first time the Trump administration's top

diplomat will meet with his Iranian counterpart.

The move comes about a month before President Donald Trump is scheduled to decide whether to certify to Congress that Iran is meeting its obligations under the 2015 nuclear pact, known officially as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

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For months, the Trump administration has been sharply divided over whether to continue to certify that Iran is in compliance with the accord, or to break free of the Obama-era agreement, a move that would result in Tehran ramping up its nuclear program.

In July, Tillerson and other key national security advisors prevailed on the president to recertify the pact, which by law he has to do every three months. But Trump was reportedly unhappy with the decision and was hoping to scupper the accord in October.

"The truth is, the Iran deal has so many flaws that it's tempting to leave it," Nikki Haley told a gathering at the

American Enterprise Institute earlier this month. "But the deal was constructed in a way that makes leaving it less attractive. It gave Iran what it wanted up front, in exchange for temporary promise to deliver what we want."

But the pact has received overwhelming support from key allies, including Britain, Germany and France, while the U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Monday pleaded with Washington to preserve it. The accord, he told reporters, "has contributed to an important de-escalation at the moment, and it is a factor of stability. And it's my opinion that all parties should do everything possible for this agreement to be preserved."

The ministerial meeting — which is scheduled for Wednesday evening at 6 PM on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly debate — will be hosted by European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and will include senior diplomats from Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia. Plans for the meeting were reported earlier this week, but the timing of the meeting remained in flux until Friday because of scheduling conflicts. Diplomats said that while the meeting was formally

scheduled there remained a residual of anxiety over the possibility that the key players might get cold feet.

The State Department declined to confirm whether the meeting would take place.

Though there are no apparent plans for Tillerson and Zarif to meet privately, the ministerial meeting sends an unexpected signal that Washington is willing to engage with Iran, at least as part of a broader diplomatic grouping, regarding the fate of the deal. But few diplomats familiar with the discussion were prepared to bet that the White House is ready to fully embrace the deal.

Still, the decision to discuss the nuclear accord comes amid reports that Trump's national security advisors persuaded the president this week to pass up on an opportunity to reimpose tough Congressionally mandated sanctions on Iran on the grounds that it would scuttle the accord and alienate key American allies.

Tillerson's predecessor, John Kerry, worked closely with Zarif to broker the nuclear pact, which eased sanctions on Iran in exchange for guarantees that Tehran would

dismantle key parts of its nuclear program and subject it to monitoring.

In May, Tillerson told reporters following the reelection of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani — a key architect of the 2015 nuclear deal — that he would be prepared to meet with his Iranian counterpart at the appropriate time. "In all likelihood," he said, "we will talk at the right time."

The Trump administration has accused Iran of renegeing on commitments it has made on the agreement, citing advances Tehran has made in its ballistic missile program. On Thursday, Trump claimed Iran is violating "the spirit" of the nuclear pact, calling it "one of the worst deals I have ever seen."

But key U. S. allies maintain that Iran has largely abided by the accord. And Yukiya Amano, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Monday that Iran's obligations "are being implemented."

Photo Credit: LEON NEAL/Getty Images



Rogin : The U.N. General Assembly gives Trump a chance to confront Iran on American hostages

<https://www.facebook.com/josh.rogin>

6-7 minutes

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley speaks during a news briefing at the White House in Washington on Sept. 15. (Carolyn Kaster/AP)

By Josh Rogin Global Opinions September 17 at 7:31 PM

As world leaders converge on New York this week for the U.N. General Assembly, a U.N. body is set to publicly call for the release of two Iranian Americans imprisoned unjustly in Tehran. That creates an opportunity for the Trump administration to make good on its promise to ramp up efforts to bring American hostages home.

With Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif present with him in New York, President Trump is expected to focus on the future of the Iran nuclear deal, Iranian military expansion in the Middle East and the regime's human rights abuses. But the subject of American hostages is also a stated priority of the Trump White House. The question is whether the president will give it

equal billing or put the fate of the U.S. prisoners on a back burner.

The U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, a body created by the U.N. Human Rights Council, has issued an official opinion stating Iran is unjustly imprisoning two Iranian Americans, Baquer and Siamak Namazi, in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The judgment is being released Monday.

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"The Working Group considers that ... the appropriate remedy would be to release [them] immediately and accord them an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations," the opinion states.

Both Namazis were sentenced this past October to 10 years in Iran's notorious Evin prison after show trials for the charge of "collusion with an enemy state," referring to the United States. Behind the scenes, the White House has been working with Babak Namazi, Baquer's son and Siamak's brother, to press for their release.

Babak Namazi told me in an interview that Rouhani and Zarif should not be allowed to visit the United Nations without being confronted about the imprisonment of his family members.

"The international community and the U.S. have to press upon them that taking hostages is a great injustice," he said. "I hope member states take this ruling as further evidence that Iran is in violation of international law and press them to release them, before it's too late."

Baquer Namazi is 81 and in poor health. He served for more than a decade as a senior official at UNICEF, which is also involved in advocating his release. Babak Namazi has met with senior Trump administration officials, including U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley and deputy national security adviser Dina Powell.

In July, after Iran handed down a 10-year sentence for Chinese American graduate student Xiyue Wang, the White House issued a statement announcing that the administration was "redoubling efforts" to secure the release of Americans held hostage in Iran, including the Namazis and former FBI official Robert Levinson, who

has been missing for more than a decade.

"President Trump is prepared to impose new and serious consequences on Iran unless all unjustly imprisoned American citizens are released and returned," the statement read.

Administration officials said punitive measures on Iran related to the hostages were being considered as part of the administration's overall Iran policy review, which is reportedly near completion. That policy could be rolled out next month, when the White House is also required to announce the way forward for the nuclear deal.

In the meantime, Trump and his senior national security aides could do several things to bring the issue of Iranian hostage-taking to the fore. First, Trump could mention the issue in his first-ever address to the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday. Next, the administration could announce new human-rights-related sanctions designations, which are not prohibited under the nuclear deal.

The Trump administration could also use its meetings with allies in New York to work on a broader

prisoner swap to bring the Americans home. When Zarif visited the United States in July, he complained that the administration had orchestrated the arrest of several Iranians here and in several other countries and called for their release "from a humanitarian perspective."

In January 2016, the Obama administration struck a prisoner deal with Iran that resulted in the release of four Americans, but Siamak Namazi was not among them. Zarif reportedly promised to secure his release but then failed to deliver.

In previewing the administration's participation in this week's General Assembly, Haley touted a renewed U.S. commitment to making the United Nations more relevant and more geared toward confronting and solving real problems.

The United Nations is now "not just about talking, it's about action," she said.

Confronting Iranian leaders about American prisoners while the leaders are on American soil this week could show there is something behind that claim.



Editorial : Allow Iranian Entrepreneurs to Sell Their Apps

by The Editors
More stories by

The Editors

4-5 minutes

Where to?

Whether Iran's ruling regime improves its behavior won't depend on how many of their citizens can use their phones to hail taxis. Yet U.S. sanctions are preventing American technology companies from offering Iranian-made apps in their online stores -- a bad bargain for both U.S. business and policy.

Apple has removed the apps from its App Store out of an abundance of caution. Google followed suit last week, taking down Iranian apps for Android phones. U.S. law prohibits American companies from doing business in Iran, though the government grants exceptions for the national interest. In that spirit, and to support the emergence of a Westernized middle class in Iran, the U.S. government should make clear that the apps are allowed.

An estimated 40 million Iranians own smartphones. About 15 percent use iPhones, though Apple does not have a physical presence in Iran. Until recently, users could download iPhone apps made by Iranian companies and hosted on App Stores outside Iran; Iranian-made apps for Android phones were available on Google's Play store.

That changed late last month, when Apple informed about a dozen startups that their apps will no longer be offered. The companies affected by the ban offer such products as a meal-delivery service and a ride-hailing app. Iranians who have already downloaded the apps will still be able to use them, but companies won't be allowed to update their services or attract new users.

In its suspension notices, Apple said that "under the U.S. sanctions regulations, the App Store cannot host, distribute, or do business with apps or developers connected to certain U.S. embargoed countries."

That's technically true. At the same time, the regulations give U.S.

technology companies a general license to provide Iranians "services incident to the exchange of personal communications over the Internet." Designed to encourage the use of social networks like Twitter and Facebook -- currently blocked by the Iranian government -- this provision means Apple and Google are permitted to give Iranians access to U.S.-made mobile apps. But because of the uncertainty about whether and where apps can be hosted, Iranian startups increasingly rely on homegrown, third-party app stores to reach consumers.

Clarity is essential -- for the sake of both U.S. companies and Iranian entrepreneurs. The most sensible step is for the government to grant licenses to U.S. companies to continue to host Iranian-made mobile apps in their stores.

The goals of U.S. sanctions policy are to pressure Iran's government to adhere to limits on its nuclear program, end its support for terrorism and respect human rights. Restrictions on apps have instead

handed Iran's government a propaganda gift, allowing it to rail against American technology companies for discriminating against Iranian business people and consumers.

The current administration, with reason, does not trust the Iranian regime. Nevertheless, it remains in the U.S.'s interests to support the Iranian people's aspirations for change, which technology can help bring about. Allowing Iranian entrepreneurs to sell their apps would serve as a reminder that, in the long game for Iran's future, the U.S. is still on their side.

Editors: Romesh Ratnesar, Michael Newman

To contact the senior editor responsible for Bloomberg View's editorials: David Shipley at davidshipley@bloomberg.net .

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Abu Bakr Bashir in Gaza City and Rory Jones in Tel Aviv

5-6 minutes

Updated Sept. 17, 2017 12:22 p.m. ET

Militant group Hamas said it agreed to conditions demanded by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas for reconciliation with his Fatah party, a move aimed at mending a decadelong rift between the two dominant Palestinian factions.

Hamas, which rules the impoverished Gaza Strip, said Sunday it would endorse national elections in the West Bank and Gaza, and allow the Palestinian Authority to administer the strip. Mr. Abbas, whose government helps fund Gaza's economy, has for months financially pressured the group to cede control.

Reconciliation would mark a significant step forward for the Palestinian national movement, which has been at a stalemate since 2007, when Hamas took control of Gaza after an armed conflict. But such a rapprochement is likely to face significant obstacles.

Mr. Abbas and Hamas's leadership have repeatedly spoken about a national government in the Palestinian territories comprised of both factions but have failed to implement such an agreement. Hamas made no mention in its statement of handing over security of the strip to the Authority, a key demand by Mr. Abbas's government in mending the rift.

Hamas's new leadership in recent weeks has said it is eager to work with Iran, which vows Israel's destruction, and restore ties with Palestinian politician Mohammed Dahlan, a former ally-turned-enemy of Mr. Abbas that is backed by the United Arab Emirates and lives in Abu Dhabi. Mr. Abbas is unlikely to

want to work with either of those parties.

Azzam al-Ahmed, a member of Fatah's central committee, nonetheless welcomed Hamas's announcement and hailed its call for a national unity government as a positive step forward, said a Sunday statement on the Palestinian Authority's official media channel.

Egypt has in recent weeks tried to broker a deal between the two sides, and Fatah and Hamas officials have made frequent visits to Cairo.

After meeting with Hamas officials in Cairo, Mr. al-Ahmed said Palestinians "will witness tangible practical steps" toward reconciliation, starting with an Authority presence in Gaza, the Authority's statement said.

United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov also called on all sides to "seize this opportunity to

restore unity and open a new page for the Palestinian people."

U.S. President Donald Trump has earmarked Israeli-Palestinian peace as a key foreign policy goal, but won't negotiate directly with Hamas over the fate of Gaza. The group is considered a terrorist organization by both the U.S. and Israel.

The Fatah-led Authority until April directed roughly a third of its annual budget to Gaza. But Mr. Abbas has in recent months increased the financial pressure on Hamas to cede control of the strip, cutting salaries of teachers and doctors in Gaza and refusing to pay for a large portion of the electricity Israel supplies to the strip.

Hamas also faces further financial and political pressure after its main benefactor, Qatar, in June became subject to an economic blockade by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the U.A.E. over alleged support for terrorist groups in the Middle East. Qatar has denied the claims.

Fearing Qatar will cut funding to the strip, Hamas has turned to Egypt for fuel to power Gaza and asked it to open up the major crossing into the strip from the Egyptian the Sinai Peninsula for supplies. Israel and Egypt largely control movement of goods and people into the strip, a dynamic that has helped weaken Hamas's economic and political standing at home.

Mr. Abbas, meanwhile, is trying to reassert his authority as his popularity dwindles among Palestinians. In 10 years in power, he has failed to achieve Palestinian statehood, or hold presidential or parliamentary elections.

Mr. Abbas and Mr. Trump are expected to meet and discuss solutions to peace Wednesday at

the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Palestinian officials are frustrated with the U.S. administration's failure to back the notion of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The White House's February decision not to commit to a Palestinian state in the rough boundaries of the West Bank and

Gaza Strip reversed decades of U.S. policy on the issue.

Write to Rory Jones at rory.jones@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 18, 2017, print edition as 'Palestinians Settle On Rules for Reconciliation.'

the Atlantic

The Doomed Hamas-Fatah Reconciliation Plan

Grant Rumley

6-8 minutes

Of the demands Palestinians often make of their leaders, reconciliation between their two largest political factions perennially tops the list. Fatah, which controls the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank, and the Islamist terror group Hamas, which wrested control of the Gaza Strip in a civil war in 2007, have waged a low-intensity conflict for over a decade. Between flare-ups, the two have often responded to the will of their people by announcing various unity agreements. None of these agreements have led to actual national harmony, and Sunday's surprise announcement that Hamas had dissolved its administrative committee in Gaza and agreed to reconciliation is unlikely to defy the precedent.

For one, this is less about unity and more about finances. In March, Hamas announced the formation of the administrative committee, a quasi-governmental body that would ostensibly assume more functions of a state. Fatah leaders reacted with outrage, accusing Hamas of forming a shadow government that would "perpetuate the division instead of promoting reconciliation."

Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of Fatah and the president of the PA, responded with an unprecedented show of force. He cut off payments for electricity to the Gaza Strip, effectively plunging the impoverished coastal enclave into darkness. (Hamas refuses to interact with Israel, so the PA has subsidized parts of Gaza's electricity input since 2007.) Abbas also slashed the salaries of his out-

of-work PA employees in Gaza, cut payments for Hamas prisoners in Israeli jails, reduced medical-supply shipments, and announced that over 6,000 PA workers would be forced into early retirement. These wide-ranging sanctions were the toughest Abbas had ever levied against Hamas, let alone his own people.

From the start, Abbas made his demands of Hamas clear: dismantle the administrative committee, bring Gaza back under the PA's control, and prepare for national elections. Hamas countered by insisting it wouldn't budge until he rescinded his crippling sanctions. For months, the two appeared to be stuck at a familiar impasse until Sunday's announcement in Cairo, where Hamas seemingly buckled to all of Abbas's demands.

The likeliest explanation for Hamas's sudden shift is the change in its leadership. Earlier this year, the results of the group's secret internal elections were announced as Ismail Haniyeh, a former prime minister in the unity government of 2007, and Yahya Sinwar, a hardline leader of Hamas's military wing, became the number one and number two leaders of the faction. Both represent a shift in Hamas's center of gravity from the exiled political class abroad back to the Gaza-based military leadership. Initially, their rise left many concerned that another war with Israel was inevitable. Sinwar, in particular, was a wild card: he arose within Hamas's military wing by weeding out—and personally executing—collaborators, and played a prominent role as a military leader in the 2014 war.

Yet by all accounts, Sinwar, whose duties within the organization involve administrating Gaza, has

turned pragmatic in his time in office. Gazans live in abject poverty, endure substandard water and health conditions, and face astronomical unemployment rates. In the past, they've rallied behind their Hamas leaders in times of crisis, but those days seem far away. In January, over 10,000 took to the streets outside of one of Hamas's electricity offices to protest the group's policies. Public discontent with both Hamas and the PA is now more common, and Hamas's new leaders have felt the pressure.

Sinwar, especially, has reached out to anyone and everyone for help. This includes Mohammad Dahlan, the former Fatah security chief in Gaza, who negotiated a deal with the Egyptians and Emiratis to get fuel and money into the Strip. That Sinwar would seemingly reconcile with Dahlan, the architect of Fatah's bloody campaign against Hamas in the 1990s and 2000s, demonstrates the severity of Hamas's plight.

Viewed in this light, it seemed only a matter of time until Hamas either acquiesced or sparked another war with Israel. In the past, financial pressure has caused Hamas to lash out violently. (Weeks before the 2014 war, its members raided and closed local banks in Gaza.) Yet for now, the group's new leadership has surprisingly opted for the former, though not without attempting to stick it to their Fatah rivals. Announcing their openness to reconciliation just days before Abbas is expected to meet with President Donald Trump at the UN General Assembly will put the PA leader in a bind. A similar reconciliation agreement in 2014 all but ended the John Kerry-led peace process; Abbas cannot expect the United States to agree to his negotiating terms if he's just inked

another agreement with a designated terror group.

Hamas appears to be attempting to corner Abbas. With his demands ostensibly met, Hamas will turn up the public pressure on him to ease his campaign against Gaza. "This puts Abu Mazen [Abbas] and Fatah to the real test," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said today. The longer his sanctions remain in place, the more everyday Palestinians will begin to wonder why he hasn't lifted the pressure against his own people. Abbas is likely to slow-roll his response in order to buy himself time with Trump before likely countering by insisting his demands weren't actually met, issuing further demands he knows Hamas can't meet, or committing to a new round of negotiations.

Either way, it's all cosmetic at this point. Neither side will be able to bridge the ideological divide or forget their blood-soaked history anytime soon. If actual unity was possible, the two Palestinian factions would have likely found the formula in their previous agreements: Mecca in 2007, Sana'a in 2008, Cairo in 2011, Doha in 2012, Cairo again in 2012, and the Shati refugee camp in 2014.

The reality is that Hamas is unlikely to ever truly give up its military control over Gaza. The faction wants Abbas to pay for the costs of governing. Abbas wants total acquiescence and disarmament. Ultimately, there's no middle ground here. Sunday's announcement is just another move in a decade-long game of chess where everyday Palestinians continue to pay the price.

The Washington Post

Diehl : How Trump could save Palestinian statehood

<https://www.facebook.com/jacksonn.diehl>

6-7 minutes

An Israeli border police officer stands guard during a

demonstration organized by young Palestinians in Hebron in the West Bank on Sept. 3. (Hazem Bader/AFP/Getty Images)

By Jackson Diehl Deputy Editorial Page Editor September 17 at 7:26 PM

The annual U.N. General Assembly is underway this week in New York, so we can expect to hear, again, its most hackneyed rhetorical theme — the Israeli-Palestinian "peace process." Speaker after speaker will declaim the urgency of settling the conflict once and for all; many will

assert that the time for doing so has all but expired. Since he will be meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, President Trump may join in the chorus himself.

It consequently seems worthwhile to offer a couple of reality checks: No, this is not the time to fashion a Mideast peace deal; and, no, the time for one has not run out.

Much as it would be desirable to have a peaceful Palestinian state established alongside Israel — and even though many Western leaders regard the terms for it as all but settled — it can't happen now, for the simple reason that neither Netanyahu nor Abbas is willing or able to agree to it. President Barack Obama, who spent eight years trying to bulldoze or work around them, only ended up proving their resilience and intransigence. When he presented them with a painstakingly fashioned peace framework in 2014, Netanyahu buried it in caveats and conditions, while Abbas simply refused to respond.

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In three years since, both have grown weaker and less able to act. Netanyahu is hemmed in by far-right coalition partners and dogged by corruption investigations. Abbas, at 82, remains in office eight years after his elected term expired,

refusing to hold elections and thereby preventing the emergence of a successor. Since January, the two have been toying with the envoys Trump has dispatched to their capitals while ignoring their requests for confidence-building concessions. Abbas has not stopped paying subsidies to the families of militants imprisoned in Israel for acts of violence; Netanyahu has not stopped expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Trump's notion of how to break this impasse involves using friendly Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, to help bring the parties to the table and induce them to settle. The theory is that Israel's shared interests with those regimes, above all in opposing Iran, make such collaboration newly possible. But Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman, absorbed in trying to consolidate power, will not stick out his neck for the Palestinians. Neither will an Egyptian regime already under assault by Islamist militants.

In short, whatever Trump might do, a breakthrough in the Middle East is probably years away. Yet the relative good news is that a smarter U.S. strategy could allow

Palestinian statehood to survive that delay.

Obama and his secretary of state, John F. Kerry, were fond of proclaiming that Netanyahu was creating "an irreversible one-state reality" by continuing to build settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem. The truth, as a former Kerry aide has demonstrated, is considerably more complicated. David Makovsky, now with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, has overseen a project to document every Israeli settlement with satellite photography, count the people in them and determine how many of them actually stand in the way of an Israeli-Palestinian deal.

The results, soon to be publicly available on a website, are revelatory. Of the some 600,000 settlers who live outside Israel's internationally recognized borders, just 94,000 are outside the border-like barrier that Israel built through the West Bank a decade ago. Just 20,000 of those moved in since 2009, when Netanyahu returned to office; in a sea of 2.9 million Palestinians, they are hardly overwhelming. Last year, 43 percent of the settler population growth was in just two towns that sit astride the Israeli border — and that Abbas

himself has proposed for Israeli annexation.

If the Palestinians were today to accept the deal they were offered nine years ago by then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, a state on 94.2 percent of the West Bank, only 20 percent of current settlers would find themselves on the wrong side of the border, Makovsky calculates. "You can have a tipping point on sheer numbers, where there are simply too many people on the wrong side of the line," he told me. For now, though, what the satellite data shows is that it's not too late for two states.

It follows that a wise U.S. policy would aim at preserving that option until Israeli and Palestinian leaders emerge who can act on it. Makovsky proposes a simple trade-off: Netanyahu stops building in areas beyond the West Bank fence, and Abbas stops paying off militants and their families. Yes, Trump's envoys already pitched that and so far got nowhere. "But the good news," Makovsky says, "is that neither leader wants to say 'no' to Trump." If the president aims in his New York meetings at pragmatic results, rather than "the ultimate deal," he might do some real good.



Editorial : Turkey still hasn't owned up to a vicious assault on American soil

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

3-4 minutes

Police secure the street outside the Turkish Embassy in Washington during a visit by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on May 16. (Dave Clark/Agence France-Presse via Getty Images)

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

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

September 17 at 7:19 PM

IN THE four months since the violent attack on peaceful protesters by Turkish bodyguards during President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Washington, nothing has made the Turkish government own up to this outrageous assault on democratic principles on American soil. Not protests from the State Department, not bipartisan condemnations from Congress and not the indictments of Turkish security officials on criminal charges. Perhaps a threat to block certain weapon sales will be a more meaningful way to suggest there is a price to be paid for such brutality.

Turkey's continued intransigence about the events of May 16, in which 11 people were injured in a melee outside the Turkish ambassador's residence, prompted a Senate committee to approve a measure that would block the U.S. government from supporting the sale of weapons to security forces protecting Mr. Erdogan. "We are not going to let President Erdogan's personal bodyguards attack peaceful American protesters on

American soil — and we're certainly not going to sell them weapons while they do it," said Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), who co-sponsored the amendment with Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) that was approved this month on a bipartisan vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Video of the demonstration showed protesters being chased down, kicked and beaten by men who included members of Mr. Erdogan's security detail while the Turkish president looked on complacently. Nineteen people, including 15 identified as Turkish security officials, were indicted on felony charges, but most are believed to have left the United States and only two have been taken into custody. The Justice Department won't comment on whether it is seeking extradition, and the Turkish government has been uncooperative to the point of insult.

That Mr. Erdogan called the indictments "a clear and scandalous expression of how justice works in America" is in keeping with the utter contempt he has displayed so brutally in his own country toward the right to dissent, a free press and an independent judiciary.

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This amendment, part of a larger spending bill for the State Department that now goes to the full Senate, makes clear, said Mr. Van Hollen, "that we don't want U.S. taxpayer dollars to be used for . . . cracking down on dissenters in Turkey and the United States." Congress should approve the measure, and the president should sign it.



As Persian Gulf crisis persists, alarm in Washington deepens

By Karen DeYoung

More than three months after it began, the Persian Gulf dispute that has driven a deep wedge between America's closest allies in the

region appears no closer to resolution.

The Trump administration, which depends on the gulf states as its main air and sea launchpad for the

fight against the Islamic State, and as a bulwark against Iran, is starting to get worried.

"We have an awful lot of equities here," a U.S. official said. "Is it

8-10 minutes

acceptable that American business starts reporting to us that contracts are getting canceled because of the climate in the gulf?" Or that the air base "from which we rain down holy hell" on militants in Syria and Iraq is endangered? Or a unified Arab bulwark against Iran is fraying?

"We're all starting to feel . . . that the Qatar crisis gets in the way of things we want to do," said the official.

The initial eruption came just days after President Trump proclaimed the gulf allies united during a visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in late May. Charging that Qatar was financing terrorists and trying to undermine their governments, four nations in the region — gulf monarchies Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt — broke relations and closed their air, land and sea borders to the tiny, energy-rich peninsula at the Straits of Hormuz.

Since then, the protagonists on both sides have waged a public war of insults and accusations, much of it through shrill, multimillion-dollar U.S. lobbying campaigns targeting political opinion in Washington.

The largest political ad buy of the summer came from an organization called the Saudi American Public Relation Affairs Committee, SAPRAC, which spent \$1.6 million on television spots on local news and Washington broadcasts of national programs, according to data provided to The Washington Post by CMAG-Kantar Media, which tracks television advertising.

"One country in the gulf region is a threat to global security," intones the narrator of the ad over doomsday music. "President Trump, Qatar cannot be trusted."

Home to a crucial air base and more than 10,000 U.S. service members, Qatar has been cited in the past by U.S. officials for lax control over terrorist financing. But officials have also noted recent progress, and few appear to believe Qatar's sins are much worse than others in the region. Instead, many chalk up the conflict to what one person involved in U.S. efforts to end it called "personal animosity" among the gulf's ruling families, and

differing outlooks on how best to keep themselves in power.

U.S. and foreign officials who discussed the crisis spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid fueling an already inflamed dispute.

At the beginning, it was Trump who spread the fire, with his open support of the accusations against Qatar. While Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis avoided blame and called for negotiations, Trump hailed the "wisdom" of Saudi King Salman, reveled in Saudi purchases of U.S. arms, pointed a finger at Qatar's capital, Doha, and said the United States could launch its counterterrorism warplanes from somewhere else.

During the summer, Tillerson and Jared Kushner, Trump's White House adviser and son-in-law, traveled separately to the region. In August, Tillerson sent two U.S. envoys to the gulf, but no progress was reported.

It was not until early September, after months of cajoling from Tillerson and Mattis, that Trump apparently decided it was time to put an end to the spat. "What you're seeing now is the White House trying to push this, to say enough is enough, before it begins to affect military operations," an official said.

At a Sept. 7 news conference with the visiting emir of Kuwait, whose own mediation efforts have been unsuccessful, Trump said he might have to bring the parties to the White House and handle the negotiations himself.

"Very quickly, I think, we'll have something solved," he said.

In telephone talks the next day with leaders of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Trump facilitated a call between them.

But any rapprochement was short-lived. Within hours, both governments had publicly claimed that the other had blinked first and sought the dialogue. The effort was officially suspended.

The failure of Trump's personal diplomacy has left the United States with few options. There is little

reason to think that the president, who plans to meet with some leaders from the region during the U.N. General Assembly, will have much better luck in person.

Tillerson has gone out of his way to bolster Qatar, calling demands by the Saudi-led quartet unreasonable and signing a new memorandum of understanding on terrorism financing with Doha. But the administration has left itself little leverage with the other side, unless Trump is willing to sacrifice arms sales and other Saudi-U.S. business deals, or temper his own fulsome praise for Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the principal Saudi partner in the fight against Qatar.

The Saudis and Emiratis have diligently courted the Trump White House. Even before the May presidential visit to Riyadh, according to U.S. intelligence, they were planning a new offensive in their long-running dispute with Qatar, correctly concluding that Trump would be sympathetic.

Small Qatar has long irked its neighbors by pursuing an impertinent foreign policy that they think contradicts their interests. A list of their 13 "nonnegotiable" demands includes an end to Qatari support for political Islamic movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood; closing Al Jazeera, the state-funded Qatari media company; reducing ties with Iran, with which Qatar shares the world's largest gas field; and ejecting political dissidents who come from quartet countries.

Qatar has said it will talk with its accusers, but will not agree to anything that impinges on its sovereignty.

As U.S. policymakers wring their hands, the main beneficiaries of the dispute so far are the lobbying firms each side has hired to influence Washington, as reflected in their filings under the Justice Department's Foreign Agents Registration Act.

In August, the Podesta Group retroactively registered for work it had done since June on behalf of SAPRAC, the Saudi purchaser of the television ads, at a monthly fee

of \$50,000, not including production and other expenses or marked-up media buys.

That fee is relatively small compared with the multiple other firms employed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, some recently, and some on the payroll for years with monthly or quarterly fees in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Qatar has been a relative latecomer to the all-out influence war, but has gone on a hiring spree since early summer.

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Rather than attacking its accusers, Qatar has focused on print and online ads emphasizing its close security ties with the United States and its own counterterrorism efforts. South Carolina-based Nelson, Mullins, Riley & Scarborough was hired at \$100,000 a month in July to "build political capital" and relationships for Qatar, and to ensure "the right information is out there, and the right people know it," said Christopher T. Kushing, the firm's managing director for public strategies.

Avenue Strategies, a firm tied to Trump campaign officials, is being paid \$150,000 a month for "strategic consulting services," and former Attorney General John Ashcroft's law firm received a \$2.5 million retainer for "evaluating, verifying, and as necessary, strengthening [Qatar's] anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financial compliance programs," according to the filings.

As far as the administration is concerned, however, the question of who is right has faded when compared to the potential damage of the dispute itself. The message to the gulf leaders, an official said, is that the cacophony of paid voices "is ham-handed, and they're being taken to the cleaners by those guys."

"We're trying to tell them to knock it off."

Tom Hamburger and Julie Tate contributed to this report.

**THE WALL
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5-6 minutes

Pakistan: Trump's Militaristic Afghanistan Strategy Is 'a Folly'

Saeed Shah

next week, saying the Trump administration is following a militaristic approach that has already failed.

In Pakistan's first strident response to the U.S. policy, Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif told The Wall Street Journal that he couldn't understand how the American

military could succeed now in Afghanistan when it hadn't during the "surge" under the Obama administration with a force eight times as large as the one now planned.

He instead called for peace talks with the Taliban, which could be arranged if Washington worked with

countries in the region that have influence over the Taliban militant group.

"They are pursuing a folly, a strategy that has already failed," Mr. Asif said. "Force will not solve any problem, it has not solved problems in the past." Mr. Asif said tell U.N. members that "peace should return

Sept. 16, 2017 7:00 a.m. ET

ISLAMABAD—Pakistan's top diplomat will reproach the U.S. for its new Afghanistan policy at the United Nations General Assembly

to this area and force is not the solution."

Pakistan's cooperation is vital to the effort to stabilize neighboring Afghanistan and extricating America from its longest war. The U.S. and Pakistan are ostensible allies, but have long suffered strained ties. Relations turned more confrontational after President Donald Trump accused Pakistan in August of providing a haven for terrorists and then threatening to withhold aid if there wasn't better cooperation.

Mr. Trump had said that a political settlement with elements of the Taliban is "perhaps" possible, but only after an effective U.S. military campaign.

Mr. Asif subsequently canceled a trip to the U.S. for talks with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Islamabad also rejected a planned visit to Pakistan by the senior U.S. official for the Pakistan-Afghanistan region, Alice Wells.

Instead, Mr. Asif toured the region, visiting U.S. adversaries in China,

Iran and Turkey, saying afterward that they agreed that a political solution was needed. Mr. Asif said he would meet at the U.N. with his Russian counterpart to get Moscow on board with this plan.

"I think Americans should be more realistic and more pragmatic about their approach in Afghanistan," said Mr. Asif. "They have already lost more than 40% of territory to the Taliban. How do you keep on fighting with them?"

Officials from the White House, the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan and the U.S. State Department in Washington didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Trump administration plan would add up to 3,900 U.S. soldiers to the 8,400 that the Pentagon says are already there, and allow them to fight the Taliban with freer rules of engagement. At its peak, under President Barack Obama, the U.S. had over 100,000 soldiers there. Mr. Tillerson said last month that the U.S. strategy was to convince the Taliban understand that they cannot win on the battlefield and "at some

point we have to come to the negotiating table and find a way to bring this to an end."

Mr. Asif said now was the time for talks and that neighbors were willing to help. A four-country group intended to prod such talks, Pakistan, China, the U.S. and Afghanistan, which hasn't met for over a year, could be expanded to include other countries with influence over the Taliban, he said.

Pakistan's influence over the militant group had waned, he said, so other countries with contacts with the Taliban also needed to be involved, including Iran, China and Russia. The Taliban have indicated that they are willing to talk to the U.S. on a timetable for its withdrawal, but not to the Afghan government.

Mr. Asif also questioned the U.S. assertion that Pakistan allowed sanctuaries for Afghan militants.

"They don't need sanctuaries on our territory. They have plenty of territory which Americans have lost to them in Afghanistan during the

last 15 years," said Mr. Asif. "This is scapegoating you know, nothing else."

The U.S. launched its first U.S. drone strike in Pakistan on Friday since Mr. Trump's policy announcement, killing at least three members of the Haqqani network, an ally of the Taliban, say Pakistani security officials. Pakistan opposes the U.S. drone attacks on its territory.

Mr. Asif said it was America's militaristic policy across the Muslim world that has inflamed much of the violence.

"There is chaos from Afghanistan to Libya, you tell what is the common denominator in this whole chaos," said Mr. Asif. "Has American policy in this whole region, the Middle East and our region, brought peace dividends to anywhere?"

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Appeared in the September 18, 2017, print edition as 'Pakistan Criticizes U.S. Afghan Policy.'

The New York Times **Rohingya Militants Vow to Fight Myanmar Despite Disastrous Cost (UNE)**

Hannah Beech
11-14 minutes

BALUKHALI, Bangladesh — Nazir Hossain, the imam of a village in far western Myanmar, gathered the faithful around him after evening prayers last month. In a few hours, more than a dozen Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army fighters from his village would strike a nearby police post with an assortment of handmade weapons.

The men needed their cleric's blessing.

"As imam, I encouraged them never to step back from their mission," Mr. Hossain recalled of his final words to the ethnic Rohingya militants. "I told them that if they did not fight to the death, the military would come and kill their families, their women and their children."

They fought — joining an Aug. 25 assault by thousands of the group's fighters against Myanmar's security forces — and the retaliation came down anyway. Since then, Myanmar's troops and vigilante mobs have unleashed a scorched-earth operation on Rohingya populations in northern Rakhine State in Myanmar, sending hundreds of thousands fleeing their homes in a campaign that the

United Nations has called ethnic cleansing.

From its start four years ago as a small-scale effort to organize a Rohingya resistance, ARSA — which is known locally as Harakah al-Yaqin, or the Faith Movement — has managed to stage two deadly attacks on Myanmar's security forces: one last October and the other last month.

But in lashing out against the government, the militants have also made their own people a target. And they have handed Myanmar's military an attempt at public justification by saying that it is fighting terrorism, even as it has burned down dozens of villages and killed fleeing women and children.

This radicalization of a new generation of Rohingya, a Muslim minority in a Buddhist-majority country, adds fuel to an already combustible situation in Rakhine, Myanmar's poorest state.

Nazir Hossain, an imam in western Myanmar, gave his blessing to Rohingya fighters to attack a police post in August. Adam Dean for The New York Times

Increasingly, there is also concern that both the relatively few Rohingya who have taken up arms and the broader population — hundreds of thousands of whom are crowded in camps in neighboring

Bangladesh — will be exploited by international terrorism networks, bringing a localized struggle into the slipstream of global politics.

ARSA's attempt at insurgency politics has been disastrous so far — a cease-fire that they declared this month was rejected by the military, and they are reported to have suffered lopsided casualties compared with the government's. But the men caught up in the cause insist that resistance is worth the steep cost, even to their families.

"This fight is not just about my fate or my family's fate," said Noor Alam, a 25-year-old insurgent whose family was sheltering in a forest in Myanmar after their village in Maungdaw Township was burned. "It's a matter of the existence of all Rohingya. If we have to sacrifice ourselves for our children to live peacefully, then it is worth it."

Myanmar's military, which ruled the country for nearly half a century, has systematically persecuted the Rohingya, subjecting them to apartheidlike existences and stripping most of their citizenship.

The nation's civilian government, led since last year by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has justified the recent violent crackdown in Rakhine as a counterstrike against "extremist Bengali terrorists." Although the Rohingya claim long-held roots in

Rakhine, the official narrative in Myanmar holds that they are recent illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

"We've talked about the risks of radicalization for years, and the writing was on the wall for some sort of militant activity," said Matthew Smith, a co-founder of Fortify Rights, a human rights watchdog group based in Bangkok. "In our view, the best way to deal with risks of extremism and radicalization is to promote and respect the rights of the Rohingya, which is not what the Myanmar military is doing."

Since Aug. 25, these so-called clearance operations have caused more than 400,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh.

'Endless Stream' of Rohingya Flee Military Offensive

"By far the worst thing that I've ever seen." The New York Times reporter Hannah Beech describes a huge exodus of civilians into Bangladesh after a new military offensive against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

By HANNAH BEECH, MALACHY BROWNE, BARBARA MARCOLINI and AINARA TIEFENTHÄLER on September 2, 2017. Photo by Adam Dean for The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

Rohingya who have tried to escape the latest violence have also had to contend with ARSA insurgents who want young men to stay back and fight. Rohingya informers, who may have leaked details of the Aug. 25 strikes to the Myanmar military, have been executed, according to rights groups.

ARSA has also been accused of killing other ethnic populations in Rakhine, such as Hindus and Buddhist Rakhine. At least a dozen non-Rohingya civilians have been killed since Aug. 25, according to Myanmar's government, along with at least 370 Rohingya militants.

The radicalized population in Bangladesh's overcrowded refugee camps does not hide its fervor.

"Even if I stay in my home, I could get killed by the military," said Abul Osman, a 32-year-old madrasa instructor and ARSA fighter who spent three months hiding in the jungly hills on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border after the group's attack last October. "I might as well die fighting for my rights, as directed by my almighty God. My sacrifice will earn me a place in heaven."

But not everyone wants to be sacrificed. When vigilante mobs and Myanmar's soldiers burned down his village, Noor Kamal, 18, tried to flee with his 6-year-old brother, Noor Faruq. Both were hacked in the head by ethnic Rakhine armed with machetes and scythes.

At a bleak government hospital in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, Noor Kamal shivered with outrage at the ARSA insurgents from his village in northern Maungdaw Township, who attacked a local police post last month. "We are the ones who are suffering because of Al Yaqin," he said. "They disappeared after the

attack. We were the ones left behind for the military to kill."

The besieged villages in Rakhine and squalid refugee settlements in Bangladesh, where at least 800,000 Rohingya now live in desperate conditions, make for fertile ground for transnational militant groups looking for recruits, even if ARSA said this past week that it had no links to such groups.

"We have seen how democratic and nationalist movements can be taken over by transnational terrorist groups," said Ali Riaz, a professor of politics and government at Illinois State University who studies Islamic militancy in Bangladesh and surrounding areas. "The presence of legitimate discontent, despair and desperation among hundreds and thousands of people, growing radicalization of a movement, asymmetry of forces engaged in the conflict and a religious dimension to the crisis all provide a conducive environment."

A Rohingya refugee at a camp in Kutupalong, Bangladesh. Adam Dean for The New York Times

Mr. Riaz noted how in the southern Philippines, the Islamic State had grafted itself onto a local separatist insurgency, dispatching foreign fighters and threatening regional stability.

"Neither the Myanmar government nor the regional powers should let this situation happen with the Rohingya," he warned.

Earlier this month, in a video message, a leader of Al Qaeda in Yemen urged Muslims in Asia to show solidarity with the Rohingya by launching attacks on "enemies of God."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

After Driving Out Over 400,000 Rohingya, Myanmar's Top General Calls for Unity

James Hookway

4-5 minutes

Updated Sept. 17, 2017 9:20 p.m. ET

Myanmar's top military commander has urged the country to unite in the face of international criticism of its treatment of the ethnic-Rohingya minority, some 400,000 of whom have sought refuge across the border in Bangladesh in the past three weeks.

Bangladesh and other nations have said they would raise the plight of the Muslim Rohingya at the United Nations General Assembly this

coming week in New York. U.N. officials are among those labeling the crisis as a clear instance of ethnic cleansing. Bangladesh medical officials said Sunday they are trying to restrict the refugees' from moving further into the country and have now begun immunizing tens of thousands of children against disease, the Associated Press reported.

In comments posted to his official Facebook page Saturday, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing reflected the widespread view in Myanmar that the stateless Rohingya are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, and should be known as Bengalis.

The military has only intensified its retribution in Rakhine. As international outrage mounted, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi blamed the Rohingya and their supporters for creating an "an iceberg of misinformation." Myanmar's military has accused Rohingya of burning down their own homes to garner international sympathy.

ARSA, which was founded by a Rohingya named Ataulah, who was born in Pakistan and raised in Saudi Arabia, does not yet have the kind of firepower that can pose a serious threat to one of Asia's biggest armies. Its Aug. 25 strike involved thousands of men but killed only about a dozen security officers. Its first assault, in October, killed nine police officers.

By contrast, other ethnic rebel forces, which have battled the state for decades, have clashed far more violently with the Tatmadaw, as Myanmar's army is known. The Arakan Army, an insurgency fighting for ethnic Rakhine rights, killed at least 300 soldiers in the first half of last year, according to a military document.

Unlike ARSA, neither the Arakan Army nor other ethnic militant groups have been designated as terrorists by Myanmar's government.

Solimulla, 26, a Rohingya refugee in the Sadar Hospital in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. He said he was shot by soldiers when Myanmar's army attacked his village. Adam Dean for The New York Times

"Why does Burma call us terrorists?" asked Dil Mohammed, a university-educated Rohingya now living in Bangladesh, using the former name for Myanmar. "It's one word: Islam."

"They have demanded recognition as Rohingya, which has never been an ethnic group in Myanmar," Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said. "The Bengali issue is a national cause, and we need to be united in establishing the truth."

Myanmar's armed forces began sweeping through the northern reaches of Rakhine State, which borders Bangladesh, after militant Rohingya carried out a series of attacks on government outposts on Aug. 25, killing 12 security officials. There area has long been steeped in tension, with many Rohingya saying their roots in the area go back centuries. Myanmar, for its part, regards the attacks as the militants' first significant attempt to

ARSA was formed four years ago, in the wake of sectarian clashes between the Rohingya and the Rakhine. Dozens were killed, mostly Muslims. Since then, many Rohingya have been barred from leaving their villages or sequestered in ghettos. Young men have no jobs. The military shuttered mosques and madrasas, leaving the faithful idle.

The military's heavy-handed response to the ARSA strike last October served as a turning point. Nearly every Rohingya village in northern Rakhine now has an ARSA cell with at least 10 members, according to fighters who fled to Bangladesh.

"We realized that it's only through Al Yaqin that we can get our message to the international community that we exist," said the 70-year-old father of an ARSA fighter who arrived in Bangladesh with two bullet wounds. "Otherwise, we will all just die."

During their strikes, ARSA insurgents often dress in black and rouse themselves with the chant "Speak loudly! God is the greatest!" In their initiation rites, the militants promise that their families will not object if they die as martyrs. A dearth of weapons, beyond homemade explosives and crude knives, has increased the chances of such deaths.

Mohammed Jalal, whose cousin is the village ARSA chief and is still fighting back in Rakhine, said he was willing to forfeit his son for the cause. "It is dangerous, but if he dies for his people and his land, then it is Allah's will," he said.

Next to him, Mohammed Harun, 10, nodded his head. "I would go to fight," he said. "I am not scared."

carve out their own territory in the area, and its response has been ferocious.

Refugees have reported soldiers shooting villagers and torching homes. In some instances local Buddhist vigilantes joined the violence, while others fled toward safer areas away from the borders.

Myanmar's civilian leader, Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, is under pressure to contain the military as it continues its operations in Rakhine State. Fellow Nobel laureates have called on her to speak out with the moral authority earned with her own Nobel Prize awarded in 1991 for resisting military rule.

"How many Rohingya have to die; how many Rohingya women will be raped; how many communities will be razed before you raise your voice in defense of those who have no voice?" one group of laureates wrote.

It is difficult for Ms. Suu Kyi to constrain Myanmar's army, however.

The junta that ruled Myanmar for nearly five decades was dissolved in 2011, but left behind a constitution that secures a role for the military in running the country and prevents Ms.

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : Squeeze Myanmar's Military - The New York Times

The Editorial

Board

3-4 minutes

A year ago, when President Barack Obama announced that, given Myanmar's progress on democracy, the United States would lift remaining sanctions on Myanmar's military, rights groups warned that easing the pressure was premature: The country's democratic transition was incomplete, they said, the military retained vast powers and its record on human rights was dismal.

Rohingya refugees on the Bangladesh side of the Naf River separating Myanmar from Bangladesh after crossing near Palong Khali, Bangladesh. Adam Dean for The New York Times

**The
Washington
Post**

It is now tragically clear

U.S. considering closing its embassy in Cuba

By Carol Morello

3-4 minutes

Appearing on CBS's "Face the Nation" Sunday, Sept. 17, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. is considering closing the U.S. Embassy in Havana after mysterious hearing problems that have left at least 21 employees with serious health issues. Appearing on CBS's "Face the Nation" Sunday, Sept. 17, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. is considering closing the U.S. Embassy in Havana after mysterious hearing problems that have left at least 21 employees with serious health issues. (Reuters)

Appearing on CBS's "Face the Nation" Sunday, Sept. 17, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. is considering closing the U.S. Embassy in Havana after

Suu Kyi from becoming president after she won national elections in 2015, on the grounds that her children are foreign nationals. She instead holds the specially created post of State Counsellor.

The army can also veto government directives, and changing the constitution is impossible without action from the 25% of seats it is allocated in the country's parliament.

Political analysts in Myanmar say that, in effect, the 2015 elections were a contest to see who shares power with the army.

that those concerns were well founded. The Myanmar military's vicious crackdown against the Muslim Rohingya minority in Rakhine State has caused at least 400,000 people to flee to Bangladesh in the past few weeks alone. On Sept. 11, the United Nations human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, accused Myanmar of carrying out "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" against the Rohingya.

Much blame has been heaped on Myanmar's leader, the democracy activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. That is justified: Instead of condemning the military crackdown, she has complained that reports of ethnic cleansing are a "huge iceberg of misinformation." Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, however, has no direct control over the military. The person most responsible for the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya —

mysterious hearing problems that have left at least 21 employees with serious health issues. (Reuters)

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Sunday that the United States is considering closing the U.S. Embassy in Havana in response to mysterious hearing problems that have left at least 21 employees with serious health issues.

"We have it under evaluation," Tillerson said on CBS's "Face the Nation" when asked about calls by some senators to shutter the diplomatic mission. "It's a very serious issue, with respect to the harm that certain individuals have suffered, and we've brought some of those people home. It's under review."

Closing the embassy would be a serious setback to relations between the United States and Cuba, two Cold War adversaries whose enmity stretched more than

In her only public comments on the latest Rohingya crisis, Ms. Suu Kyi so far has chosen not to confront Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, but to commend the military's response to the Aug. 25 attacks.

She also canceled her visit to the U.N. General Assembly to deal with the crisis. She is scheduled to address Myanmar's diplomatic corps and press on the crisis on Tuesday, and her speech will be likely be closely watched for signs as to whether she will ultimately break ranks with Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, or stay with the army in the current government.

and who has the power to stop it — is Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the commander in chief.

On Monday, the White House issued a statement of concern about "massive displacement and victimization" of people in Rakhine State and called for Myanmar's authorities to "respect the rule of law, stop the violence" and put in place the recommendations of a commission led by a former United Nations secretary general, Kofi Annan, to address the root causes of the Rohingya's plight, including denial of citizenship for them. On Tuesday, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the situation and, on Wednesday, the United Nations Security Council called for "immediate steps to end the violence in Rakhine."

These are welcome words, but there is no indication that General Min Aung Hlaing cares a hoot what

half a century before they restored diplomatic relations and upgraded their missions into embassies in 2015.

But at least 21 Americans who worked in the U.S. Embassy in Cuba have reported medical problems since late last year, when percussive attacks on their residences began. The incidents apparently continued into 2017. Two Cuban diplomats have been expelled from the embassy in Washington in response.

The State Department did not talk publicly about the incident until August, months after the problems were uncovered. The FBI is investigating what the union representing Foreign Service officers calls "sonic harassment attacks" on the diplomats at the U.S. Embassy in Havana. (Desmond Boylan/AP)

It "may well be the most important speech that the State Counsellor ever gives," said Myanmar author and commentator Thant Myint-U.

Write to James Hookway at james.hookway@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 18, 2017, print edition as 'Myanmar Bucks Critics of Its Crackdown.'

the world thinks. The only thing that may get his attention is what forced the military to accept a measure of democracy in Myanmar: economic sanctions.

Yet with China backing Myanmar's military, there is little chance the Security Council will vote for new sanctions. There is nothing, however, to stop the United States from acting on its own. Senator John McCain's announcement on Tuesday that he would seek to halt plans to expand military ties with Myanmar is a step in the right direction. The Senate could go further and move to restore sanctions against Myanmar's military unless the carnage stops, humanitarian aid groups are allowed back into Rakhine State, United Nations investigators are permitted to do their job there and the Rohingya are restored safely to their homes as full citizens of Myanmar.

[Trump's Cuba policy tries to redefine 'good' U.S. tourism.]

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

Some of the victims suffered mild traumatic brain injuries, hearing loss and other neurological and physical ailments, said the union representing Foreign Service officers. The FBI is investigating what the union calls "sonic harassment attacks" on the diplomats. A Canadian diplomat also reported similar problems.

Cuba has denied any responsibility for the attacks.

Cuban President Raúl Castro called in the then-head of the U.S. mission, Jeffrey DeLaurentis, to express concern.

Five Republican senators wrote Tillerson last week asking him to

close the embassy and expel Cuba's diplomats from the United States.

"We ask that you immediately declare all accredited Cuban diplomats in the United States persona non grata and, if Cuba

does not take tangible action, close the U.S. Embassy in Havana," the senators wrote. "Cuba's neglect of its duty to protect our diplomats and

their families cannot go unchallenged."

**The
New York
Times**

Now It's Hurricane Maria, and Caribbean Braces for New Hit

Kirk Semple and
Luis Ferré-

Sadurní

5-6 minutes

With a new hurricane heading their way on Sunday, soldiers from a medical support unit broke down a field hospital on St. Thomas in the United States Virgin Islands. Jonathan Drake/Reuters

MEXICO CITY — Oh, no. Not again.

This was the general sentiment across a broad area of the eastern Caribbean on Sunday as residents, some still sifting through the wreckage left by Hurricane Irma, braced for the impact of yet another powerful storm stalking them in the Atlantic Ocean.

Hurricane Maria was rumbling toward the Lesser Antilles, the crescent of islands that curves from the Virgin Islands to Grenada, and forecasters predicted that the storm would continue to grow as it plowed west-northwest through the Caribbean. It may reach major hurricane status by midweek as it approaches Puerto Rico and the British and United States Virgin Islands.

"I don't think that anybody is emotionally prepared for it," said Cruselda Roberts, a real estate agent in the United States Virgin Islands, which were hammered by Hurricane Irma. "But we'll do our best."

The new storm comes less than two weeks after Hurricane Irma, one of the most powerful cyclones ever recorded, made landfall in Antigua and Barbuda before sweeping through the Caribbean and Florida, killing dozens, destroying entire neighborhoods and leaving thousands homeless. Another Atlantic storm, Hurricane Jose, threatened the region in the wake of Irma, but ended up skirting the Lesser Antilles before turning north.

On Sunday afternoon, Hurricane Maria had maximum sustained winds of 75 miles per hour and was heading west-northwest at 15 miles per hour on a trajectory that was further south than Hurricane Irma's. Forecasters said the storm's likely trajectory early in the week would take it across or near islands that were largely spared the impact of Irma, including Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Montserrat and St. Kitts and Nevis.

Still, hurricane watches remained in effect for several of the islands further north that were battered by Irma, including St. Martin, St. Barthélemy and Anguilla, which are still trying to assess the extent of the damage they suffered, grapple with their losses and imagine a path toward recovery. Even if the storm remains mostly to the south of those beaten-up islands, its outer bands of wind and rain could halt recovery efforts, inflict further damage to already-broken buildings and cause flash floods and mudslides.

"Everybody's upset with that," said Christophe Louis, a businessman in

Guadeloupe with investments in St. Martin.

Mr. Louis, who is a partner in a rum bottling and distribution firm in St. Martin, said the company's warehouse had been damaged by Irma, and then looted. And now the island is bracing for more punishment.

"Everybody's so tired," he said.

Throughout the region on Sunday, residents prepared for the latest storm's arrival, boarding up windows and loading up on provisions. Officials opened storm shelters and publicized emergency contact numbers.

On islands that were threatened by Hurricane Irma but not hard hit, some found they did not have much work to do. Windows were still boarded up, and emergency stockpiles of food, water and supplies, gathered in advance of the earlier storm, were untouched.

"This hurricane season has been very, very frightening," said Jenny Gordon, a member of the wait staff at the Pagua Bay House, a hotel in Dominica. "There's been one hurricane after another, so we never stopped preparing."

Forecasters said late Sunday that Hurricane Maria could attain Category 2 status, with winds up to 110 miles per hour, by the time it breaches the Antilles chain late Monday, and that it could threaten Puerto Rico later in the week "as a dangerous major hurricane," with winds up to 125 miles per hour.

Irma left more than 70 percent of households in Puerto Rico without power, but otherwise spared the island the worst of its fury. The island may not be so lucky this time, officials warned on Sunday.

"This has the potential of being a very big disaster," Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said.

Electricity has been restored to 96 percent of households and businesses since Hurricane Irma, but Mr. Rosselló said there was little time to prepare an already vulnerable power grid for another storm.

Government officials in the United States Virgin Islands, which is still reeling from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Irma, warned residents not to remain in their damaged homes but instead to seek refuge in a government shelter.

Hurricane Irma knocked out the basic infrastructure on the islands of St. Thomas and St. John, leaving thousands of residents without electricity, water and telephone communication. St. Croix was mostly unscathed by the storm, but officials said the island could take a direct hit by Hurricane Maria on Tuesday.

"I'm not trying to alarm folks, I'm not trying to scare folks," Gov. Kenneth Mapp said. "I know the anxiety is high."

**The
New York
Times**

Facebook Navigates an Internet Fractured by Governmental Controls (UNE)

Paul Mozur, Mark Scott and Mike Isaac

20-26 minutes

On a muggy, late spring evening, Tuan Pham awoke to the police storming his house in Hanoi, Vietnam.

They marched him to a police station and made their demand: Hand over your Facebook password. Mr. Tuan, a computer engineer, had recently written a poem on the social network called "Mother's Lullaby," which criticized how the communist country was run.

One line read, "One century has passed, we are still poor and hungry, do you ask why?"

Mr. Tuan's arrest came just weeks after Facebook offered a major olive branch to Vietnam's government. Facebook's head of global policy management, Monika Bickert, met with a top Vietnamese official in April and pledged to remove information from the social network that violated the country's laws.

While Facebook said its policies in Vietnam have not changed, and it has a consistent process for governments to report illegal content, the Vietnamese government was specific. The social network, they have said, had

agreed to help create a new communications channel with the government to prioritize Hanoi's requests and remove what the regime considered inaccurate posts about senior leaders.

Vietnam's government has said Facebook agreed to help create a new communications channel with the government. Na Son Nguyen/Associated Press

Populous, developing countries like Vietnam are where the company is looking to add its next billion customers — and to bolster its ad business. Facebook's promise to Vietnam helped the social media giant placate a government that had called on local companies not to

advertise on foreign sites like Facebook, and it remains a major marketing channel for businesses there.

The diplomatic game that unfolded in Vietnam has become increasingly common for Facebook. The internet is Balkanizing, and the world's largest tech companies have had to dispatch envoys to, in effect, contain the damage such divisions pose to their ambitions.

The internet has long had a reputation of being an anything-goes place that only a few nations have tried to tame — China in particular. But in recent years, events as varied as the Arab Spring, elections in France and

confusion in Indonesia over the religion of the country's president have awakened governments to how they have lost some control over online speech, commerce and politics on their home turf.

Even in the United States, tech giants are facing heightened scrutiny from the government. Facebook recently cooperated with investigators for Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel investigating Russian interference in the American presidential election. In recent weeks, politicians on the left and the right have also spoken out about the excess power of America's largest tech companies.

As nations try to grab back power online, a clash is brewing between governments and companies. Some of the biggest companies in the world — Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Alibaba among them — are finding they need to play by an entirely new set of rules on the once-anarchic internet.

And it's not just one new set of rules. According to a review by The New York Times, more than 50 countries have passed laws over the last five years to gain greater control over how their people use the web.

"Ultimately, it's a grand power struggle," said David Reed, an early pioneer of the internet and a former professor at the M.I.T. Media Lab. "Governments started waking up as soon as a significant part of their powers of communication of any sort started being invaded by companies."

Facebook encapsulates the reasons for the internet's fragmentation — and increasingly, its consequences.

Global Reach

Facebook has grown by leaps and bounds around the world to over 1.3 billion daily users worldwide.

The company has become so far-reaching that more than two billion people — about a quarter of the world's population — now use Facebook each month. Internet users (excluding China) spend one in five minutes online within the Facebook universe, according to comScore, a research firm. And Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's chief executive, wants that dominance to grow.

But politicians have struck back. China, which blocked Facebook in 2009, has resisted Mr. Zuckerberg's efforts to get the social network back into the country. In Europe, officials have repudiated Facebook's attempts to gather data from its messaging apps and third-party websites.

The Silicon Valley giant's tussle with the fracturing internet is poised to escalate. Facebook has now reached almost everyone who already has some form of internet access, excluding China. Capturing those last users — including in Asian nations like Vietnam and African countries like Kenya — may involve more government roadblocks.

"We understand that and accept that our ideals are not everyone's," said Elliot Schrage, Facebook's vice president of communications and public policy. "But when you look at the data and truly listen to the people around the world who rely on our service, it's clear that we do a much better job of bringing people together than polarizing them."

Friending China

By mid-2016, a yearslong campaign by Facebook to get into China — the world's biggest internet market — appeared to be sputtering.

Facebook has tried various methods to get back into China, where the social network has been blocked since 2009. Ng Han Guan/Associated Press

Mr. Zuckerberg had wined and dined Chinese politicians, publicly showed off his newly acquired Chinese-language skills — a moment that set the internet abuzz — and talked with a potential Chinese partner about pushing the social network into the market, according to a person familiar with the talks who declined to be named because the discussions were confidential.

At a White House dinner in 2015, Mr. Zuckerberg had even asked the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, whether Mr. Xi might offer a Chinese name for his soon-to-be-born first child — usually a privilege reserved for older relatives, or sometimes a fortune teller. Mr. Xi declined, according to a person briefed on the matter.

But all those efforts flopped, foiling Facebook's attempts to crack one of the most isolated pockets of the internet.

China has blocked Facebook and Twitter since mid-2009, after an outbreak of ethnic rioting in the western part of the country. In recent years, similar barriers have gone up for Google services and other apps, like Line and Instagram.

Even if Facebook found a way to enter China now, it would not guarantee financial success. Today, the overwhelming majority of Chinese citizens use local online services like Qihoo 360 and Sina Weibo. No American-made apps rank among China's 50 most

popular services, according to SAMPI, a market research firm.

Chinese tech officials said that although many in the government are open to the idea of Facebook releasing products in China, there is resistance among leaders in the standing committee of the country's Politburo, its top decision-making body.

In 2016, Facebook took tentative steps toward embracing China's censorship policies. That summer, Facebook developed a tool that could suppress posts in certain geographic areas. The Times reported last year. The idea was that it would help the company get into China by enabling Facebook or a local partner to censor content according to Beijing's demands. The tool was not deployed.

In another push last year, Mr. Zuckerberg spent time at a conference in Beijing that is a standard on the China government relations tour. Using his characteristic brand of diplomacy — the Facebook status update — he posted a photo of himself running in Tiananmen Square on a dangerously smoggy day. The photo drew derision on Twitter, and concerns from Chinese about Mr. Zuckerberg's health.

For all the courtship, things never quite worked out.

"There's an interest on both sides of the dance, so some kind of product can be introduced," said Kai-Fu Lee, the former head of Google in China who now runs a venture-capital firm in Beijing. "But what Facebook wants is impossible, and what they can have may not be very meaningful."

This spring, Facebook tried a different tactic: testing the waters in China without telling anyone. The company authorized the release of a photo-sharing app there that does not bear its name, and experimented by linking it to a Chinese social network called WeChat.

One factor driving Mr. Zuckerberg may be the brisk ad business that Facebook does from its Hong Kong offices, where the company helps Chinese companies — and the government's own propaganda organs — spread their messages. In fact, the scale of the Chinese government's use of Facebook to communicate abroad offers a notable sign of Beijing's understanding of Facebook's power to mold public opinion.

Chinese state media outlets have used ad buys to spread propaganda around key diplomatic events. Its stodgy state-run television station and the party mouthpiece

newspaper each have far more Facebook "likes" than popular Western news brands like CNN and Fox News, a likely indication of big ad buys.

To attract more ad spending, Facebook set up one page to show China's state broadcaster, CCTV, how to promote on the platform, according to a person familiar with the matter. Dedicated to Mr. Xi's international trips, the page is still regularly updated by CCTV, and has 2.7 million likes. During the 2015 trip when Mr. Xi met Mr. Zuckerberg, CCTV used the channel to spread positive stories. One post was titled "Xi's UN address wins warm applause."

At a White House dinner in 2015, Mr. Zuckerberg asked the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, whether Mr. Xi might offer a Chinese name for his soon-to-be-born first child — usually a privilege reserved for older relatives, or sometimes a fortune teller. Charles Ommanney/Facebook, via Associated Press

Fittingly, Mr. Zuckerberg's eagerness and China's reluctance can be tracked on Facebook.

During Mr. Xi's 2015 trip to America, Mr. Zuckerberg posted about how the visit offered him his first chance to speak a foreign language with a world leader. The post got more than a half million likes, including from Chinese state media (despite the national ban). But on Mr. Xi's propaganda page, Mr. Zuckerberg got only one mention — in a list of the many tech executives who met the Chinese president.

Europe's Privacy Pushback

Last summer, emails winged back and forth between members of Facebook's global policy team. They were finalizing plans, more than two years in the making, for WhatsApp, the messaging app Facebook had bought in 2014, to start sharing data on its one billion users with its new parent company. The company planned to use the data to tailor ads on Facebook's other services and to stop spam on WhatsApp.

A big issue: how to win over wary regulators around the world.

Despite all that planning, Facebook was hit by a major backlash. A month after the new data-sharing deal started in August 2016, German privacy officials ordered WhatsApp to stop passing data on its 36 million local users to Facebook, claiming people did not have enough say over how it would be used. The British privacy watchdog soon followed.

By late October, all 28 of Europe's national data-protection authorities jointly called on Facebook to stop the practice. Facebook quietly mothballed its plans in Europe. It has continued to collect people's information elsewhere, including the United States.

"There's a growing awareness that people's data is controlled by large American actors," said Isabelle Falque-Pierrotin, France's privacy regulator. "These actors now know that times have changed."

Facebook's retreat shows how Europe is effectively employing regulations — including tough privacy rules — to control how parts of the internet are run.

Facebook's international headquarters in Dublin. The company has faced regulatory pushback in Europe. Aidan Crawley/Bloomberg Nytcredit:

The goal of European regulators, officials said, is to give users greater control over the data from social media posts, online searches and purchases that Facebook and other tech giants rely on to monitor our online habits.

As a tech company whose ad business requires harvesting digital information, Facebook has often underestimated the deep emotions that European officials and citizens have tied into the collection of such details. That dates back to the time of the Cold War, when many Europeans were routinely monitored by secret police.

Now, regulators from Colombia to Japan are often mimicking Europe's stance on digital privacy. "It's only natural European regulators would be at the forefront," said Brad Smith, Microsoft's president and chief legal officer. "It reflects the importance they've attached to the privacy agenda."

In interviews, Facebook denied it has played fast and loose with users' online information and said it complies with national rules wherever it operates. It questioned whether Europe's position has been effective in protecting individuals' privacy at a time when the region continues to fall behind the United States and China in all things digital.

Still, the company said it respected Europe's stance on data protection, particularly in Germany, where many citizens have long memories of government surveillance.

"There's no doubt the German government is a strong voice inside the European community," said Richard Allan, Facebook's head of public policy in Europe. "We find their directness pretty helpful."

Europe has the law on its side when dictating global privacy. Facebook's non-North American users, roughly 1.8 billion people, are primarily overseen by Ireland's privacy regulator because the company's international headquarters is in Dublin, mostly for tax reasons. In 2012, Facebook was forced to alter its global privacy settings — including those in the United States — after Ireland's data protection watchdog found problems while auditing the company's operations there.

Three years later, Europe's highest court also threw out a 15-year-old data-sharing agreement between the region and the United States following a complaint that Facebook had not sufficiently protected Europeans' data when it was transferred across the Atlantic. The company denies any wrongdoing.

A Facebook event in Berlin last year. Europe, where Cold War-era suspicions over monitoring still linger, is exporting its views of privacy to other parts of the world. Tobias Schwarz/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

And on Sept. 12, Spain's privacy agency fined the company 1.2 million euros for not giving people sufficient control over their data when Facebook collected it from third-party websites. Watchdogs in Germany, the Netherlands and elsewhere are conducting similar investigations. Facebook is appealing the Spanish ruling.

"Facebook simply can't stick to a one-size-fits-all product around the world," said Max Schrems, an Austrian lawyer who has been a Facebook critic after filing the case that eventually overturned the 15-year-old data deal.

Potentially more worrying for Facebook is how Europe's view of privacy is being exported. Countries from Brazil to Malaysia, which are crucial to Facebook's growth, have incorporated many of Europe's tough privacy rules into their legislation.

"We regard the European directives as best practice," said Pansy Tlakula, chairwoman of South Africa's Information Regulator, the country's data protection agency. South Africa has gone so far as to copy whole sections, almost word-for-word, from Europe's rule book.

The Play for Kenya

Blocked in China and troubled by regulators in Europe, Facebook is trying to become "the internet" in Africa. Helping get people online, subsidizing access, and trying to launch satellites to beam the internet down to the markets it covets, Facebook has become a

dominant force on a continent rapidly getting online.

But that has given it a power that has made some in Africa uncomfortable.

Some countries have blocked access, and outsiders have complained Facebook could squelch rival online business initiatives. Its competition with other internet companies from the United States and China has drawn comparisons to a bygone era of colonialism.

For Kenyans like Phyl Cherop, 33, an entrepreneur in Nairobi, online life is already dominated by the social network. She abandoned her bricks-and-mortar store in a middle-class part of the city in 2015 to sell on Facebook and WhatsApp.

Phyl Cherop, who lives in Kenya, closed her bricks-and-mortar store to sell items through Facebook. Adriane Ohanesian for The New York Times

"I gave it up because people just didn't come anymore," said Ms. Cherop, who sells items like designer dresses and school textbooks. She added that a stand-alone website would not have the same reach. "I prefer using Facebook because that's where my customers are. The first thing people want to do when they buy a smartphone is to open a Facebook account."

As Facebook hunts for more users, the company's aspirations have shifted to emerging economies where people like Ms. Cherop live. Less than 50 percent of Africa's population has internet connectivity, and regulation is often rudimentary.

Since Facebook entered Africa about a decade ago, it has become the region's dominant tech platform. Some 170 million people — more than two thirds of all internet users from South Africa to Senegal — use it, according to Facebook's statistics. That is up 40 percent since 2015.

The company has struck partnerships with local carriers to offer basic internet services — centered on those offered by Facebook — for free. It has built a pared-down version of its social network to run on the cheaper, less powerful phones that are prevalent there.

Facebook is also investing tens of millions of dollars alongside telecom operators to build a 500-mile fiber-optic internet connection in rural Uganda. In total, it is working with about 30 regional governments on digital projects.

"We want to bring connectivity to the world," said Jay Parikh, a

Facebook vice president for engineering who oversees the company's plans to use drones, satellites and other technology to connect the developing world.

Facebook is racing to gain the advantage in Africa over rivals like Google and Chinese players including Tencent, in a 21st century version of the "Scramble for Africa." Google has built fiber internet networks in Uganda and Ghana. Tencent has released WeChat, its popular messaging and e-commerce app, in South Africa.

Facebook has already hit some bumps in its African push. Chad blocked access to Facebook and other sites during elections or political protests. Uganda also took legal action in Irish courts to force the social network to name an anonymous blogger who had been critical of the government. Those efforts failed.

In Kenya, one of Africa's most connected countries, there has been less pushback.

Facebook expanded its efforts in the country of 48 million in 2014. It teamed up with Airtel Africa, a mobile operator, to roll out Facebook's Free Basics — a no-fee version of the social network, with access to certain news, health, job and other services there and in more than 20 other countries worldwide. In Kenya, the average person has a budget of just 30 cents a day to spend on internet access.

Free Basics now lets Kenyans use Facebook and its Messenger service at no cost, as well as read news from a Kenyan newspaper and view information about public health programs. Joe Mucheru, Kenya's tech minister, said it at least gives his countrymen a degree of internet access.

Still, Facebook's plans have not always worked out. Many Kenyans with access to Free Basics rely on it only as a backup when their existing smartphone credit runs out.

"Free Basics? I don't really use it that often," said Victor Odinga, 27, an accountant in downtown Nairobi. "No one wants to be seen as someone who can't afford to get online."

A cybercafe in Nairobi, Kenya, earlier this year. Africa, where many people are only just beginning to get online, is a greenfield for internet companies like Facebook. Adriane Ohanesian for The New York Times

Correction: September 18, 2017

An earlier version of this article misspelled the surname of Facebook's head of public policy in

ETATS-UNIS

THE WALL
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JOURNAL

Trump Administration to Brief Officials on Emissions Goals (UNE)

Emre Peker, Nick Timiraos and Russell Gold

8-9 minutes

Updated Sept. 17, 2017 9:58 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump's top economic adviser is expected to outline the administration's proposals to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions while restating that its stance on the Paris climate accord has not changed, White House officials said, following signals over the weekend that the U.S. was exploring ways to remain in the 2015 pact.

White House economic chief Gary Cohn's planned breakfast discussion on energy and climate matters in New York follows a similar meeting led by Canada, China and the European Union in Montreal on Saturday, when U.S. officials broached revising Washington's goals under the Paris accord to avoid pulling out of it, according to officials at the event.

Mr. Cohn, who is leading the White House's stance toward the 197-party accord, is set to discuss how the U.S. can continue to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions without sacrificing its re-emergence as a leading energy producer, according to a White House official. The initiative to hold an informal meeting in New York materialized shortly before the Montreal event, according to an invitation letter from Mr. Cohn, and it was interpreted by some U.S. partners as a harbinger of a policy shift.

Trump administration officials on Sunday confirmed the president remained open to revising U.S. commitments under the Paris accord rather than quitting the pact.

The White House has said such a position isn't a shift: Mr. Trump said in June that the U.S. would withdraw from the pact "but begin negotiations to reenter either the Paris accord or an...entirely new transaction, on terms that are fair to the United States."

But Mr. Trump has repeatedly boasted of withdrawing from what he has called a "job-killing" deal and

hasn't emphasized revising the country's participation in the pact.

Asked Sunday by ABC News whether the U.S. could remain in the Paris pact, national security adviser H.R. McMaster said: "If there's an agreement that benefits the American people, certainly."

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told CBS News: "The president is open to finding those conditions where we can remain engaged."

Remarks by the top U.S. national-security official and diplomat reflected the message offered by the U.S. delegation, led by White House senior adviser Everett Eissenstat, to representatives from 34 governments in Montreal Saturday, according to a person familiar with the discussions.

Mr. Trump's envoy, who is deputy director of the National Economic Council, the White House office led by Mr. Cohn, said the U.S. couldn't carry forward with targets set by the Obama administration. Mr. Eissenstat said the White House continued its review of those commitments, the person said. In the meantime, the U.S. said it would participate in climate talks, remain active and be constructive, the person said.

Participants at the Montreal gathering said Mr. Eissenstat's remarks fueled optimism among proponents of the Paris deal. Since Mr. Trump's inauguration in January, officials from China, the EU and Canada have tried to convince his administration that fighting climate change could also prove an economic boon.

Businesses mostly declined to discuss the administration's position, while indicating it wouldn't affect clean-energy investments.

"Until we know more about the administration's thoughts and plans, FirstEnergy doesn't have anything to add," a spokeswoman for the Ohio-based electricity company said. Since the president's June announcement, companies have showed few signs of changing long-term strategies in the capital-intensive industries with decade-long planning horizons.

Many firms are shifting to less carbon-intensive fuels and renewable energy to satisfy

customer preferences, and because these fuels have become less expensive and more competitive. Most also operate in multiple countries, including in jurisdictions still pursuing ambitious climate regulations.

"Reducing emissions cost effectively remains an important part of our strategy," said Neil Nissan, a spokesman for North Carolina-based power company Duke Energy, which plans to cut carbon emissions by 40% by 2030.

America's international partners will be looking for clarification during Mr. Cohn's briefing in New York, as world leaders arrive in the city for the United Nations General Assembly.

The Paris deal, brokered under a U.N. framework, is on the agenda as countries seek to meet their commitment to limit the global temperature increases to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) compared with preindustrial levels. The U.S. wants to use the annual U.N. gathering to present its "softer vision" on the sidelines, according to one official who participated in the Montreal event.

Mr. Cohn is planning to exchange views on the path ahead, a White House official said, underlining that the U.S. was focused on reducing emissions by pursuing clean energy and other technological improvements. Mr. Cohn would point to areas where the U.S. had made such strides without sacrificing economic growth or energy security, the official said. Mr. Cohn had argued in favor of remaining party to the Paris deal before the president's June decision, though he remains committed to Mr. Trump's policies, the official said.

"The plan is for Director Cohn to consider other ways in which we can work with partners in the Paris climate accord," Mr. Tillerson said Sunday on CBS. "We want to be productive. We want to be helpful."

The U.S. delegation joined the Montreal discussions on climate change and clean energy, which spurred optimism around the table about American engagement, one participant said. At the meeting Mr. Eissenstat appeared to juggle the

Trump administration's competing policy priorities on the Paris agreement, according to participants in the Montreal meeting.

On the one hand, the U.S. delegate sought to reaffirm that Washington is ultimately committed to the accord, and on the other he sought an opening to deliver on the president's promise to clinch more favorable terms.

"I was in the meeting, and effectively, the negotiator didn't close the door to remaining in the agreement, and in addition ruled out looking for a new agreement," Chilean Environment Minister Marcelo Mena said late Saturday in a tweet from Montreal.

Yet some of the representatives were more measured in their enthusiasm of Mr. Eissenstat's position.

The American envoy "did not imply that the U.S. would reconsider its decision to withdraw" from the Paris deal, German State Secretary Jochen Flasbarth said.

"This is obviously a misunderstanding," he said. "However, the Montreal talks were constructive and showed that the U.S. administration does not want to cut all ties with the international climate community."

Rep. Kevin Cramer (R., N.D.), who has urged Mr. Trump to renegotiate U.S. commitments under the Paris accord, said Sunday that the White House told him the president's "position hasn't changed—he still plans to withdraw unless we find more suitable terms." Still, Mr. Trump's position allows for flexibility, he said.

—Paul Vieira, Ben Leubsdorf, William Mauldin, Bradley Olson and Sarah Kent contributed to this article.

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Appeared in the September 18, 2017, print edition as 'Trump Climate Policy to Face New Questions.'

Sept. 17, 2017 5:42 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump said in June that the U.S. would exit the Paris climate accord, while leaving open the possibility of negotiating the deal or crafting an "entirely new transaction on terms that are fair to the United States." In recent days, American officials said the U.S. could remain in the climate accord if it could revise its commitments under the pact, raising hopes among the agreement's supporters.

Here's a closer look at the Paris agreement and the process of withdrawal from it.

1. Technically, Mr. Trump can't pull the U.S. out of the agreement

What Trump's Actions Will Mean for the Paris Climate Accord

William Mauldin and Ben Leubsdorf

for several years.

Mr. Trump's June announcement was only the beginning of a multiyear process for extricating the U.S. from the deal. According to the agreement, countries can only exit three years after the effective date of the deal. That was Nov. 4, 2016. Once November 2019 comes, Mr. Trump can send a written request to exit the accord, and after that point, the U.S. can be out after one year, or as early as November 2020.

2. The level of U.S. commitment under the agreement is nonbinding.

The Obama administration agreed to aim to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions by 26% to 28% below 2005 levels by the year 2025. Mr. Trump could ease that goal, which is voluntary, and make it less ambitious. Paris accord supporters say that would weaken the pact but would be preferable to a hard withdrawal.

3. Renegotiation could be difficult.

Mr. Trump has said the U.S. could seek a new deal or try to reopen negotiations on the entire Paris agreement. But experts say such a process would be difficult, because nearly all nations agreed on the deal in 2015, and leading economies have said they would continue with the original deal if the U.S. leaves.

4. The administration has sent mixed signals.

Trump advisers told a group of climate officials in Montreal on Saturday the U.S. could remain engaged in the Paris deal. On Sunday, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and national security adviser H.R. McMaster said the administration was willing to renegotiate the terms of U.S. participation in the deal. In his June remarks announcing the U.S. withdrawal, Mr. Trump said the U.S.

would seek to renegotiate on "terms that are fair to the U.S." But Mr. Trump has boasted of withdrawing the U.S. from the "job-killing Paris Climate Accord," making no mention of the possibility of revising the country's participation in the pact.

5. A future administration could rejoin the agreement.

If Mr. Trump does ultimately withdraw from the pact, the U.S. could get back in. Environmental groups say the Paris agreement was designed to be durable and withstand shifts in global climate politics.

Write to William Mauldin at william.mauldin@wsj.com and Ben Leubsdorf at ben.leubsdorf@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 18, 2017, print edition as 'Next Steps Unclear On Climate Deal.'

McMaster says no redo on Paris climate deal decision

<https://www.facebook.com/anne.earan>

"The president decided to pull out of the Paris accord because it's a bad deal for the American people and it's a bad deal for the environment," he said on "Fox News Sunday."

[Post-ABC Poll: Majority oppose U.S. withdrawal from Paris deal]

The Wall Street Journal and Agence France-Presse had cited a top European climate official as saying that the United States was seeking ways to remain a party to the deal. The White House denied those reports in a statement Saturday, and McMaster underscored the U.S. position Sunday.

[Trump announces U.S. will exit Paris climate deal]

"The president's ears are open if, at some point, they decide they can come forward with an agreement that addresses the president's very legitimate concerns with Paris," McMaster said.

Trump had announced in June that the United States would begin a three-year process of withdrawal. He said then that he could revisit the decision if the United States could renegotiate terms he sees as unfair.

The U.S. withdrawal was seen as a policy victory for then-adviser Stephen K. Bannon and his deep suspicion of international agreements and obligations. McMaster's disagreements with Bannon over matters of policy, access to Trump and other issues

are well known, and McMaster acted to reduce Bannon's role. Last month, Trump dismissed Bannon in a White House shake-up.

Fox host Chris Wallace noted during the interview the bad blood that had existed between McMaster and Bannon and asked McMaster whether the Trump administration is better off without Bannon.

[Five takeaways from Steve Bannon's "60 Minutes" interview]

McMaster answered carefully.

"The administration is better off when we can serve the president by integrating and coordinating across all of our departments and agencies with our key allies and partners and to present the president with multiple options and then, based on his decisions, to help the president implement these policies that prioritize protecting and advancing the interests of the American people," McMaster began.

"And so what's important is to have an inclusive process, not to try to manipulate into a particular decision or to advance your own agenda."

Pressed on whether Bannon was guilty of such manipulation or ulterior motives, McMaster denied that there was an active feud between the two men and repeated his goal of open discussion of competing viewpoints.

"There were some who tried to operate outside that process for

their own narrow agendas, and that did not serve the president well."

On ABC's "This Week," McMaster appeared to leave slightly more room for a reconsideration of U.S. participation in the Paris agreement.

"What the president has said is that we are withdrawing from the Paris accord. He left the door open to reentering at some later time if there can be a better deal for the United States," the national security adviser said.

"He's open to any discussions that will help us improve the environment, that will help us ensure energy security and will advance our prosperity and the prosperity of American workers and American businesses," McMaster added.

When host George Stephanopolous asked whether "it is possible the United States would stay in if you can get a new agreement," McMaster replied, "If there's an agreement that benefits the American people, certainly."

[Fact-checking Trump's claims on the Paris climate change deal]

Appearing on CBS's "Face the Nation" on Sunday, Sept. 17, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson criticized the Paris climate accord for being "out of balance" for America and China, but said the Trump administration would look for ways to work with other countries on tackling climate "under the right conditions." Appearing on CBS's

"Face the Nation" on Sunday, Sept. 17, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson criticized the Paris climate accord for being "out of balance" for America and China, but said the Trump administration would look for ways to work with other countries on tackling climate "under the right conditions." (Reuters)

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ways to work with other countries on tackling climate "under the right conditions." (Reuters)

On CBS's "Face the Nation," Secretary of State Rex Tillerson criticized the Paris accord as being "out of balance" for the United States and China but said the administration is seeking "other ways" to work with other countries on tackling climate change "under the right conditions."

Tillerson said the administration is "willing to work with partners in the Paris climate accord if we can construct a set of terms that we

believe is fair and balanced for the American people and recognizes our economy, our economic interests, relative to others, in particular the second-largest economy in the world, China. If you look at those targets in terms of the Paris climate accord, they were just really out of balance for the two largest economies."

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

The plan, Tillerson said, is to "consider other ways in which we

can work with partners in the Paris climate accord."

"We want to be productive; we want to be helpful," he added.

Asked whether the United States could remain in the agreement, Tillerson also appeared to leave a small window of possibility.

"I think under the right conditions, the president has said he's open to finding those conditions where we can remain engaged with others on what we all agree is a challenging issue," he said.



Can resilience planning be disentangled from climate politics?

The Christian Science Monitor

8-9 minutes

September 15, 2017 Boulder, Colo.—After hurricane Harvey hit Texas — and in the lead-up to hurricane Irma — Scott Pruitt, the administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency, made clear his feelings about discussing climate change in the context of the storms.

Such discussions about the role climate change might have played were "insensitive" and "misplaced," he said, since all attention should be on helping people in need.

A host of critics — including the Republican mayor of Miami — disagreed.

But if climate change has become such a politicized topic that discussing its role in intensifying storms like Irma and Harvey is only likely to lead to more polarization and policy gridlock, there is another topic that is getting not just traction, but meaningful action across the political spectrum: resilience planning.

And increasingly, some experts are arguing there is good reason to decouple the two debates from each other. For one thing, not every disaster can be linked to climate change. Debating which storm fits under that umbrella, and which is simply a matter of typical weather fluctuation, does little to help communities cope with either type of storm. What's more, some of those experts hope that approaching such policy decisions through the less controversial lenses of resilience, risk, adaptation, and disaster preparedness can be a portal to the tougher — and more politically fraught — conversation about mitigation and carbon emissions.

"If you start with resilience, there's so much learning that takes place through that process," says Michelle Wyman, executive director of the National Council for Science and the Environment, a Washington-based nonprofit that works to improve the scientific basis for environmental decisionmaking. A conversation about flood planning might start at a local level, she explains, and bring in existing data. "Without fully realizing it, you end up very often with an outcome that includes policymakers and community folks, can trickle up to the state level, and all of a sudden we're having a climate discussion. It makes something that's really complicated a little easier to digest."

Bringing a global conversation home

One reason resilience is an easier — and less politicized — topic to take on is that it's so concrete, and so local, says Anthony Leiserowitz, director of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication. He says climate-change activists, in some ways, made a strategic mistake by refusing to discuss adaptation a couple decades ago because they didn't want to give the impression that we could adapt our way out of the problem. They only wanted to talk about mitigation — how to reduce carbon emissions and change the direction of global warming.

"The problem is that mitigation is fundamentally a global conversation ... at a level the vast majority of humanity does not think about," says Professor Leiserowitz. "Most of us are intensely local."

The challenges that towns on the Gulf Coast face are fundamentally different from those challenges faced by communities in North Texas, or the Chesapeake Bay, or Northern California. At the community level, the politically charged and abstract discussion of causation matters less than the

tangible effects of changing rain, flood, and weather patterns.

"For the Republican mayor of Miami Beach, this isn't some abstraction. The streets of his city are flooding on perfectly blue-sky sunny days," says Leiserowitz. "So he knows there's a risk now, an increasing risk that on more and more days those streets are going to be flooded."

Miami Beach, he notes, recently spent about \$500 million to increase the resiliency of the city, elevating streets and installing pumps.

For Fairhope, Ala., devastating flooding in back-to-back years with hurricanes Ivan and Katrina prompted new, more resilient building practices, and an embracing of "fortified" building standards.

Moore, Okla., and Greensburg, Kan. — both nearly destroyed by tornadoes — are other frequently cited examples of cities that took on the idea of resilience and preparedness as they rebuilt.

"What turns an extreme event into a disaster is what happens to the infrastructure, and we can do a better job of planning," says Jennifer Jacobs, an engineering professor at the University of New Hampshire and director of the Infrastructure and Climate Network. "There's a lot of bottom-up effort going on from the citizens in a community saying, whatever the disaster is, or just something that causes them not to be able to get to work, they don't find that acceptable." Whether those disasters are tied to climate change often doesn't matter to them, she adds.

A 'sea change' in disaster planning

Joshua Behr, a research professor at the Virginia Modeling, Analysis, and Simulation Center at Old Dominion University, has been

working with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to generate hyper-local models — down to the neighborhood level — of disaster recovery times in the Hampton Roads region, an area that stretches from northeast North Carolina almost up to Washington, D.C.

In his modeling, he looks at the impacts, in particular, on vulnerable populations — those who are medically fragile, or low-to-moderate income, or elderly — and what sort of barriers they might have to evacuation, or to recovery after the disaster.

Such modeling, he says, has helped to identify policies — often with a relatively small investment — that can help such populations get to safety before a disaster and recover more quickly after one.

Professor Behr says he's seen a "sea change" in how such disaster planning is approached over the past decade or two, going from involving just a small group of emergency responders to including all sorts of related groups: advocacy groups, nonprofits, hospitals, food banks. To some extent, he thinks social media — and the farther reach it gives to disasters — has helped that rise.

"There's a sense of intimacy with these impending storms that wasn't around 10 or 15 or 20 years ago," he says.

Such planning can sometimes rely on scientific projections, like sea-level rise, that is politicized, Behr acknowledges, but says it's helped to be transparent about the assumptions and different modeling approaches. In the past, he says people who were skeptical were sometimes shouted down in meetings and simply left.

"Now, those conversations are being more frank and real about the assumptions and uncertainties involved, and those voices are

starting to come back to the table," he says.

That language of risk – so central to any sort of resiliency planning – can be a noncontroversial and less partisan way to get into climate discussions, say many experts.

**The
Washington
Post**

Hurricanes Harvey and Irma offer sobering lessons in the power of nature (UNE)

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

12-15 minutes

MIAMI — The astonishing hurricanes of 2017, Harvey and Irma, have provided a sobering lesson in the power of nature, along with some modest reassurance about how Americans respond when calm blue skies turn a violent gray.

The next test could come sooner than anyone wants. This stormy hurricane season is a long way from over, and there are ominous stirrings in the Atlantic, which has a history of brewing tropical cyclones that spin toward the United States. Hurricane Jose has been loitering in the Atlantic and might be preparing a run toward the East Coast this week. And Hurricane Maria is expected to hit the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean on Monday.

[As hurricanes approach, fear is in the water, spreading with new and viral efficiency]

While Texas and the Southeast pick up after significant wind and flood damage, the welcome news from the Harvey and Irma hurricanes is that, in a crisis, neighbors help neighbors. The government did not stumble and bumble as it did initially during the Hurricane Katrina disaster of 2005. Improved storm track forecasts gave millions of people and civic leaders time to prepare for tornadic winds and biblical flooding.

But the storms were not without moments of confusion and chaos, as well as tragic mistakes.

In Texas, first responders were overwhelmed, leaving many flood-related rescues to a nomadic corps of volunteers with boats. In Sarasota, Fla., the American Red Cross struggled to staff emergency shelters because many of its local volunteers are snowbirds who don't arrive in Florida until October or later, said Jacqueline Fellhauer, who manages one of the Red Cross shelters.

Everyone – from those in the financial and insurance sectors to farmers deciding what to plant – understands the concept of risk, and how to prepare for possibilities.

"That language and context of risk can get the [climate debate] out of 'it's going to blow up the world' or 'it's not a problem at all' and into the

real area of gray where we all make decisions in our daily lives," says Leiserowitz.

Leiserowitz is among those who sees a benefit to talking about resilience and disaster planning in a less polarized language, but also a danger in decoupling that

conversation too much from the broader climate change debate.

"In the end, our ability to adapt to the kind of changes we're potentially facing is small," he says. "At this point, we've dilled and dallied and dithered long enough."

"We were just trying to grab people out of the sky," she said.

Perhaps the biggest lesson from the storms was driven home by the shocking images of flooded nursing homes in Texas and eight deaths at a facility for the elderly in Florida last week: In emergencies, communities and their government officials need to be much more effective in protecting the most-fragile members of society.

[Waiting for help that never came: Eight died in Florida nursing home]

The episode in South Florida, where the facility grew dangerously hot after losing air conditioning in the storm — along with multiple instances in Texas where entire residential populations of the infirm and wheelchair-bound required boat rescues — has prompted advocates and state authorities to finger-point and soul-search.

Advocates argued that all nursing homes should be marked as top priorities in both state evacuation and emergency response strategies. Better enforcement of existing codes — such as ensuring that generators are functional and up to date — might also be necessary.

"The lesson learned is, when you lose power you have to get the frail elderly out of the nursing homes," an outraged Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) said in a telephone interview, remarking on the deaths at a Hollywood, Fla., facility. "The nursing home is right across the street from the hospital."

In Houston, scores of people died in flooding that, although historic in scale, was predicted by meteorologists many days in advance. Harvey would strike the Gulf Coast and then inundate Southeast Texas with days of rain, they warned. Yet many residents were unprepared to see their homes and belongings lost suddenly to floodwater, and thousands needed to be rescued from the tops of homes or cars, sometimes after making ill-advised ventures out into the fast-flowing current.

[Storm flooding destroyed hundreds of thousands of cars in a city that relies heavily on them]

A number of observers have applauded Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner's decision not to evacuate the city. The flooding, in the end, caused fewer deaths than the evacuation of Houston ahead of Hurricane Rita in 2005. But the days before the storm were filled with conflicting official messages, stirring elements of panic, confusion and hand-wringing among Texans. Gov. Greg Abbott (R), for example, encouraged coastal evacuations, while Turner (D) told residents to shelter in place.

In the aftermath of the storm, the state's highly decentralized system of government meant that casualties were slow to tally and the desperate needs of local jurisdictions — like Beaumont, a city that languished without running water for days — appeared to get lost in the morass of competing cries for help.

"You never have one clear distinctive voice," said retired Coast Guard Adm. Thad Allen, who helped prop up the federal response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

By contrast, Allen said, Florida benefited from the clear leadership of Gov. Rick Scott (R): "The governor was out front, he was the voice of the state, he was transparent, he was credible, he emoted."

The volunteers who flocked to the rescue efforts in Houston were a source of pride for many Texans, and an illustration, many said, of what went right during the crisis. But the citizen heroes of Houston learned some lessons as well. The flooded streets of the city and its suburbs contained dips and hills, deep water, shallow water and dangerously rushing water, and the amateur rescuers were sometimes woefully ill-equipped.

[An adrenaline-driven mission on the dark, waters streets of Texas]

Air boats and john boats were good for city rescues but often became treacherous in strong currents, they

found. Bigger boats could handle the current, but were useless in shallower water, and problematic when curbs, cars, mailboxes and other obstacles got in the way.

Charitable efforts after the storms also saw a tide of donations mismatched to needs: too many clothes and would-be rescuers, and too few cleaning supplies and ready laborers to help with the unglamorous task of dragging moldy furniture out of wrecked homes, local church leaders said.

Rising coastal populations

Hurricanes expose the flaws in infrastructure. And in some instances, the airing of those flaws has sounded like a broken record.

Earlier warnings against Houston's unchecked building explosion have come back to haunt it yet again, environmentalists and civil engineers said this month, attributing part of the flooding to the city's lack of adequate drainage and excessive building in areas of known risk.

Old sewage systems in flat landscapes that require the pumping of wastewater need backup plans when the power gets knocked out and the facilities flood, as much of Central Florida has discovered. The power grid turned out to be so vulnerable to windstorms that 16 million people across the southeastern United States, most of them in Florida, lost power from Hurricane Irma, a U.S. record. Some still haven't gotten it back.

And then there are the basic needs that come with the basic facts of living on or near a coast.

"We need better generators, we need to require generators at shelters, and they need to be beefy enough to sustain lights, food service, and a semblance of air-conditioning and fans," said Sarasota City Manager Tom Barwin.

There were "glitches" in the shelter plan in Miami-Dade County, Mayor Carlos Gimenez admitted as the storm roared toward Florida. He had insisted that the county open

enough space for 100,000 people. But the Red Cross had trouble mustering volunteers amid difficult travel conditions, and many shelters were short-staffed.

In 1960, when Hurricane Donna rode up Florida, a peninsula that juts directly into Hurricane Alley, the state had fewer than 5 million residents. Today it has more than 20 million, and an average of roughly 1,000 people move to the state every day.

The Houston metropolitan area's population, estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau to be about 6.6 million, has similarly boomed during the past few decades, adding more than 100,000 people from 2014 to 2015 alone.

Along the packed U.S. coastlines, these waves of humanity are meeting a rising sea. Climate change intensifies deluges, and warmer water can supercharge a hurricane.

But trying to stop the population growth would be unrealistic, experts and officials say.

"People are going to come to Florida," Sen. Nelson said. "So we have to use the best scientific evidence about hurricanes and wind speeds and drainage and water and so forth, so that we have smart growth, not irresponsible growth."

Robert Gilbert, a professor and the chair of the civil, architectural and environmental engineering department at the University of Texas at Austin, echoed that view for geographical "bathtubs" like

Houston and New Orleans.

Instead of rebuilding homes with the kind of materials that will require the large-scale stripping of drywall every time there's a flood, communities should build with the reality of floods in mind, Gilbert and other experts said. They recommended using materials that hold up better in water and considering drainage. For example, in many frequently wet parts of the world, homes are made of concrete, he said.

"Saying we're not going to let people move there is naive," Gilbert said. "Maybe a better way of looking at it is how to build better, so that people can get wet but not lose their houses and not lose their jobs."

And instead of offering flood insurance to only those in arbitrarily marked flood zones, face up to the reality that flooding is a pervasive risk that warrants broad protection in the United States, he added. "The way we deal with flood insurance in the United States is broken."

Others think it might be better to throw in the towel in some spots.

In Houston, Mayor Turner said Thursday that rebuilding low-income apartment complexes in areas like Greenspoint, a frequent flood zone on the north side of the city, might not be wise.

[Recovering from Harvey when 'you already live a disaster every day of your life']

"Quite frankly, we've already had a conversation with FEMA because it may not be the best thing to rebuild in those locations," he said at a

news conference. "Otherwise we'll find ourselves in those conditions again."

In Bonita Springs, in Southwest Florida, flooding from a late August storm had not dried up by the time Hurricane Irma hit last week, submerging the area in four feet of water a few days later.

The low-lying city has been involved in a years-long legal battle over whether to allow development on its east side. It's vacant now and absorbs rainwater during major storms.

Mayor Peter Simmons thinks it's time to consider buying out dozens of homeowners and letting the river do what it wants to do, an idea he said he discussed this week with Gov. Scott.

"No matter what you do, Mother Nature is always going to win," Simmons said.

William "Brock" Long, the FEMA administrator, has had two epic storms in his first three months on the job, and what he's seen affirms his philosophy that the United States needs a fundamental change in disaster preparedness.

"We don't seem to learn the lessons over and over again from past hurricanes," he said. He cited the many people who refused to evacuate from storm-surge zones, "which blows my mind."

He said he believes the 10,000 people who didn't evacuate the Florida Keys "got lucky, and don't realize that a shift of that storm track, just a few miles west or east, could have had devastating impact."

Likewise, a slightly different path could have sent storm surge rampaging into Tampa Bay, or widespread devastation along Florida's Gulf Coast.

Americans need to save money, Long said. They need to recognize that disasters will happen.

"We need a true culture of preparedness," he said.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

Sen Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) echoed that sentiment after touring damage from Irma.

"You live in the tropics, you live in South Florida, you're never more than 10 days away from a hurricane," Rubio said.

In Miami, where authorities have yet to finish clearing thousands of downed palm trees and power lines, humorist Dave Barry — who lived through Hurricane Andrew in 1992 — offered his own lesson learned from Irma:

"Never fall into the trap of thinking it won't happen again. But also never fall into the trap of thinking, while it's happening, that you should have moved to Oklahoma. No offense to Oklahoma, there's a reason you live in Florida. And in the end, it's worth it."

Sullivan reported from Houston and Bonita Springs, Fla., and Hauslohner reported from Houston. Roy Furchgott in Sarasota, Fla., contributed to this report.



Editorial : The inexplicable horror of the deaths of eight elderly people in Florida

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

4-5 minutes

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages). Messages left on the sidewalk of the Rehabilitation Center of Hollywood Hills nursing home in Florida. (Pedro Portal/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 17 at 7:19 PM

"UNFATHOMABLE."

"INEXCUSABLE." Those were the words used respectively by Florida Gov. Rick Scott (R) and Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) to describe the deaths of eight elderly people found in a sweltering nursing home in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma last week. Those descriptions, while accurate, nonetheless fail to capture the full, inexplicable horror of the deaths. That people who were so vulnerable and needed special care were instead treated as an afterthought is insupportable.

Investigation of this incident, already underway, needs to sort out the conflicting accounts of what happened to determine who — and

it seems there might be multiple parties at fault — dropped the ball in protecting these people. There also needs to be a thorough review of nursing-home policies and practices and state oversight. The governor Saturday plugged one hole in the safety net with new rules requiring nursing homes and assisted-living facilities to have generators capable of maintaining comfortable temperatures for at least 96 hours. But are there other gaps that could imperil lives?

Causes of death of the eight people, ranging in age from 71 to 99, at the Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills are still to be determined, but authorities suspect that a loss of power and air conditioning turned the facility into a death trap; the elderly are particularly susceptible to heat-related illnesses. Temperatures were reported to be

stifling when rescue workers, after the third emergency call Wednesday, recognized the gravity of the situation — three people already dead and others in medical distress — and undertook an evacuation.

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Hollywood, Fla., police have opened a criminal investigation into the deaths, and investigators from the state attorney general's office were also dispatched. New admissions to the home, which reportedly has a history of citations and poor inspections, were halted.

Disquieting questions have emerged. Did the home, as officials alleged, reach out to the governor's office for help but find itself ignored?

Should the power company have placed a higher priority on calls from the home? Why didn't staff at the facility evacuate these fragile patients sooner? What exactly were its emergency plans, and does the

state need to stiffen oversight? It is mind-boggling that eight people died in a facility across the street from a hospital, and it's maddening that so far there has been more finger-pointing than answers.

Florida, as we wrote last week, managed to mitigate the damage from the massive storm because of its careful preparations. The deaths of Carolyn Eatherly, 78; Miguel Antonio Franco, 92; Estella

Hendricks, 71; Betty Hibbard, 84; Manuel Mario Medieta, 96; Gail Nova, 71; Bobby Owens, 84; and Albertina Vega, 99, suggest more work needs to be done.

The New York Times

The Editorial Board

Editorial : Using the E.P.A. to Prop Up Big Coal

5-6 minutes

A closed coal mining site in Whitesburg, Ky., one of many such towns trying to develop new economic growth. George Etheredge for The New York Times

The Trump administration is unflinching in its misbegotten campaign to protect the coal industry from what has become an obvious and inevitable decline. Eight months in, the administration has already killed, or is in the process of killing, rules that would prevent the dumping of coal mining wastes in streams, impose a temporary moratorium on new mine leases in the West, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants — one of President Barack Obama's most important efforts to resist climate change. All of this to prop up an industry whose workers would be best served not by false promises of new mining jobs, but by aggressive programs to retrain them for a changing economy.

The latest ritualistic bow from Scott Pruitt, the administrator of the

Environmental Protection Agency who has presented himself as an industry savior, was to order last week a two-year postponement of the Obama administration's tighter controls on lead, mercury, arsenic and other coal plant wastes that threaten human health. Delaying the rule's effective date to November 2020, Mr. Pruitt said, merely "resets the clock."

What it does, rather, is to try to twist the clock back to the day when coal was essentially a monopoly fuel, a day that practical-minded utility executives know is long gone. In fact, these executives are busily shutting down coal-fired plants in favor of more affordable energy sources like natural gas and wind and solar power.

"We're not going to build any more coal plants; that's not going to happen," Chris Beam, head of Appalachian Power, West Virginia's largest utility, bluntly told the state last April, despite President Trump's phantasmagorical campaign promise to resurrect lost jobs for coal miners. No less candid, Lynn Good, the head of Duke Energy, America's largest utility, defended the closing of 12 coal plants across five years, with more to come, in order to cut the company's coal-

fired energy output by a third: "Our strategy will continue to be to drive carbon out of our business."

In February, one of the nation's biggest coal-fired plants, the Navajo Generating Station in Arizona, set plans to shut down by the end of 2019 — more than two decades earlier than expected — in order to turn to alternatives, cut consumer prices and shed the notoriety of being the third-worst carbon polluter in the nation, according to the ratings of the (pre-Trump) E.P.A.

While environmental rules have played some role in the closing of coal-fired plants, the main driver is cheaper and abundant natural gas. Coal's use in power generation has been declining since 2007, and by 2016 coal-fired plants produced only 30 percent of the nation's total generation, compared with 50 percent in 2003.

The trend will continue; an estimated 46-plus coal-fired units will close at 25 electricity plants in 16 states over the next five years, according to the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. In its outlook for 2017, the institute skewered Mr. Trump's campaign vows, saying, "Promises to create more coal jobs will not be kept —

indeed the industry will continue to cut payrolls."

About 60,000 coal industry jobs have been lost since 2011, and three of the four major mining companies have gone bankrupt, according to a new study by Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy. Even so, Mr. Trump remains obstinate in his "war on coal" statements and steadfast to his bloated campaign promises to laid-off miners, despite expert opinion, expressed in the study, that lifting vital environmental controls "will not materially improve" the coal industry's prospects.

It is shocking that an administration led and staffed by supposedly shrewd business executives deliberately overlooks the blossoming of profitable and cleaner energy products simply because of Mr. Trump's hollow showmanship before his campaign base.

Until now, the E.P.A. and the environmental safeguards Congress has ordered it to enforce have been crucial to the development of new technologies. To have Mr. Pruitt sully that history with false promises to a fading industry is irresponsible.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Maue : Climate Change Hype Doesn't Help

Ryan Maue

5-6 minutes

Sept. 17, 2017 2:26 p.m. ET

As soon as Hurricanes Harvey and Irma made landfall in the U.S., scientists, politicians and journalists began to discuss the role of climate change in natural disasters. Although a clear scientific consensus has emerged over the past decade that climate change influences hurricanes in the long run, its effect upon any individual storm is unclear. Anyone trying to score political points after a natural disaster should take a deep breath and review the science first.

As a meteorologist with access to the best weather-forecast model data available, I watched each hurricane's landfall with particular interest. Harvey and Irma broke the record 12-year major hurricane landfall drought on the U.S.

coastline. Since Wilma in October 2005, 31 major hurricanes had swirled in the North Atlantic but all failed to reach the U.S. with a Category 3 or higher intensity.

Even as we worked to divine exactly where the hurricanes would land, a media narrative began to form linking the devastating storms to climate change. Some found it ironic that states represented by "climate deniers" were being pummeled by hurricanes. Alarmists reveled in the irony that Houston, home to petrochemical plants, was flooded by Harvey, while others gleefully reported that President Trump's Mar-a-Lago might be inundated by Irma.

How to put these two hurricanes into proper context? An informative website from the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, synthesizes reams of research literature on the links between hurricanes and global

warming. Over the next century, climate models generally indicate fewer but stronger storms—between 2% and 11% greater average storm intensity—with substantially increased rain rates. Against the background of slow sea-level rise, explosive coastal population growth will overwhelmingly exacerbate any hurricane's damages. In the aggregate, the global-warming signal may just now be emerging out of our noisy observational records, and we may not know certainly for several decades. These conclusions are hardly controversial in the climate-science community.

My own research, cited in a recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, found that during the past half-century tropical storms and hurricanes have not shown an upward trend in frequency or accumulated energy. Instead they remain naturally variable from year-to-year. The global prevalence of the most intense storms (Category

4 and 5) has not shown a significant upward trend either. Historical observations of extreme cyclones in the 1980s, especially in the Southern Hemisphere, are in sore need of reanalysis.

By focusing on whether climate change caused a hurricane, journalists fail to appreciate the complexity of extreme weather events. While most details are still hazy with the best climate modeling tools, the bigger issue than global warming is that more people are choosing to live in coastal areas, where hurricanes certainly will be most destructive.

The nascent field of "attribution science" attempts to explain how climate change may affect characteristics of a given hurricane using models in "what if" mode. Such research requires a faithful reproduction of events and predictions of the future constrained by subjective choices within computer models. This research

also takes time—which means other scientists must examine the evidence with patience and judiciousness not usually seen on Twitter or cable news.

Still, the scientific community already knows plenty about hurricanes and climate change—knowledge it has accumulated over two decades through peer-reviewed research, academic conferences

and voluminous national and international assessments. Yet climate scientists all too often speculate during interviews rather than refer to IPCC reports or their cousins from the U.S. National Climate Assessment. Some climate scientists have peddled tenuous theories with no contemporaneous research evidence. Advocacy groups package these talking points

for easy consumption by journalists, who eagerly repeat them.

The historical record books contain dozens of devastating hurricane landfalls over the past century, any of which, if repeated, would be catastrophic regardless of additional climate-change effects. To prepare for the next hurricane, the U.S. needs the best weather forecasts, evacuation plans and leadership.

These plans should be built on sound science, not speculation, overselling or exaggeration. Hurricane science in this political climate already has enough spin.

Mr. Maue, a research meteorologist, is an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute.

The New York Times Trump Lawyers Clash Over How Much to Cooperate With Russia Inquiry (UNE)

Peter Baker and Kenneth P. Vogel
11-13 minutes

Donald F. McGahn II, center, the White House counsel, during a swearing-in ceremony for White House staff in January. He has expressed caution about limiting the president's ability to assert executive privilege as the Russia investigation proceeds. Al Drago/The New York Times

WASHINGTON — President Trump's legal team is wrestling with how much to cooperate with the special counsel looking into Russian election interference, an internal debate that led to an angry confrontation last week between two White House lawyers and that could shape the course of the investigation.

At the heart of the clash is an issue that has challenged multiple presidents during high-stakes Washington investigations: how to handle the demands of investigators without surrendering the institutional prerogatives of the office of the presidency. Similar conflicts during the Watergate and Monica S. Lewinsky scandals resulted in court rulings that limited a president's right to confidentiality.

The debate in Mr. Trump's West Wing has pitted Donald F. McGahn II, the White House counsel, against Ty Cobb, a lawyer brought in to manage the response to the investigation. Mr. Cobb has argued for turning over as many of the emails and documents requested by the special counsel as possible in hopes of quickly ending the investigation — or at least its focus on Mr. Trump.

Mr. McGahn supports cooperation, but has expressed worry about setting a precedent that would weaken the White House long after Mr. Trump's tenure is over. He is described as particularly concerned about whether the president will invoke executive or attorney-client privilege to limit how forthcoming Mr. McGahn could be if he himself

is interviewed by the special counsel as requested.

The friction escalated in recent days after Mr. Cobb was overheard by a reporter for The New York Times discussing the dispute during a lunchtime conversation at a popular Washington steakhouse. Mr. Cobb was heard talking about a White House lawyer he deemed "a McGahn spy" and saying Mr. McGahn had "a couple documents locked in a safe" that he seemed to suggest he wanted access to. He also mentioned a colleague whom he blamed for "some of these earlier leaks," and who he said "tried to push Jared out," meaning Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, who has been a previous source of dispute for the legal team.

After The Times contacted the White House about the situation, Mr. McGahn privately erupted at Mr. Cobb, according to people informed about the confrontation who asked not to be named describing internal matters. John F. Kelly, the White House chief of staff, sharply reprimanded Mr. Cobb for his indiscretion, the people said.

Mr. Cobb sought to defuse the conflict in an interview over the weekend, praising Mr. McGahn as a superb lawyer. "He has been very helpful to me, and whenever we have differences of opinion, we have been able to work them out professionally and reach consensus," Mr. Cobb said. "We have different roles. He has a much fuller plate. But we're both devoted to this White House and getting as much done on behalf of the presidency as possible."

The special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, is investigating connections between Russia and Mr. Trump and his associates, including whether they conspired to influence last year's election. Mr. Mueller is also looking into whether Mr. Trump's decision to fire James B. Comey, the F.B.I. director initially leading the investigation, constitutes obstruction of justice. He has asked the White House for emails and

documents related to these matters, and Mr. Cobb has organized the requests into 13 categories, but officials would not describe them in more detail. So far, officials said the White House has not turned down any request.

Mr. Trump's aides said they were scrambling to respond to the requests to avoid a subpoena that might make it look as if the White House was not cooperating. Mr. Cobb hoped to turn over a trove of documents this week, according to people close to the legal team.

Mr. Cobb argues that the best strategy is to be as forthcoming as possible, even erring on the side of inclusion when it comes to producing documents, because he maintains the evidence will show Mr. Trump did nothing wrong. Mr. McGahn has told colleagues that he is concerned that Mr. Cobb's liberal approach could limit any later assertion of executive privilege. He has also blamed Mr. Cobb for the slow collection of documents.

Complicating the situation is that Mr. McGahn himself is a likely witness. Mr. Mueller wants to interview him about Mr. Comey's dismissal and the White House's handling of questions about a June 2016 meeting between Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian lawyer said to be offering incriminating information about Hillary Clinton.

Mr. McGahn is willing to meet with investigators and answer questions, but his lawyer, Bill Burck, has asked Mr. Cobb to tell him whether the president wants to assert either attorney-client or executive privilege, according to lawyers close to the case. Mr. McGahn could face legal jeopardy or lose his law license should he run afoul of rules governing which communications he can divulge. He did not respond to requests for comment.

During the 1998 investigation into whether President Bill Clinton committed perjury and obstruction of justice to cover up an affair with Ms. Lewinsky, an appeals court ruled that government lawyers do not enjoy the same attorney-client

privilege as private lawyers and that prosecutors in some circumstances can compel a White House lawyer to testify.

Ty Cobb, whom the White House brought in to manage the response to the Russia investigation, has argued for turning over as many of the emails and documents requested by the special counsel as possible. Jerry Cleveland/The Denver Post, via Getty Image

Mr. Trump's legal team has been a caldron of rivalry and intrigue since the beginning. His first private lawyer, Marc E. Kasowitz, grew alienated from the White House in part over friction with Mr. Kushner. The lawyer was unhappy that Mr. Kushner was talking with his father-in-law about the investigation without involving the legal team.

At one point, the private lawyers explored whether Mr. Kushner should resign because he was involved in the investigation, The Wall Street Journal reported. People close to the situation confirmed that talking points were drawn up to explain such a resignation, although it was not clear how directly the issue was raised with Mr. Trump.

Mr. Kasowitz was eventually pushed to the side, and Mr. Trump elevated John Dowd, a Washington lawyer with extensive experience in high-profile political cases, to take the lead as his personal lawyer. At the same time, Mr. Trump decided he needed someone inside the White House to manage the official response since Mr. McGahn, whose professional experience is mostly in election law, already handles a vast array of issues from executive orders to judicial appointments.

Mr. McGahn's first choices turned down the job, in part out of concern that Mr. Trump would not follow legal advice. Eventually, Mr. Dowd introduced Mr. Trump to Mr. Cobb, another veteran Washington lawyer known for his high energy and expansive, curly mustache, and he was tapped as special counsel to the president, much to Mr. McGahn's chagrin.

Tension between the two comes as life in the White House is shadowed by the investigation. Not only do Mr. Trump, Mr. Kushner and Mr. McGahn all have lawyers, but so do other senior officials. The uncertainty has grown to the point that White House officials privately express fear that colleagues may be wearing a wire to surreptitiously record conversations for Mr. Mueller.

Admirers said Mr. Cobb has developed a rapport with the president and does not report to Mr. McGahn, who they believe feels insecure about his place in Mr. Trump's orbit. Mr. McGahn's supporters argue that Mr. Cobb is wildly over-optimistic to think he can steer the investigation away from the president, given that Mr. Mueller has now hired 17 prosecutors.

The suspicion within the legal team seemed evident in the lunch conversation Mr. Cobb had last

week with Mr. Dowd at BLT Steak, not far from the White House and a few doors down from The Times's office. A reporter who happened to be at the next table heard Mr. Cobb describing varying views of how to respond to Mr. Mueller's requests for documents.

"The White House counsel's office is being very conservative with this stuff," Mr. Cobb told Mr. Dowd. "Our view is we're not hiding anything." Referring to Mr. McGahn, he added, "He's got a couple documents locked in a safe."

Mr. Cobb expressed concern about another White House lawyer he did not name. "I've got some reservations about one of them," Mr. Cobb said. "I think he's like a McGahn spy."

While Mr. Cobb advocated turning over documents to Mr. Mueller, he seemed sensitive to the argument that they should not necessarily be provided to congressional

committees investigating the Russia matter. "If we give it to Mueller, there is no reason for it to ever get to the Hill," he said.

Mr. Cobb also discussed the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting — and the White House's response to it — saying that "there was no perception that there was an exchange."

In the interview over the weekend, Mr. Cobb emphasized respect for Mr. McGahn. "Don McGahn is an exceptional professional," he said. "He's done a superior job of building and managing a White House counsel's office that deals with a wide variety of issues effectively every day. He works hard and is highly regarded, and his lawyering skills are excellent."

Mr. Cobb acknowledged that the two approach the investigation from different perspectives. His role, he said, was "working as hard as I can every day to assist and fully

cooperate with the special counsel's office, and that cooperation is ongoing at a substantial pace."

Contacted separately, Mr. Dowd emphasized that the lunch conversation was not critical of Mr. McGahn. "Don McGahn is doing a terrific job and our needs are an extra load," he said in an email. "We understand and respect the time it has taken to gather the material and review it. Nothing we said reflected adversely upon Don McGahn."

He said tension over how to respond to document requests was normal. "Assertions of privilege are the exception to the rule that the law is entitled to every man's evidence, and in this instance it is critical in our judgment that the president be fully transparent with the special counsel in this inquiry," Mr. Dowd said. "All this is getting worked out in a professional manner."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Del Quentin Wilber

5-7 minutes

Russia Probe Takes Financial Toll on Trump Aides

Aruna Viswanatha and

and a target of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's probe, owes substantial sums in unpaid legal bills to his former law firm, according to people familiar with the matter.

Jason Maloni, a spokesman for Mr. Manafort, declined to comment. A spokesman for Mr. Manafort's former law firm, WilmerHale, also declined to comment.

The sprawling investigations into Russian meddling in the 2016 election have touched many current and former White House and campaign officials. Some, like Mr. Manafort, played major roles in the campaign, while others operated at lower levels.

The Office of Government Ethics recently revisited guidance on anonymous and other donations to legal-defense funds in light of the current interest.

The family of former national security adviser Mike Flynn has said it plans to set up a legal-defense fund, as has Roger Stone, a longtime informal adviser to Mr. Trump who is collecting donations at whoframedrogerstone.com. He said on his website his legal expenses include defending himself against a private lawsuit accusing him of helping Russian efforts to distribute information hacked from the Democratic National Committee.

A lawyer for Mr. Flynn said his client hadn't announced a legal-defense fund and declined to comment further. Mr. Stone didn't respond to an emailed request for comment.

These Trump aides' plight recalls that of staffers in the Bill Clinton era who also faced multiple investigations. Former Clinton administration official Neel Lattimore, in an interview, described the investigations into the Clinton White House as "emotionally draining and financially expensive."

One grand jury appearance took about four days including preparation, he said, and required paying a private lawyer out of his own pocket and using vacation days. "I had to work out a relationship with my attorney just to make payments," Mr. Lattimore said. "It was exhausting, and you can't talk to your peers about it."

Hillary Clinton characterized her family as "dead broke" after her husband's time in office, in part due to legal costs as various investigations dogged the Clintons. They paid more than \$1.3 million in 2001 alone to cover legal bills.

Mr. Mueller's office is investigating Russian government efforts to influence the 2016 presidential election and "related matters," which includes wide-ranging investigations into the business dealings of Messrs. Manafort and Flynn. At least three congressional committees are conducting related inquiries, and each one involves detailed interviews with numerous witnesses.

Multiple current and former White House officials, including communications director Hope Hicks and former chief of staff Reince Priebus, have retained top

lawyers in recent weeks, according to people familiar with the hires.

In June, the Donald J. Trump For President, Inc. campaign committee paid \$50,000 to the law offices of Alan S. Futerfas, who is representing Mr. Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., in the investigations, according to a Federal Election Commission filing.

A 1993 Office of Government Ethics opinion allowed anonymous donations to government employees' legal-defense funds, on the grounds that conflicts of interest wouldn't exist because the employees wouldn't know the identity of their donors.

The former head of the office, Walter Shaub, who resigned in July and has been a vocal critic of Mr. Trump, said he added a note to the opinion saying it was "not consistent with current OGE interpretation and practice."

But that note has since been removed, he said, and replaced with a note saying the 1993 policy "has not changed." The note also urges employees to discuss the rules with OGE before accepting donations. "They tried to slip this one by us," Mr. Shaub said. "It's very disturbing."

An OGE spokeswoman said the office still discourages such donations. "The OGE policy on anonymous contributions has not changed," she said. "It is the same as when former director Shaub left the agency."

Sept. 17, 2017 9:00 a.m. ET

Some White House and Trump campaign officials caught up in investigations of Russia's electoral meddling are struggling to pay their legal bills, prompting them to create legal defense funds, liquidate personal accounts and explore other sources of financing.

Washington is one of the nation's costliest legal jurisdictions, with many lawyers charging upward of \$1,000 an hour, and several Trump associates have been contacted in connection with multiple ongoing investigations, from Congress to the special counsel's office.

Former Trump campaign aide Michael Caputo, who testified in July before a closed-door hearing of the House Intelligence Committee, said in an interview he has spent around \$30,000 on legal bills. He said he liquidated a college fund he had set up for his daughters, including one who is 15 years old.

"My retirement account is next," Mr. Caputo said, estimating that paying a Washington attorney to represent a witness at one congressional hearing costs around \$40,000. He said his costs were lower because he hired a lawyer in upstate New York where he lives.

Paul Manafort, President Donald Trump's former campaign chairman

POLITICO Trump's team gunning for potential 2020 reelection rivals

By GABRIEL DEBENEDETTI

8-10 minutes

Allies of Donald Trump have begun plotting to take down or weaken potential Democratic challengers in 2020, including several who will be on the ballot in next year's midterms.

The 2018-focused work ranges from a major donor-funded super PAC designed to blemish Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren's image, to a full-scale effort to defeat Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown outright before he gets the chance to take on Trump. Beyond that, after months of monitoring dozens of potential challengers, Trump allies are building research files and crafting lines of attack on Democrats seen as most threatening to Trump and who will be on the ballot next November.

Story Continued Below

The patchwork push is less organized than past efforts orchestrated by presidential reelection campaigns. But it's beginning to resemble Republicans' successful attempt to drag down Hillary Clinton before she announced her 2016 run. Plus, with Trump under siege from Democrats and Republicans — and with his team wary of a GOP primary challenge — it's more confirmation that Trump allies are already maneuvering for a bruising 2020 campaign.

The bulk of the early preparations underway focus on seven possible 2020 Democrats who are up for reelection in 2018. Within the Republican National Committee and Trump-aligned outside groups in recent months, operatives have regularly met to discuss plans for constructing the research material, money and staff they'll need to chip away at Democratic White House hopefuls' reputations in 2018 and 2020.

"There's wisdom in putting the 2018 Democratic candidates on notice — and some Republicans who are making noises as well — that there is going to be a well-funded, diverse set of groups that will be taking them on," said Matt Schlapp, the American Conservative Union chairman and former George W. Bush political aide who is close with Trump's White House.

Trump's official reelection team has already made some early moves. A

March fundraising email branded a group of Democrats — including potential opponents, Sens. Cory Booker, Kirsten Gillibrand, and Bernie Sanders — as "radical liberals" for standing against Trump's Muslim travel ban. This month it released a cable television ad that called Warren a "career politician."

Of the group of Democrats on the ballot next year, six are expected to win easily and use their campaigns to build war chests that can be used to run for president. The list includes Sanders, Gillibrand, Warren, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy.

None of the gambits to go after incumbents is more pointed than the little-noticed launch of a big-money group earlier this year set up specifically to tarnish Warren.

In June, a previously unknown super PAC called Massachusetts First — an apparent nod to Trump's "America First" slogan — started running radio ads lashing the senator as a "hypocrite professor" for taking a high salary as a Harvard instructor before she was elected. While Warren is unlikely to face a competitive challenge, a barebones website associated with the organization says the group "is committed to providing voters the full and real story on Senator Elizabeth Warren's failure as a United States Senator, and to bring to light her hypocrisy and out-of-touch policy positions."

Federal filings show the group, which has run around \$150,000 worth of radio ads, was organized in March. Of the roughly \$200,000 it raised between then and July, \$150,000 — the amount needed to fund the ads — came from Robert Mercer, a hedge fund billionaire whose political operation is closely tied to Trump's, largely through former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon.

It was Mercer's biggest donation of the year to any candidate or group, according to Federal Election Commission records.

But the GOP efforts extend far beyond Warren. At the White House and the RNC, political operatives are monitoring dozens of Democrats' strategic moves and public pronouncements. At the committee, they've started filing public records requests on some. And leading GOP researchers have started identifying vulnerabilities for

high-profile contenders in an attempt to harm their political prospects early.

"It hasn't been difficult so far, as Democrats angling for 2020 are tripping over themselves to see who can spout the most extreme far-left positions and who can be the biggest obstructionist," said RNC research director Mike Reed.

Operatives are aiming to replicate the pounce-early-and-often model they used against Clinton in 2014 and 2015, multiple GOP operatives familiar with the effort told POLITICO.

The RNC has already used memos to reporters and allies to start painting likely contenders including Gillibrand and Klobuchar as knee-jerk obstructionists. And it has also been working with opposition research firm America Rising to gather background on the candidates and explore strikes against them.

Leaders of pro-Trump America First Policies — the political nonprofit tied to the America First Action super PAC, where close White House allies including former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski landed — have also begun coordinating with America Rising about setting up 2020 plans and compiling research on likely candidates. America Rising has already publicly announced campaigns against Cuomo and Warren.

White House aides have lobbed a few warning shots, too. Bannon floated regulating Facebook as a public utility in a jab at CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who he sees as a possible opponent.

Leading Republican donors and money men have yet to see formal proposals for 2020. Trump's own political team has had to focus more on trying to keep the Republican Party behind him to pass his policy agenda, and less on drawing up comprehensive plans against Democrats.

"There's only one person that could beat Trump right now: It's Trump," explained Trump campaign pollster John McLaughlin, justifying the emphasis on wrangling his own party. "[Democrats] could have one, two, 30 opponents against him, but his ability to get reelected is based on getting his policies through."

Nonetheless, with the Trump-driven political climate so volatile, the Democratic front-runner to take on Trump could change repeatedly

between now and 2020. That underscores the importance of starting the preparations, said Virginia Republican Party Chairman John Whitbeck.

"There's no question that this kind of effort should be going on this early," he said.

Republicans are also closely watching Brown. A finalist to be Hillary Clinton's vice president in 2016, the Ohio senator is now running a close campaign for a third term in a battleground state that Trump carried after Barack Obama won it twice.

Seeing a chance to beat the populist senator before he could even consider a White House run, people close to Trump's political team have signed up with two different Republican candidates vying to unseat Brown.

Jeff Roe — the Ted Cruz campaign manager who has been in close touch with members of Trump's circles, including son-in-law Jared Kushner — is helping guide state treasurer Josh Mandel's second attempt at beating Brown. And Lewandowski held a fundraiser for Mandel in Akron last month.

Other Trump allies are working to elect Cleveland banker Mike Gibbons, a 2016 Ohio co-chair for the joint committee run by Trump and the RNC. New Hampshire-based Michael Biundo, a former senior national political adviser to Trump's campaign, is leading Gibbons' bid, joined by strategists at the Prosper Group digital media firm that also worked for the president last year.

Because the other potential Democratic contenders are all likely to skate to reelection and the GOP's short-term task is simply to dent their image or test messages against them, Trump allies see beating Brown as an ideal way to segue from the midterms to the presidential reelection bid.

"We have an opportunity [to unseat him], especially after last year, when we had so many blue-collar voters come over to our side," said Ohio Republican Party executive director Rob Secaur, who led the national party's 2016 effort in the state Trump won by 8 percentage points. "It's a bonus that it would stop a 2020 run from him."

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Editorial : Reining in Mr. Sessions

The Editorial Board

Sept. 17, 2017 3:42 p.m. ET

Attorney General Jeff Sessions recently provoked bipartisan opposition when he revived a civil asset-forfeiture program that had been restricted by his predecessor, Eric Holder. Last week a bipartisan coalition brushed Mr. Sessions back with amendments to the annual appropriations package working its way through the House.

federal law enforcement to take property from people who haven't been convicted of any crime—and then share in the spoils. In theory, civil asset forfeiture ensures that crime doesn't pay by allowing law enforcement to seize homes, cars and cash thought to be paid for or generated by illegal activity. That's why Mr. Sessions calls it a "key tool" against organized crime.

In practice, it means property can be taken from people without due process or criminal culpability. A March report from Justice's Inspector General noted that the department doesn't even have a way to measure if these seizures are advancing criminal

investigations. In short, it invites abuse.

Last week House members passed, by voice vote, five forfeiture amendments that showed their displeasure. An amendment by Darrell Issa (R., Calif.) redirects \$10 million in funding for Justice's asset forfeiture to a program designed to help local governments reduce the backlog of unprocessed rape kits. A Peter Roskam (R., Ill.) amendment bars bonuses for certain Justice employees until they decide on a backlog of 255 asset forfeiture cases referred by the IRS.

Three other amendments target the "adoptive forfeiture" aspect of the program, which allows local law

enforcement to make end runs around state prohibitions by working with the feds. Three separate amendments—from Jamie Raskin (D., Md.), Tim Walberg (R., Mich.) and Justin Amash (R., Mich.)—limit the funding Mr. Sessions can use to implement his program.

Though Congress will have to pass a separate law to make these restrictions permanent, these are a victory for property rights and due process. Who says Washington is so polarized that Republicans and Democrats can't agree on anything?

The program allows local and

Editorial : California Democrats Target Tesla

The Editorial Board

Sept. 17, 2017 3:42 p.m. ET

California Democrats have finally found a cause that's worth suspending their environmental passions. The United Automobile Workers are struggling for a presence in Tesla's Fremont plant, and organized labor has called in a political favor.

amendment to cap-and-trade spending legislation that would require participating manufacturers to get a sign-off from the state labor secretary verifying that they are "fair and responsible in their treatment of workers."

The legislation, which passed Friday, is a direct shot at Tesla. The Clean Vehicle Rebate Project has amounted to a \$82.5 million subsidy for the company, giving extra incentive to 32,842 Tesla buyers in seven years.

Tesla's sales have been built with taxpayer support. When Hong Kong cut back its electric-vehicle tax credits earlier this year, Tesla sales dropped to zero in April from nearly 3,000 the month earlier. And when

Denmark scaled back incentives last year, electric-car sales plummeted by 70%.

The labor secretary in California is hand-picked by unions and their Democratic allies, and last month the UAW and a few auto workers filed a complaint against Tesla with the National Labor Relations Board, alleging unfair labor practices.

But the plant's employees are doubtless aware of the union's abysmal record in Fremont, which stretches back decades. In the early 1980s, the union's control was so complete that General Motors couldn't fire even workers who drank, used drugs and had sex at the Fremont plant. Roughly one in five workers failed to show up on

any given day. The plant closed in 1982—no surprise. Auto workers got a second shot with a GM-Toyota joint venture, but that was shuttered in 2010.

A record of closures and corruption contributed to the UAW's defeat last month at a Mississippi Nissan plant, where workers voted nearly two-to-one against the union. Organized labor needs political coercion because it can't win over workers on its own. As for electric cars and green subsidies, what progressive politicians give away with one hand they want to redistribute with another.

Appeared in the September 18, 2017, print edition.

Editorial : Trump flirts with a new age of American timidity

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

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

September 17 at 7:19 PM

PRESIDENT TRUMP wants to keep Confederate monuments where they are, but he may be preparing the ideological justification for removing a far more important symbol of enduring American values: the Statue of Liberty. Having already cut refugee resettlement by more than half, compared with the Obama administration, officials close to Mr. Trump are pushing for a further draconian reduction, to levels not seen since the Cold War. If Mr. Trump backs such a proposal, the message to those fleeing persecution and violence would be to shelter in place — any place, as long as it's not the United States.

So much for welcoming the tired, huddled masses.

A report in the New York Times describes an initiative driven by White House senior policy adviser Stephen Miller that would whack annual refugee admittances below the current cap fixed by Mr. Trump of 50,000, already the lowest number since at least 1980 and less than half the 110,000 that President Barack Obama set in his last year in office.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

Mr. Miller is said to have urged a ceiling of 15,000 annual admittances, fewer than the number of new refugees fleeing persecution and violence *each day* — about 28,000, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. That hints at the administration's indifference to the world's refugees, who now number about 17 million

(not counting Palestinians). Half of them are children.

The stated rationales for further refugee cuts — concerns over terrorists sneaking in, and the costs involved — are not defensible. In fact, both the Obama and Trump administrations have tightened vetting for refugees, who are now the subject of exhaustive background checks despite the fact that very few terrorist attacks, in the United States or Europe, have been carried out by refugees. As for the cost, most is borne by private resettlement agencies.

In fact, the Trump administration is waging a multi-front crusade against legal as well as illegal immigration, in which the president's stated compassion for "dreamers" — young undocumented immigrants usually brought to the United States by their parents — is the exception that proves the rule. Mr. Trump backs drastically cutting levels of

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages). Activists take part in a demonstration organized by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society outside the U.S. Capitol on Sept. 14 in Washington. (Aaron P. Bernstein/Getty Images)

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

legal immigration. He is appealing to the Supreme Court to uphold his ban on immigrants from six mainly Muslim countries. He has intensified deportation sweeps targeting not only criminal immigrants, but also law-abiding migrants who have lived in this country for years.

By adding refugees — by definition the world's most beleaguered

**The
New York
Times**

Blow : Is Trump a White Supremacist?

Charles M. Blow
5-7 minutes

President Trump at a rally in Vienna, Ohio, in July. Doug Mills/The New York Times

"Donald Trump is a white supremacist who has largely surrounded himself w/ other white supremacists."

That was only one in a string of tweets on Sept. 11 by ESPN host Jemele Hill in which Hill goes on to say that Trump is "the most ignorant, offensive president of my lifetime," that he hired and courted white supremacists, that "His rise is a direct result of white supremacy," that "if he were not white, he never would have been elected." Hill insinuates that the Republican Party "has done nothing but endorse/promote white supremacy."

These tweets caused quite a stir. The White House perpetual lie-generator and press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, said that it was a fireable offense for ESPN. Sanders's statement, of course, was not without its own controversy. As AOL reported:

"The Democratic Coalition, an anti-Trump Super PAC, has filed an ethics complaint against White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders with the Office of Government Ethics for her comments calling on ESPN host Jemele Hill to be fired."

AOL continued:

"The group claims federal law

people — to its lengthy list of undesirables, the administration would conflate what is essentially a humanitarian and diplomatic program with its anti-immigrant agenda. As former homeland security secretary Michael Chertoff argued in The Post on Friday, gutting the refugee program subverts the United States' security and economic interests while

prohibits government employees from influencing 'a private entity's employment ... solely on the basis of partisan political affiliation.'"

Then on Friday, Trump himself weighed in, because obviously there are no more pressing matters that need his attention, oh like, say, North Korea continuing to launch missiles over Japan, for one.

Trump tweeted:

"ESPN is paying a really big price for its politics (and bad programming). People are dumping it in RECORD numbers. Apologize for untruth!"

This tweet, for me, changed the conversation. It moved the discussion from propriety and in-house rules of conduct by a brand, to a question of veracity. Was what Hill said untrue, as Trump's tweet suggests, or is Trump in fact a white supremacist who has surrounded himself with white supremacists and whose party courted white supremacists?

Two of those points can be quickly put to rest. First, there is no question that Trump has hired someone who was at least a booster of white supremacists: Steve Bannon. In a sinister act of double signaling, Bannon was hired as the Trump campaign's chief executive on the same day that Trump started his fake outreach to black voters in Milwaukee.

Also, while the Republican Party clearly stands for more than white supremacy and the promotion of that intellectually fallacious concept, the party has often turned a blind

eye to the racists in its midst and done far too little to extricate them.

But then the question remains: Is Trump himself a white supremacist?

This question is almost unanswerable in the absolute, but there is mounting circumstantial evidence pointing in a most disquieting direction.

First, we must submit that Trump is not particularly discerning in the administration of his insults. As The New York Times's Upshot pointed out in July, "Trump is on track to insult 650 people, places and things on Twitter by the end of his first term." He is often reflexive with his derisions, attacking those who criticize or condemn him. Many of Trump's lackeys laud his instinct to counterpunch. When Trump attacked MSNBC host Mika Brzezinski, Huckabee Sanders explained, "When the president gets hit, he's going to hit back harder."

They paint it as strength, although it is clearly weakness. It is a masking of fragility with aggression. And the traditionally marginalized — women, racial, religious and ethnic minorities — are treated to a particularly personal strain of Trump's venom. In Trump's eyes, Barack Obama wasn't simply a bad president, he was illegitimate and inferior, a person who couldn't possibly be as talented as the world thought he was. He questioned whether Obama had actually attended his prestigious colleges and insisted that Obama's memoir was too well-written for him to have written it, that it must have been written by a white man.

Then they quit it.

charities leaving Trump properties. As President Trump's actions and rhetoric grow more polarizing, his business empire is losing lucrative event business. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

For two years, a shelter for victims of domestic violence called Safe+Sound Somerset held its fundraiser golf tournament at Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster, N.J.

They loved it.

confident, welcoming country whose interests span the globe. By rolling back refugee admissions to levels negligible when measured against the need, the administration would accelerate Washington's retreat from the global stage and inaugurate a new age of American timidity.

Is Trump patriarchal and misogynistic? Definitely. But, what of white supremacy?

It is clear that Trump is hero among white supremacists: He panders to them, he is slow to condemn them and when that condemnation manifests, it is often forced and tepid. Trump never seems to be worried about offending anyone except Vladimir Putin and white supremacists.

What does that say about him? How can you take comfort among and make common cause with white supremacists and not assimilate to their sensibilities?

I say that it can't be done. If you are not completely opposed to white supremacy, you are quietly supporting it. If you continue to draw equivalencies between white supremacists and the people who oppose them — as Trump did once again last week — you have crossed the racial Rubicon and moved beyond quiet support to vocal support. You have made an allegiance and dug a trench in the war of racial hostilities.

Hill may have pushed into the realm of hyperbole with a few of her statements — it was Twitter after all — but I judge the spirit of her assessment to be true.

Either Trump is himself a white supremacist or he is a fan and defender of white supremacists, and I quite honestly am unable to separate the two designations.

**The
Washington
Post**

Trump's divisive presidency reshapes a key part of his private business (UNE)

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

12-16 minutes

As President Trump's actions and rhetoric grow more polarizing, his business empire is losing lucrative event business. The Post's David A. Fahrenthold looked at the trend of

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Then they quit it.

"Beautiful golf course. Beautiful facilities. We were treated well. But we couldn't go back," said Debbie Haroldsen, the charity's acting executive director. President Trump's campaign-trail comments about women and Mexicans had offended staff and clients. They found another course.

In Florida this year, the president's politics attracted a new client for one of his businesses. Steven M. Alembik, a conservative activist, is planning a \$600-per-seat gala at the Mar-a-Lago Club.

His logic: Trump helped Israel. So Alembik will help Trump in return.

"He's got Israel's back," Alembik said. "We've got his back."

Trump's divisive political career is reshaping a key — and previously apolitical — part of his business empire.

Trump-owned hotels and clubs have long made money by holding galas and other special events. Now, their clientele is changing. Trump's properties are attracting new customers who want something from him or his government.

But they're losing the kind of customers the business was originally built on: nonpolitical groups who just wanted to rent a room.

This summer, 19 charities canceled upcoming events at Mar-a-Lago — a major blow to that club's business — after the president said there were "fine people" among white supremacists, neo-Nazis and members of the alt-right protesting to preserve a Confederate statue in Charlottesville. Dozens of other clients have left since Trump entered the 2016 presidential race.

On Saturday, the latest cancellation: A triathlon for charity at Trump's Charlotte golf course, called "Tri at the Trump," was abruptly scrapped. Sign-ups were down this year, the organizer said, due to concerns over the name.

For the Trump Organization, a potentially troubling trend is emerging.

Before this year, many longtime Trump clients said they would return to use his clubs again — believing that quitting a Trump club would be a political act. Now, as Trump's presidency has grown more polarizing, some customers say they see it as a political act to stay.

"We are not a political organization," said Mike Levin, whose charity Harlem Lacrosse this year moved its golf tournament away from a Trump course in New York state, after going there for two prior years. "Given the current political environment, we opted to reschedule for a different course."

In all, Trump owns 12 golf courses in the United States — 11 on the East Coast, and one outside Los Angeles. He owns at least a partial stake in four hotels, in the District, Chicago, Las Vegas and New

York's SoHo. And he owns Mar-a-Lago and a winery resort outside Charlottesville.

To assess the state of Trump's hospitality business, The Washington Post reviewed public records, data released by the Trump Organization and social-media postings from Trump properties. The Post identified a sample of more than 200 groups that had rented out meeting rooms or golf courses at a Trump property since 2014.

Of those groups, 85 are no longer Trump customers. Many said they left for nonpolitical reasons. But 30 told The Post that they had left because of Trump's political career.

The Post provided its findings to the Trump Organization, which declined to provide a response or answer questions. A White House spokeswoman declined to comment, referring questions to the Trump Organization.

The Post's review could not determine if the Trump Organization's special-event business is growing or shrinking overall.

But it did show, clearly, that one part of that business is thriving. The business of political events.

For instance, in the 2014 election cycle, before Trump jumped into the presidential race, nine federal Republican candidates and committees reported patronizing Trump-owned properties.

Altogether, these groups spent \$32,499 over two years, less than Trump's clubs could take in from a single run-of-the-mill golf tournament.

This year, the figures are different.

At least 27 federal political committees — including Trump's reelection campaign — have flocked to his properties. They've spent \$363,701 in just seven months, according to campaign-finance reports. In addition, the Republican Governors Association paid more than \$408,000 to hold an event this spring at the Trump National Doral golf resort, according to tax filings, a gathering the group said was booked back in February 2015.

Trump International Hotel in Washington. (Evelyn Hockstein/for The Washington Post)

At Trump's D.C. hotel, there have also been a slew of events involving groups that have come to Washington to influence policy decisions.

Just last week, the hotel hosted the prime minister of Malaysia, who is the subject of a Justice Department

corruption probe, as well as the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, which wants more offshore drilling. The hotel was also scheduled to host an association of candy-makers, who want federal help in a long-running feud with the sugar industry.

In July, a trade group representing e-cigarette makers and vape shop owners brought about 150 people to the hotel. They paid \$285 per guest room. They also paid to rent a ballroom, and reserve the hotel's Lincoln Library, though the vapers wouldn't say how much they cost.

Ten days after the group checked out, it scored a victory.

An Obama-era regulation requiring stricter government oversight of e-cigarette products was put on hold by the Food and Drug Administration.

Tony Abboud, the executive director of the Vapor Technology Association, said in a recent interview that the FDA decision was based on the merits and unrelated to the group's choice of venue. He said the Trump hotel was chosen as a matter of convenience.

"We put this together very quickly," he said.

When asked whether the Trump hotel event had influenced the FDA's decision, an agency spokesman said that the announcement was the "culmination of months-long internal discussions" about how to reduce tobacco-related deaths.

Rentals from groups such as these helped Trump's D.C. hotel surpass its own revenue expectations.

Through the first four months of the year, the hotel turned a profit of \$1.97 million, according to documents reported by The Post last month. Before the election, the company had projected it would lose \$2.1 million in the same period, the documents show. The revenue from food and beverage sales — which includes special events — was part of that surprising performance. It came in 37 percent above expectations. President Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Fla. (Alex Brandon/AP)

Trump's politics was a draw for Alembik, the conservative Israel backer who decided recently to hold an event at Mar-a-Lago, the president's oceanfront club in Palm Beach.

Alembik said he will charge \$600 per ticket. He expects 700 guests. That's \$420,000. In theory, Alembik said, any leftover proceeds will go

to an Israeli charity called The Truth About Israel.

But, Alembik said, Trump's club will probably keep most of the money. He said he'd recently seen an estimate of the costs. He declined to say what the number was, but said: "My God, they're expensive. Holy crap."

"With what Mar-a-Lago charges," he said, "I don't think there's going to be much left over." Alembik was fine with the idea that he was putting money into the president's pocket: "Yeah, and the other ones are taking money out of his pocket," he said, meaning the charities that canceled after Charlottesville.

Alembik's event is unusual, in that he is explicit about using a ballroom rental as part of a political message to the president.

More broadly, however, many Trump clubs seem to be losing the customers that had been commonplace before.

That trend began in California in 2015, just after Trump said in his campaign announcement speech that Mexico was sending "rapists" to the United States. The L.A. Unified School District canceled a golf tournament. So did ESPN, the PGA, the L.A. Galaxy soccer team and the Union Rescue Mission.

The Post counted 11 special events at Trump's California course in 2014. Now, 10 of those clients are gone.

Those California departures made news.

But at other clubs, clients were also quietly deciding to leave.

"A lot of the children that are in our program are immigrant children, [and] we didn't want them to feel offended" by Trump's comments about Mexicans, said Debra Green, of a youth-sports charity called Jeremy's Heroes. For four years, her charity, named for a passenger who fought back against hijackers on Sept. 11, 2001, had used Trump's golf course in Colts Neck, N.J., for its charity fundraiser.

In 2016, the group didn't return.

That meant about \$50,000 in lost business for Trump's club.

"We would not have changed the venue, but for that happening," Green said. "The facilities, the service there, were all excellent."

At Trump's course in the Bronx, the drop is spelled out in figures provided to New York City, which owns the land under the course. The city data shows that the revenue from "outings" — events where the course is rented out by

outside groups — declined 30 percent from 2015 to 2016 and is headed down again this year.

Other courses appear to be experiencing declines. In Westchester County, N.Y., 14 of the 21 clients that The Post identified in 2014 are now gone.

In Colts Neck, N.J., 11 of 17 are gone. The losses included the Golf Classic of the Sisters of Mercy, a tournament that benefits retired nuns. “The sisters cannot participate in a political campaign or support a specific candidate,” a spokeswoman wrote.

Most of those departing cited nonpolitical reasons for their decisions — such as the end of a contract, the price of the rental or a need for more event space.

For the Trump Organization, some clubs are doing better than others. At Trump’s course outside Charlotte — one of just three courses located in counties Trump won in 2016 — a number of new events have sprung up since 2014.

But even there, the Trump name can be a drag for the club’s customers.

Like the organizer of “Tri at the Trump.”

“A lot of people wouldn’t participate because of that,” said Chuck McAllister, who runs the triathlon, referring to the Trump name. The triathlon had used that name for three prior years. This year was different. Participant numbers were far below the high of 325-plus, set before Trump won the GOP nomination.

McAllister initially tried Sept. 11 to resolve the controversy, first reported by the Charlotte Observer, by changing the race’s name to Tri for Good.

That wasn’t enough.

“I had some people sign up. And I had some people want out,” he told The Washington Post late in the week. “Probably a pretty even split.”

Finally, on Saturday, he canceled the event. The situation “became way [too] politicized,” McAllister

wrote in an email message. The main entrance to the Trump National Doral Miami Golf Shop. (Angel Valentin/for The Washington Post)

At Trump Doral, a golf club and resort outside Miami, The Post identified 18 business conferences or golf tournaments scheduled to be held at the property from mid-September through next May.

Many are sponsored by industry groups such as the Food Marketing Institute, which is hosting a conference for 1,000 food retailers and suppliers there in January. The group signed a contract to book the Doral back in April 2015, according to a spokeswoman.

A major defense contractor, L3 Technologies, just announced that it would hold its annual management meeting at the resort. A spokeswoman said the company chose Doral for a variety of logistical reasons unrelated to politics.

Last Tuesday, at Trump’s club in the New Jersey suburbs of Philadelphia, there was a tournament that epitomized the old

business model for his events business. A charity tied to the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team held a celebrity golf tournament, with players teeing off and then gathering for fancy food.

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It was the seventh year in a row the Flyers’ charity had come there.

It might be the last.

“We’ve made the decision that we will explore other options” for 2018, said Scott Tharp, the president of the Flyers’ charity, the Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation. He was worried about the tournament being seen as a political statement.

Next year, Tharp said, “It’s going to be very hard to replace this venue.”

Jonathan O’Connell, Drew Harwell, Anu Narayanswamy and Alice Crites contributed to this report.