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FRANCE – EUROPE

THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL

U.K. Police Probe Whether Bombing Suspect Built Device at Foster Home

Jenny Gross and Jason Douglas

4-6 minutes

Updated Sept. 20, 2017 4:54 a.m. ET

LONDON—Police are investigating whether an 18-year-old refugee suspected of planting a bomb on a London subway car practiced building the device in a shed in his foster home's backyard, a Western security official said.

Investigators over the weekend searched the house in Sunbury-on-Thames, a London suburb where neighbors said the young man arrested in connection with the attack had been living. The Western security official confirmed neighbors' description of him as a refugee from the Middle East. Police haven't released his name.

Investigators are sifting through the man's online and phone records for clues on how he was allegedly radicalized and how he learned to build the hydrogen-peroxide-based explosive TATP bomb, the official said.

Police arrested a third man, 25, on Tuesday and two others, a 48-year-old man and a 30-year-old man, on Wednesday in Newport, Wales, in connection with

the attack, bringing the total in custody to five. On Saturday, police arrested a 21-year-old man in West London.

"Detectives are carrying out extensive inquiries to determine the full facts behind the attack," said Commander Dean Haydon, head of the Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism Command.

The improvised device partially exploded on a crowded train during the Friday morning rush hour, leaving 30 people injured in the fifth terrorist attack to hit the U.K. since March.

Triacetone triperoxide, or TATP, bombs have been used in recent Islamist terrorist attacks in Europe, including this year in Manchester, when suicide bomber Salman Abedi killed 22 people outside an Ariana Grande concert.

British Prime Minister Theresa May was expected to say Wednesday in a speech at the United Nations General Assembly that technology companies must develop ways to take down terrorist material within one to two hours.

"Defiance alone is not enough," she will say in her keynote speech, according to her office. "As prime minister, I have visited too many hospitals and seen too many

innocent people murdered in my country."

Instruction manuals available on the internet or on message groups have paved the way for extremists to build low-tech bombs composed of household items. Photos of the London subway device showed a white bucket in a bag with wires hanging out of it.

"People don't need to go out to Libya or Syria to learn how to do things," the Western security official said. "The role of the internet is becoming more crucial to our investigations."

It is unclear when the young man arrived in the U.K. and to what extent he may have been connected to terrorist cells.

A number of terrorist assaults in Europe in recent years were committed by attackers who arrived in the West after fleeing war or persecution in their home countries, a trend that has tested public support for welcoming new arrivals. The U.K. has taken in far fewer refugees in recent years than other countries in Europe, like Sweden and Germany.

Refugees and other migrants can present a problem for authorities who are already struggling to

monitor and intercept homegrown terrorists, security experts say.

"There's no effective way to screen who comes into the country and much less to monitor what happens to them after they settle in," said Bob Quick, formerly a senior counterterrorism officer at Scotland Yard. "We simply have no way of knowing. There's no blood test for terrorism."

There are more than 3,000 known Islamist extremists in Britain, and U.K. intelligence services have the resources to follow only a small percentage full-time, a British intelligence official said.

Otso Iho, senior analyst at Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, said European authorities are trying to monitor incoming individuals with high-risk profiles. But "the number of individuals on the watch list is so large that there simply are not the resources available to monitor everyone," he said.

—Georgi Kantchev contributed to this article.

Write to Jenny Gross at jenny.gross@wsj.com and Jason Douglas at jason.douglas@wsj.com

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The
New York
Times

How Martin Schulz's Campaign Against Angela Merkel Fizzled

Christopher F. Schuetz

9-11 minutes

Martin Schulz of the Social Democratic Party announced his candidacy for chancellor earlier this year to much enthusiasm, but he now lags badly in the polls in Germany. Omer Messinger/Getty Images

WÜRSELEN, Germany — What happened to Martin Schulz?

Mr. Schulz, 61, the candidate of Germany's Social Democratic Party, was once the only person who had a real chance of taking the

chancellorship from Angela Merkel after nearly 12 years.

He had left his job as president of the European Parliament to take her on. He won his party's backing in March with 100 percent support. Some early polls had him beating Ms. Merkel. The German news media called the sudden burst of enthusiasm the Schulz effect.

Fast forward, just days from the Sept. 24 election, and that hype has fizzled. Ms. Merkel's party leads Mr. Schulz's Social Democrats 36 percent to 23 in the latest polls. No one gives him even an outside chance of winning.

Many, even within his own party, say Mr. Schulz became a victim of overly inflated expectations and

tactical missteps. But there has also been a larger problem for his party — having its independent voice and identity subsumed after joining a coalition dominated by Ms. Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, or C.D.U.

Four years of governing together with Ms. Merkel has left the Social Democratic Party, or S.P.D., in the awkward position of having to criticize the very government it is a part of. It is hard now to be a real opposition party.

"The S.P.D. missed an opportunity to bring the politics of social democratic values against a C.D.U. that is not as conservative as it once was," said Prof. Emanuel Richter,

political scientist at RWTH Aachen University, a research university.

The one debate between Mr. Schulz and Ms. Merkel was widely criticized for its lack of actual debate. The roughly 16 million television viewers were instead treated to a polite exchange of policy ideas, plenty of nodding of heads and only very limited glimpses of daylight between the two candidates, let alone real friction.

The press called the encounter a duet, rather than a duel.

"Merkel was successful in not getting into a real election debate," said Tarik Abou-Chadi, a researcher at Humboldt University in Berlin, who studies electoral competition.

When it comes to the last four years of their governing together, “many of the good things that happened are being credited to the C.D.U.,” Mr. Abou-Chadi said, referring to Ms. Merkel’s party.

But some of Mr. Schulz’s problems are of his own making, analysts said.

Having spent five years as president of the European Parliament and more than two decades working on broader European matters rather than specifically in German politics — something once seen as a potential advantage for him — Mr. Schulz has taken pains to shed the image of a globalist interloper and present himself as a man of the people.

In many ways, he is. He likes to talk about his hometown, Würselen, a former coal-mining town north of Aachen, just miles from the Dutch and Belgium borders.

“Of course, Germany is a wealthy country, but not all people in our country are wealthy,” Mr. Schulz said in a televised debate with Chancellor Angela Merkel. It was one of the few opportunities he had to challenge her. Maja Hitij/Getty Images

He often mentions his neighbors, the local mosque, the bookstore he ran and the city hall, where at 31, he became the region’s youngest mayor ever.

For a time, it looked like a strategy that could work.

Mr. Schulz’s enthusiastic “Bürger Nähe,” or closeness to the people, and his emphasis on social issues were seen as potential qualities that might expose chinks in Ms. Merkel’s impressive armor.

Unlike Ms. Merkel, who holds a doctorate in physics, Mr. Schulz never graduated from high school, having dropped

out to pursue a soccer career. He has made public a youthful period of being lost before learning the trade of book dealer and setting up his own little shop in Würselen that is now owned and still run by a woman he trained nearly three decades ago.

At 19, he joined the Social Democrats and got into city politics. In his hometown, Mr. Schulz is remembered mostly fondly, whether for his time as a mayor or because of the relative fame his candidacy has brought.

“In the 11 years he spent here, he dealt directly with the problems, the challenges and the lives of people here in Germany,” Arno Nelles, Würselen’s current mayor, said.

According to a recent study, perhaps the only category in which Mr. Schulz outperforms Ms. Merkel is the perception that he is “closer to the problems of people.”

“Of course, Germany is a wealthy country, but not all people in our country are wealthy,” Mr. Schulz said in the debate with Ms. Merkel, one of the few areas where he directly challenged her.

But some analysts say Mr. Schulz should have put more emphasis on his tenure in the European Union post and less on his experience as a small-time mayor, nearly two decades ago.

“You have this big politician who speaks five languages, but you keep on hearing about the mayor of Würselen,” said Mr. Abou-Chadi of Humboldt University. “He does do well with a certain class of people, but it’s no longer enough.”

Indeed, after the party’s ephemeral success in polls early this year, the Social Democrats lost three state elections, most painfully in North Rhine-Westphalia, a bellwether

state with a history of voting for Mr. Schulz’s party.

Although few fault Mr. Schulz for the results — German state elections generally turn on regional issues — the results did much to halt his momentum.

“The Schulz effect was actually only visible in opinion polls,” said Marcel Lewandowsky, a researcher at the Helmut Schmidt University-University of the Federal Armed Forces in Hamburg.

Mr. Schulz left his job as president of the European Parliament to challenge Ms. Merkel. In the campaign, he preferred to emphasize his experience as a small-town mayor. Mathieu Cugnot/European Pressphoto Agency

While there was real early enthusiasm for Mr. Schulz when voters saw the possibility of an upset, as soon as that looked less likely, their attention drifted, Mr. Lewandowsky said.

At the height of Mr. Schulz’s appeal in March, Marcus Gross at INWT Statistics predicted that Mr. Schulz had a 30 percent chance of becoming chancellor. As the vote nears, Mr. Schulz is limping into the homestretch.

“Right now the chance that S.P.D. beats the C.D.U., or that Martin Schulz becomes chancellor, is at less than 1 percent,” Mr. Gross said.

Mr. Richter, the political scientist at RWTH Aachen, noted that “the S.P.D. is now polling exactly the same as it was before it nominated Martin Schulz.”

“Twenty percent in the polls has really become normal for them,” he said.

That is a dangerous place to be for the country’s main opposition party. But it reveals a narrowing of its

traditional political terrain since the Social Democrats tacked toward the center in the late 1990s under their last chancellor, Gerhard Schröder.

After nearly 12 years in office, Ms. Merkel has by now successfully co-opted much of the same space.

While the personal popularity of Ms. Merkel, and Germany’s economic progress under her, always made a victory by Mr. Schulz a long shot, some still wonder how his early momentum might have been preserved.

“He might have been too slow in presenting his platform,” ventured Georg Gauger, who at 20 is one of the youngest S.P.D. campaign directors in the country.

But critics from the left say that, just days from the finish line, it was still hard to know what the party’s candidate stands for.

“They don’t really know what they want,” said Pascal Meiser, a parliamentary candidate for Die Linke, a leftist party.

Last week, Mr. Schulz named the four conditions — equal access to education, gender pay parity, secure and sufficient pensions and the protection of German and European values — that he would insist on in coalition negotiations.

He quickly had to quell the idea that he was opening the door for talks as a junior partner to Ms. Merkel yet again.

He was still running for chancellor, he insisted. If Ms. Merkel wished to stay in the government, she should take a post as vice chancellor — a role usually reserved for leaders of smaller coalition parties, he told disbelieving journalists.

“Let the others win the opinion polls,” Mr. Schulz said. “I don’t care, I’m fighting until the last second for every voter.”

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

Dougherty : Angela Merkel & Emmanuel Macron Won’t Save the EU

6-7 minutes

Later this week, Germans are very likely to reelect Angela Merkel as chancellor. Mainstream pundits will take a strong Merkel victory, add it to the one for Emmanuel Macron in France earlier this year, and tell us a story: After the shocks of Brexit and Donald Trump, populism is in retreat. Maybe it was just an Anglo-American phenomenon. But on Continental Europe, things are going better. Europe’s economy is growing, and the grand visions of liberal internationalism can proceed again. Now is the time to make sure the dragon is really dead.

The editorial writers have already written up an agenda for Angela Merkel and how she will reform the eurozone and the European Union. This, they say, is how she will build her legacy as a great European stateswoman. All the sensible people now recognize that the EU’s obvious defects of construction were the irritants that inflamed the populist revolt. (Why didn’t they recognize it before now? Oh, let’s not get bogged down in the past.) We can fix Europe.

Par exemple, the aspiring European superstate allows freedom of movement between member states, but it has no unified policy of border

control, no body for controlling entry into the European Union. This problem is currently making the EU more unpopular by the day in Italy, which struggles to handle the inflow of migration across the Mediterranean. Then there are the big fiscal design problems. The EU has a central bank for the countries that use the euro currency, but these states have no united fiscal policy, and mechanisms for bailout or fiscal relief barely exist. Hence all that unpleasantness in Greece, Portugal, and Ireland a few years back.

Mujtaba Rahman, the managing director for Europe at Eurasia

Group, a political-risk consultancy, cautions that much will depend on Merkel’s coalition partners, but lays out the conventional thinking this way:

After a rocky 12 months menaced by populist parties, core Europe suddenly feels as if it is on the march again. The arrival of Emmanuel Macron in the Elysée Palace, Brexit, the growing transatlantic divide and Angela Merkel’s likely reelection as chancellor have all provided sudden impetus to fire up the Franco-German motor and bolster the EU — especially the eurozone.

The generally accepted thesis is that everything depends on Macron. The French president will need to overhaul France's labor markets and improve its fiscal situation as a precondition for any Franco-German cooperation over eurozone reforms.

Rahman is correct. I've heard as much from nearly a dozen European and American policymakers, diplomats, and influencers. Once Macron does his part to wean the French off their accreted worker protections and labor rules from the 20th century, a diplomat told me, Germany will have "the capacity" and "the opportunity" to reform Europe for the benefit of all.

Significantly, though, nobody says that Merkel will have a strong motive or incentive to do so. It is more of a plot device: How will European problems be solved? Macron will free the French economy and then there will be a *Deus Ex Merkela*.

This story underestimates the



Not mad, just adventurous: Cyclist completes trip around the world in 80 days

The Christian Science Monitor

5-6 minutes

September 19, 2017 Paris—As he got off his bike in front of the Arc de Triomphe, Mark Beaumont looked remarkably fresh for a man who had just cycled around the globe in less than 80 days, shattering the world record.

After pedaling for 16 hours a day through 16 countries, Mr. Beaumont arrived on Monday evening to a welcome from family and friends at the spot from which he had set off before dawn 78 days, 14 hours, and 40 minutes earlier.

The time it took him to ride his journey's 18,032 miles "were definitely the longest two and a half months of my life," he said. "I've taken myself beyond anything I've ever done physically and mentally."

"He has always had an adventurous spirit," explains his mother, Una, when asked if her boy had always been a bit mad.

Beaumont's route led from Paris to Beijing, via Russia and Mongolia, and then to Australia and New Zealand. He cycled across Canada and the United States before flying to Lisbon and the final mountainous stage to Paris.

Sleeping less than five hours a night, he covered about 240 miles a

European capacity for self-sabotage. Rahman says Europe was "menaced by populist parties." What he is describing is actually voters and citizens expressing their dissatisfaction with the current leadership class of Europe. The high-handedness of Rahman's judgment reflects the high-handedness of European leaders, the same quality that brought them to this crisis.

Rahman says Europe was "menaced by populist parties." What he is describing is actually voters and citizens expressing their dissatisfaction with the current leadership class of Europe.

It was under the current liberal internationalist management of the Union that David Cameron had to return to the British public and say that he'd won nothing from Brussels in pre-Brexit negotiations. No concessions on control of Britain's

day. That's 25 miles more than the distance from New York to Boston. Every day for 79 days.

"You just have to decide that you are not going to stop," says Beaumont. "Once you have taken that option off the table, it's simple."

Precision and discipline

Beaumont, a Scot, has been doing this sort of thing for a long time. As a 12-year-old schoolboy he cycled across Scotland; three years later he rode the length of Britain.

He has been round the world before, on his own and unsupported; it took him 194 days in 2008 – a record then. He has also cycled from Alaska to Chile and from Cairo to Cape Town. He nearly drowned in 2012 when his boat capsized while he was trying to row the Atlantic in 30 days as part of a six-man crew.

His earlier expeditions were real adventures; he traveled alone carrying his own equipment, often camping and cooking his own food. There was time to stop and chat with people he met on the way.

His latest successful record bid, however, left nothing to serendipity or to chance. Though his goal was inspired by a fantasy, Phileas Fogg's journey in Jules Verne's novel "Around the World in Eighty Days," Beaumont planned his operation with military precision, knowing it would demand iron discipline.

borders, not even after Angela Merkel invited more than a million migrants to the heart of Europe in one year. Now the European Union is about to lose 10 percent of its annual budget when the United Kingdom leaves.

Why would Merkel reform the economic structure of the European Union, which has kept German living standards rising, the German middle class thriving, and German exports competitive in Europe and beyond? Out of sheer gratitude to Emmanuel Macron for doing what she believes is the right thing for France on its own terms?

The president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, gave his "state of the union" address last week. There was some mention of new financial structures for Europe, but far more important was his call for the dramatic expansion of the euro as the currency of the entire European Union. This expansion would further bolster the

German model of widely shared prosperity within Germany.

It was Angela Merkel's canny leadership for Germany that helped to create the populist mess throughout the rest of Europe. The lesson that she and German citizens have learned from all the political turmoil of the last decade is that Germany was right, and until Europe becomes more like Germany, the real Germany has to keep on dominating the Union and taking the biggest rake from the table for the service.

There is a good chance that Emmanuel Macron will not be able to reform the French labor market. And if the only hope for the liberal international order is Angela Merkel, it may be in worse shape than anyone thought.

— Michael Brendan Dougherty is a senior writer at National Review.

It took a lot of back-up, too. Beaumont was accompanied by two support vehicles and a support team comprising a performance manager, a mechanic, and a navigator/logistics organizer among others.

The rules, set by the Guinness Book of Records, stipulate that contenders should ride for at least 18,000 miles through two points on opposite sides of the globe. They can choose their route and fly between continents. Beaumont won two awards on Monday – for the fastest circumnavigation of the globe and for "the furthest distance cycled by a human in one month," as the Guinness Book of Records official put it as she presented Beaumont with his certificate.

"It's a marvelous, marvelous achievement," said Lindsay Whitelaw, founder of Artemis Investments, Beaumont's main sponsor, as he waited at the finish line. "He wanted to show what you can achieve if you are focused, that if you put your mind to something you can really change things. His message is that you can have your own 80 days."

'Getting to the next horizon'

Beaumont came off his bike three times, breaking a tooth and apparently fracturing an elbow in one nasty fall occasioned by a Russian pothole, but the hardest

part of the challenge, he said, was sleep deprivation.

"You spend long, long hours in your head, battling," he recalled. "There were definitely moments when I wondered if the race would carry on. I plumbed the depths."

He coped by breaking his challenge into chunks and tackling the immediate task at hand. "Looking at the big picture of the world was really scary," he said. "It was just a question of getting to the next horizon."

Rising at 3:30 in the morning and in the saddle by 4 a.m., Beaumont rode for four-hour spells, with 30-minute breaks in between. That system meant that he could always concentrate on a near-term, reachable goal.

Cycling around the world in less than 80 days would pose problems for most of us; it was "simple" for Beaumont. But tasks that are simple for the rest of us are more complicated for him. For the past 11 weeks, Beaumont has scarcely taken more than the few paces he needed to fall into bed. He has got out of the habit of walking.

"I've been riding my bike from four in the morning 'til 10 at night," he says. "Just taking the dog for a walk is going to be strange."

INTERNATIONAL



Citing North Korea, Macron calls on Trump to honor Iran nuclear deal

By Christiane Amanpour, Chief International Correspondent, and Hilary Clarke, CNN

Updated 3:52 PM ET, Tue September 19, 2017

Source: CNN

Macron calls on US to keep Iran deal 01:59

Story highlights

- French leader says it would be a mistake for the US to withdraw from Iran nuclear deal
- "If we talk of a military solution, we speak about a lot of victims," he says of North Korea

New York (CNN) French President Emmanuel Macron firmly rejected any military solution to the North Korean crisis and warned against scrapping the nuclear agreement with Iran, in an exclusive interview Tuesday with CNN.

Macron warned that Iran risked becoming a rogue nuclear state like North Korea without the deal.

"North Korea is a very good illustration of a 'what if' regarding Iran," he told CNN shortly before his maiden speech at the UN General Assembly.

"Why? Because we stopped everything with North Korea years and years ago. We stopped any monitoring, any discussions with them, and what's the result? They will probably get a nuclear weapon. I don't want to replicate that situation with Iran."

Macron spoke to CNN during and after what was also President Donald Trump's debut address at the United Nations on Tuesday. The US leader again called dictator Kim Jong Un "rocket man" and threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea.

Macron warned against harsh rhetoric. "My point is not to increase pressure by issuing words against words," he said.

"We have to decrease tension and protect people in the region."

Any military solution to North Korea's drive to develop ballistic nuclear missiles would result in tragedy: "Look at the map, if we talk of a military solution we speak about a lot of victims. Building peace is what we have to do in this region," Macron said, speaking in English.

Macron said North Korea was a good example of how not to do things, and compared the example of the East Asian nation with the nuclear agreement with Iran, which Trump has described as "one of the worst" deals the United States has ever made and has threatened to tear up.

Macron said it would be a "big mistake" for the United States to withdraw from the agreement with Iran. "I don't think this Iran deal, this nuclear deal with Iran, is (the be-all and end-all) of everything to do with Iran. If President Trump considers it is not sufficient, I do agree with that. (But) we have this deal.

"I think that the outcome of this deal is that now we have the monitoring process with international urgency following the situation, and I think it is better than nothing. Why? Because if we stop with this deal ... if we just stop with the nuclear agreement, we will enter into a situation very similar to the North Korean situation."

Macron meets with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Monday in New York.

The 2015 nuclear agreement between Tehran, the United States, the European Union and other partners led to the lifting of most international sanctions against Iran in return for curbs on its nuclear program. As an EU country and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, France has been a vocal supporter of the deal.

"We need this framework -- if we stop with this agreement, what do you propose, nothing?" he asked.

Macron said the international community needed also to focus on developing a new strategy with Iran regarding the development of the country's ballistic missiles. "I want to know more about this strategy. We have to control it because it is a threat for the whole region -- we have to open discussions post-2025," when the deal runs out, he said.

Climate change agreement

Macron also said France will do all it can to convince Trump to reverse his stated decision to pull the United States out of the Paris accord to halt rising global temperatures.

"That's his choice and I do respect his choice, and he was elected on the basis of such a decision, but I do regret this decision, and I do want to convince him to come back to this agreement because for me that's the core agreement for climate," he said.

Macron said the hurricanes that have been pounding Caribbean islands, including French and US territories, were "the direct result of carbon dioxide emissions."

The Paris climate accord was hailed as a landmark international deal when 194 countries, including the United States, EU and China, signed up to sweeping pledges to halt global warming at a UN meeting in the French capital in late 2015.

The United States is the second-biggest polluter behind China, and its potential exit has raised questions over whether the goals set by the agreement can still be met.

"The US is a very great contributor in terms (of carbon emissions)," Macron said. "If you don't fix the situation in the US, then you are not credible to tell the others what to do."

Last week, Trump confirmed his long-stated wish to withdraw from the Paris agreement unless there are major changes to the carbon emissions pact.

Macron grabbed international headlines in June, and reaffirmed his commitment to multilateralism and fighting climate change during a televised speech when he mocked Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" with his own call to "Make the planet great again."

Speech at UN General Assembly

Earlier Tuesday, Macron delivered his first official address before the UN General Assembly, where he reiterated his points about Iran, North Korea and climate change.

He also called for an end to Myanmar's military campaign that has driven some 400,000 Rohingya Muslims from the country, describing their plight as ethnic cleansing.

The French President made a moving case for the plight of refugees.

"The refugee, the displaced person, the person we sadly term the migrant, is today sadly, the symbol of our era, the symbol of our world where there are no barriers to the onwards march of despair," he said. "We need, we must change the road of need to the road of freedom."

Macron also urged a political settlement in Syria.

"Syrian people have now suffered enough at the international community to not acknowledge its collective failure," Macron said. "... We must act for peace in Syria. And we must also act against Islamic terrorism. We must fight against terrorism in Syria, in Iraq."

And finally, he called for the protection of journalists.

"We must protect the liberty of those who think, who express themselves, and we must preserve the freedom of the press."

CNN's Christiane Amanpour wrote and reported from New York, and Hilary Clarke wrote from London. CNN's Chandrika Narayan contributed to this report.



4-5 minutes

Macron Issues Sharp Rebuttal to Trump at U.N. (online)

Farnaz Fassihi

Sept. 19, 2017 6:25 p.m. ET

UNITED NATIONS—French President Emmanuel Macron delivered an emphatic defense of

multilateral diplomacy at the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, disagreeing with earlier comments by U.S. President

Donald Trump that nations should put their own interests first.

"We have allowed the idea to proliferate that multilateralism is a

kind of game, a game for diplomats sitting around a table," Mr. Macron said. "Today, more than ever before, we need multilateralism" to address global issues ranging from war to climate change.

In his speech, Mr. Macron openly disagreed with Mr. Trump on three key policy issues: the North Korea crisis, the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and climate change.

On North Korea, Mr. Macron said Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic missile provocations are an existential threat to the world but that France's responsibility is to work with China and Russia to resolve the crisis politically and bring North Korea to the negotiating table.

"France rejects escalation and will not close any door to dialogue," Mr. Macron said. Mr. Trump took a more aggressive posture in his speech earlier, saying the U.S. would "totally destroy" North Korea if forced to defend itself or its allies.



Mr. Macron also called on the

France's Emmanuel Macron: No Renegotiation for Climate Deal

Tara John

2 minutes

French President Emmanuel Macron threw down the gauntlet to President Trump on the Paris climate agreement on Tuesday, saying the environmental accord will not be renegotiated to favor the U.S.

During his maiden speech at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, Macron said

U.S. not to abandon the Iran nuclear deal and said at a news conference after his speech that he had told Mr. Trump in private a day earlier that the deal was working and that Washington should remain committed.

"I don't understand what the substitute plan is. If we simply throw away this agreement, we can't replace it," Mr. Macron told reporters. He said he doesn't want to find himself in a "no man's land" where Iran is free to develop nuclear weapons with no international monitoring if the deal were canceled.

Mr. Macron's position on Iran falls in line with what's been said by four other world powers that are signatories to the deal. The U.K., Germany, China and Russia all said they want to stick with the agreement.

Mr. Macron said he advocates an approach that would preserve the Iran deal but pressure Iran with sanctions to curb its ballistic missile

program and its policies in the Middle East.

The Paris agreement on climate change marked another area of disagreement between Paris and Washington. Mr. Trump did not discuss climate change in his U.N. address, although he mentioned the suffering of American people from recent hurricanes in Texas and Florida, events that some scientists believe are becoming more severe.

Mr. Macron, in contrast, said the "planet will not negotiate with us." He said he fully respects the decision of the U.S. regarding its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement but said the door would be open to a U.S. reversal and that France would work with all governments to implement the accord.

In their prospective speeches, Messers Trump and Macron highlighted competing themes that have emerged from this year's gathering of world leaders: multilateralism versus nationalism, or engagement versus sovereignty.

Analysts said Mr. Trump's speech, and the approach he outlined, left an opening for Mr. Macron to fill.

Mr. Trump's speech "seemed strangely short on calls for partnership, which has been a U.S. strategy at the U.N. since its founding," said Jon Alterman, vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "While the president didn't attack the institution [of the U.N.], he also didn't make much pretense of trying to lead the member states."

Mr. Macron said at his news conference that Mr. Trump "has his position, but we have disagreements. We each have our own beliefs and positions. History will judge us on Iran and on North Korea and on climate."

Write to Farnaz Fassihi at farnaz.fassihi@wsj.com

"[the deal] can be improved, we can have new contributions, but we will not backtrack." Of the accord, he said, "it binds us. It brings together us." His speech comes after reports suggest that Trump's administration will following through on the President's promise to withdraw from the accord, unless a more favorable agreement was given to the U.S.

Macron firmly rejected escalation with North Korea and said France would "not close any door to dialogue" with the country. He also warned that renouncing the Iran nuclear agreement, which was

signed by the Obama administration and five other nations two years ago, would be a "grave error." "This is a good agreement, an agreement that's essential to peace" Macron said. Earlier, Trump had called the deal "an embarrassment to the United States."

Multilateralism was a major theme of his speech. Macron said the world's greatest problems, from climate change to the problems of "unregulated capitalism," could only be solved by nations working together. "We can only try and address those challenges through

multilateralism, not through the law of the survival of the fittest" he said.

His comments are in direct contrast to U.S. President Donald Trump, who stressed the importance of nationalism and sovereignty at the UNGA. Trump, who was also addressing the UN for the first time, threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea if the U.S. and its allies were forced to defend itself.



French president: Paris climate deal 'will not be renegotiated'

Henry

2 minutes

French President Emmanuel Macron reiterated Tuesday that the Paris climate agreement "will not be renegotiated," despite calls to do so from the Trump administration.

Macron during his speech to the United Nations General

Assembly defended the 2015 climate accord, saying "we won't go back" on the agreement.

The French president added that he "respects" Trump's decision to pull the United States out of the climate deal unless he can get a better deal.

Trump in June said he would pull the U.S. out of the deal, which envisions a 26 percent to 28 percent reduction in the country's greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. He opened the door to redoing the

deal, though many world leaders have rejected that proposal.

Macron is among the loudest critics of Trump's decision. In the days following the announcement, he invited "engineers, entrepreneurs, responsible citizens who were disappointed by the decision of the president of the United States" to move to France and released a video fact-checking the Trump administration's talking points on the Paris agreement.

The White House denied reports earlier this week that it would not pull out of the deal after all. Gary Cohn, Trump's top economic adviser, told foreign climate officials during a Monday meeting that the administration is still planning to withdraw from the agreement, something that cannot happen until 2020 at the earliest.

Trump did not discuss the Paris agreement or climate change during his speech to the General Assembly earlier on Tuesday.



Iran nuclear deal drives wedge between US and France

6-7 minutes

President Donald Trump meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in New York. (REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque)

The presidents of the United States and France both addressed the United Nations General Assembly for the first time on Tuesday, and

both took divergent views when it came to the 2015 nuclear agreement reached between five

U.N. permanent members and Germany.

While President Donald Trump devoted much of his Assembly address to condoning the Obama-era deal, referring to it as an "embarrassment to the United States," Emmanuel Macron defended France's role in it, doubling down on both the U.N. floor and again in a media address afterwards.

"I can understand President Trump thinks this deal is not perfect," he said, adding that the uncertainty should instead signal them to work together.

President Donald Trump, left, shaking hands with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace in Paris, in July. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

Macron advocated that further sanctions should certainly be ordered if Iran

does not comply with the terms, but feared tossing out the current agreement would leave the world "with nothing" to stop the Middle East nation from developing a dangerous nuclear arsenal.

"We know what nothing does," he said. "Nothing is what we have with North Korea."

Macron was met with some skepticism from various world reporters, who pinned him for his "friendship" with Trump, of which he remained unflustered.

On the issue of climate change, Macron remained firm that it was a "moral, economic and social necessity" and expressed a desire to continue talking to Trump in the hopes he "comes back" to the Paris Agreement.

The two western countries also appear to have contrasting stances with regards to the Kurdish referendum slated to take place on

Friday, in which the semiautonomous region of Iraq intends to vote on whether it should totally diverge from Baghdad's reign. The U.S. State Department has remained staunch in its insistence that the vote should not go ahead, joining most of the international community in condemning its timing. The State Department believes the vote threatens the security situation inside the fragile country.

Nonetheless, Macron noted that France would not oppose the forthcoming vote.

French President Emmanuel Macron in July. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

"The Kurds and France have a longstanding relationship. France has lots of respect for people who defend their values and their history," he said. "If this referendum is held, I hope it leads to the proper representation of Kurds in

government and within the framework of the (Iraqi) Constitution."

He also called for Kurdish President Masoud Barzani to "transform the referendum" into one that would seek greater protections for all minorities in the embattled nation.

But despite the prominent differences of view between France and America on policy stances, Macron insisted that the U.S. remains an "historic partner, now and in the future."

Hollie McKay has been a FoxNews.com staff reporter since 2007. She has reported extensively from the Middle East on the rise and fall of terrorist groups such as ISIS in Iraq. Follow her on twitter at @holliesmckay



France's Macron defends Iran nuclear deal and says climate pact is not up for renegotiation

Alexandra Zavis

In a pointed rejection of President Trump's "America first" approach to foreign policy, French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday urged world leaders to join together to confront global challenges, including war, terrorism, immigration and climate change.

"Today, more than ever, we need multilateralism," Macron said in his maiden address to the United Nations General Assembly. "Why? Because our challenges are global."

Macron said he "profoundly respects" Trump's decision to withdraw from a landmark agreement reached in Paris in 2015 to fight global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But although he said the deal could be improved, he emphasized, "This accord will not be renegotiated."

"The future of the world is that of our planet, which is in the process of taking its revenge against the foolishness of men," he said, referring to recent hurricanes that brought devastation to parts of the Caribbean, Texas and Florida.

Macron's appeal for collective action and dialogue between nations was in sharp contrast to a speech delivered by Trump, in which he decried a landmark nuclear disarmament deal reached with Iran in 2015 as "an embarrassment to the United States" and threatened North Korea with "total destruction."

North Korea's recent nuclear and missile tests present the world with an "existential" threat, Macron said. "Our responsibility, with all our partners, including China, is to bring it back to the negotiating table."

Macron hailed the agreement reached between Iran and six world powers, including the U.S., as a "solid, robust and verifiable" way to ensure the Islamic Republic does not also arm itself with nuclear weapons.

"To denounce it would be a grave error," he said. "Because it is a good deal, essential to peace at a time where the risk of an infernal spiral cannot be excluded."



Macron Uses UN Pedestal to Rebut Trump on Iran, Climate Deals

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5-6 minutes

By

September 19, 2017, 4:17 PM EDT

- French president defends multilateralism 2 hours after Trump
- Macron says would be 'grave error' to quit Iran accord

French President Emmanuel Macron used his inaugural appearance at the United Nations General Assembly to offer an almost a point-by-point rebuke to another first-timer: U.S. President

Donald Trump, who spoke two hours earlier.

Macron insisted the world's challenges were best met by working together, not alone, and he ruled out any renegotiation of the Paris climate accord, saying the rest of the world will go ahead with or without the U.S. He warned that Trump's threats to exit the Iran nuclear accord would make the world more dangerous, and said brandishing military threats against North Korea was "impetuous" and counter-productive.

"Our challenges are global, and more than ever we need multilateralism," Macron said during his 35-minute address to the assembly. "Walls don't protect us; what protects us is our joint willingness to change history. We are all linked."

Earlier in the day, Trump ripped into the Iran accord and warned he'd destroy North Korea if they threatened the U.S., and he avoided any mention the Paris carbon emissions accord from which he's begun the formal process of withdrawal. The dueling speeches -- aides to Macron said he retouched his speech at the last moment to respond to Trump's -- were the latest episode in a complicated relationship between the two men.

The two leaders have clashed on issues such as climate but seem to have developed a close working relationship, sealed during a friendly visit by Trump to France's Bastille Day parade July 14 that so pleased Trump that he's said he wants to replicate it in the U.S.

Read more: Macron Woos Trump With Parisian Splendor in European Lesson

At a later news conference, Macron said that Trump respects leaders who make their differences clear. He said he shares many views with Trump, and that their countries work closely on security and terrorism, but won't hold back on areas where he thinks the U.S. president was wrong.

Macron said in his speech that questioning the Iran nuclear accord "without proposing anything to replace it is a grave error." He went on to ask: "If we denounce the accord, do we better manage nuclear proliferation? I don't think so."

Trump, who today called the Iran nuclear accord "one of the worst ever," faces an Oct. 15 deadline to

inform Congress whether the U.S. will continue to certify Iran's compliance. The International Atomic Energy Agency has found Iran to be meeting its responsibilities under the 2015 accord, which capped the country's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

On North Korea, Macron said "you only need to look at the map" to see why there isn't a military solution to North Korea's nuclear tests. "We

are in a geography where a military intervention would be very complex, an area that is densely populated," he said at his news conference.

Special 'Debt'

In an interview that ran on CNN as he was giving his news conference in New York, Macron said he "regrets" Trump's choice to leave the Paris climate treaty and said that he wants "to convince him to come back to this agreement because, for me, that's the core

agreement for climate." But he ruled out any weakening of the treaty.

While Trump began his speech by touting the strength of the U.S. economy and saying countries should look out for their own interests, Macron began his by saying France had a special "debt" to the UN because of its birth in the ashes of the Second World War.

"If I am here it's because of countries 70 years ago that rose up to defeat the barbarism that had

occupied my country," he said. "I owe it to those who, once the war was over, chose reconciliation and reconstruction, to those who thought it was necessary to resurrect the ideas that had been so violated in the war."

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Global differences abound as leaders address UN

ABC News
6-8 minutes

This year's U.N. gathering of world leaders put an immediate spotlight Tuesday on deep differences on tackling crises from North Korea to global warming: France's president urged world leaders to work together, while America's emphasized nations' own sovereignty.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that the threat of a nuclear attack is at its highest level since the end of the Cold War and cautioned about the dangers of fiery rhetoric.

All three men made their debut appearances at the U.N. General Assembly, where presidents, prime ministers and monarchs are gathered for six days of discussion of matters ranging from nuclear peril to climate change to refugees. But on day one, the spotlight was on U.S. President Donald Trump and France's Emmanuel Macron.

Macron, a centrist who embraced internationalism during his campaign, vowed to press ahead with the Paris accord to combat global warming, although the U.S. has said it's withdrawing from the agreement. In his speech and a subsequent news conference, Macron said he respects Trump's decision but thinks it's a mistake and will continue trying to persuade the American to reconsider.

Macron also said France won't "close any door to dialogue" with North Korea and said it would be "a grave error" to unwind the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, which faces strong criticism from Trump. Macron also called for investing in education and health and proposed appointing a U.N. representative for press freedom.

Seven decades after the end of World War II and the creation of the United Nations, international bodies are confronting doubts that they are merely venues for "a game for diplomats sitting around a table" and come up short on addressing such major threats as climate change.

But "today, more than ever before, we need multilateralism" to work on global warming, war, terrorism and other issues, Macron said.

"We can only address those challenges through multilateralism," he said, "not through survival of the fittest."

Trump, a couple of hours earlier, portrayed "a coalition of strong and independent nations that embrace their sovereignty to promote security, prosperity, and peace," but keep their own citizens' interests foremost.

"I will always put America first," and his counterparts "should always put your countries first," Trump said. "America first" was one of his slogans from a campaign in which he often belittled the U.N.; he now says it has "tremendous potential."

He told leaders that the United States seeks harmony and friendship, not strife, but he warned that America "can no longer be taken advantage of."

In his speech, Trump had harsh words for North Korea — he threatened to "totally destroy" the Asian nation if the U.S. is forced to defend itself or its allies against aggression — and for the Iran pact, which Trump called "an embarrassment" to the U.S. He hinted that his administration could soon declare Iran out of compliance with the deal, which could unravel it.

North Korea's mission said its ambassador and a senior diplomat left the chamber to boycott Trump's speech, but left a note-taker to listen.

Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency said Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called Trump's remarks "impudent and ignorant."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu heaped praise on Trump's comments and told the General Assembly that the Iran deal should be scuttled or changed to put more pressure on Tehran.

Israel sees Iran as its most dangerous adversary because of its nuclear program, development of long-range missiles and support for militant groups in the region. Netanyahu warned that Israel would fiercely defend itself, but he made a point of telling everyday Iranians that Israel doesn't see them as enemies — he even broke into Farsi, one of Iran's main languages, to say: "You are our friends."

Guterres, meanwhile, put "nuclear peril" as the leading global threat and added that "fiery talk can lead to fatal misunderstandings."

His message was implicitly directed at North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, but also at the U.S. and Trump. The two have traded tough rhetoric amid Pyongyang's continuing nuclear and missile tests.

Guterres said a solution to North Korea's activities must be political. "This is a time for statesmanship," he stressed.

Beyond the nuclear threat, Guterres painted a grim picture of a troubled world facing grave challenges as people see rising insecurity, inequality, conflict and climate change in a world of polarized politics and fragmented societies.

"We are a world in pieces. We need to be a world at peace," he said, later tweeting that "only together, as truly United Nations, can we build a peaceful world."

By long tradition, Brazil's leader is first to address the 193-member

General Assembly — a custom carried on this year by President Michel Temer, who was charged last week with obstruction of justice and leading a criminal organization. Temer denies wrongdoing.

He said that at "this time in history, marked by so much uncertainty and instability, we need more diplomacy, not less — and "we need the U.N. more than before."

But Temer said it needs reform, particularly expanding the powerful Security Council to align it with the reality of the 21st century. Brazil is part of a group with Germany, India and Japan seeking permanent seats on the council.

Not far behind North Korea on the list of issues needing urgent international attention is the plight of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims, victims of what Guterres calls a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" that has driven nearly 400,000 to flee into Bangladesh in the past three weeks. He called for the authorities in Myanmar to end military operations, allow unhindered humanitarian access and address the Rohingya's grievances.

In Myanmar's capital of Naypyitaw, leader Aung San Suu Kyi defended the government earlier in the day and said her country does not fear international scrutiny. She invited diplomats to see some areas for themselves.

Guterres told leaders in his address that "I take note" of Suu Kyi's speech.

The world leaders gathered as Hurricane Maria pounded the small Caribbean nation of Dominica with 160 mph winds. On Monday, Guterres and top government officials from several countries devastated by another Category 5 storm, Hurricane Irma, addressed a hastily called U.N. meeting and appealed for help to rebuild following that storm's destruction.



The Worst 1st Year of Foreign Policy Ever

Most experts agree that President Donald Trump's foreign policy and national security strategy have been disappointing so far, if not disastrous. But historians also know that this isn't entirely surprising. Since the United States became a global power after World War II, most administrations experienced difficulties getting started. Some — like Ronald Reagan — entered office with a real sense of strategy but floundered at the outset because of bureaucratic infighting or slow staffing. Others — like John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton — disdained strategy and sought to improvise, and they suffered.

Studies my colleagues and I have conducted at the University of Virginia's Miller Center demonstrate that administrations typically flounder during their first year. That's because presidents often focused on domestic policy and resisted efforts to think through a comprehensive national security strategy. Sometimes, presidents selected able leaders to head key departments and agencies but these appointees had trouble collaborating with one another. In other administrations, presidents have disregarded the importance of process or ignored linking foreign policy making to budgetary planning. Often, they failed to nurture allies in Congress and, in recent decades, have been slow to staff key agencies.

Despite their difficult beginnings, many administrations go on to gain their footing and experience real accomplishment in foreign policy. So there is still hope for Trump. But it's important to first understand that he isn't just repeating all the early errors that beleaguered his predecessors — he is magnifying them in unprecedented fashion.

Then-Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump exits his plane during his trip to the Mexico border on July 23, 2015 in Laredo, Texas. (Photo by Matthew Busch/Getty Images)

First, he has no strategy. Consider the "America First Foreign Policy" that is outlined on the White House website, which appears to be the official expression of Trump's nationalist populist foreign-policy vision. The Trump administration is "focused on American interests and American national security" and seeks "peace through strength." Its top priority is fighting "radical Islamic terror groups." Through aggressive military operations and other initiatives, it seeks to destroy

and defeat these groups, cut off their funding, expand intelligence sharing, and engage in cyberwarfare. Next, the administration aims to rebuild the American military and gain "military dominance." And, lastly, it plans to jettison the rotten trade deals of the past and negotiate new ones that "put American workers and businesses" ahead of the "interests of insiders and the Washington elite."

That's it. Note the bewildering absence of any mention whatsoever of allies and adversaries. The statement says not a word about China, not a word about Russia, not a word about NATO. The statement says not a word about North Korea or nonproliferation.

In the past, poor strategy often resulted from failures to rank priorities, reconcile values and interests, and link means and ends, resources and commitments, and budgeting and policymaking. Trump is guilty of all of the above. "America First" seeks to achieve a "stronger and more respected America." Yet by embracing authoritarian leaders — from Vladimir Putin in Russia, to Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, to Najib Razak in Malaysia, to Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Egypt — and by reneging, denigrating, or disdaining key agreements and alliances like NAFTA and NATO, Trump has put his personal imprimatur on a strategy that conveys contempt for the values and the relationships that have buttressed America's image around the world for generations. Michael Anton, his National Security Council strategist and spokesman, likes to say that "America First" policy aspires to enhance America's prestige and stature around the world. Yet a recent poll covering 37 countries by the Pew Research Center shows that only about 22 percent of the people in those countries have confidence that President Trump will do "the right thing" when it comes to international affairs. This number compares to 64 percent who previously had said that they believed in the ability of Barack Obama to make the right choices. At the same time, favorable views of the United States have plummeted from about 64 to 49 percent.

There are plenty of other strategic contradictions. Trump seeks to enhance America's position around the world while cutting hundreds of positions and proposing slashing billions of dollars from the State Department. He hopes to contain or constrain China yet jettisons the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the key instrument for preserving America's future influence in Asia. He yearns to achieve military hegemony yet shows no sign of reconciling his

defense buildup with other budgetary priorities. He needs to build relationships with key legislators but clearly has undermined the confidence of Tennessee Republican Sen. Bob Corker, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who has publicly voiced skepticism about Trump's competence and stability.

History suggests that administrations head toward disaster when presidents hand off too much responsibility in foreign policy to subordinates, when top advisors compete to be the top dog and can't get along with one another, and when Cabinet officials are slow to fill key positions. We see signs of all these things in this administration.

Trump's first national security advisor, Michael Flynn, was dismissed; his secretary of state seems to be sidelined; and key positions throughout the Department of State and the Department of Defense remain unfilled. More significantly, Trump's most consequential advisors seem to be at odds with one another and with the president himself about the administration's trade policy and its relationships with China, Russia, and America's closest allies in Europe. His trade representative, Robert Lighthizer, and Wilbur Ross, his secretary of commerce, clearly are on a different page than his key economic advisor Gary Cohn and his secretary of state, Rex Tillerson. We see little sign that Trump is inclined to or knows how to resolve these differences.

Meanwhile, the president refuses to say negative words about Putin's Russia, but James Mattis, his secretary of defense, and H.R. McMaster, his national security advisor, clearly see ominous signs of Russian expansionism in Central Europe and the Baltic and seek to offer diplomatic support and military aid. Trump's advisors want to reassure and collaborate with South Korea in the face of North Korean nuclear testing and bellicose posturing, yet the president is inclined to threaten Seoul with a termination of the U.S.-Korean trade pact. And, meanwhile, the president veers wildly in his dealings with Beijing: from recasting his anti-Chinese campaign rhetoric to depending on Chinese assistance restraining Kim Jong Un to threatening expansive trade sanctions if President Xi Jinping does not succeed.

Harry Truman, the 33rd president of the United States, addresses media in 1945 in Washington, D.C.. (AFP/Getty Images)

The trends are bad for the Trump administration, but perhaps not hopeless. As noted above, many administrations falter at the onset. Perhaps no president stumbled as much as did Harry S. Truman after he took over the Oval Office upon the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in April 1945. His first 12 or 18 months were filled with challenges, frustrations, and failures. He witnessed Soviet inroads throughout much of Eastern Europe, Soviet probes in Iran and Turkey, communist advances in China, financial strife in Great Britain, and political instability, economic disarray, and revolutionary nationalist rumblings in the Third World. Reconstruction in Western Europe proceeded slowly and occupation policies in Japan, southern Korea, and western Germany floundered. At home, he faced labor unrest, rising prices, and partisan furor. Yet Truman recovered. From defeat and disarray came a strategy, a process, and a team that set in place a foreign policy that revitalized America's posture in global affairs and that positioned Truman to win an unexpected victory in the 1948 presidential election.

How did Truman manage his turnaround? First, he dismissed his secretary of state, James F. Byrnes, whose stature at Foggy Bottom was dismal and whose loyalty the president doubted. In his place, Truman appointed Gen. George Marshall, the former army chief of staff, orchestrator of victory in World War II, and arguably the most respected man in America at the time. Marshall was disciplined, cared about strategy, focused on planning, and grasped the importance of process and teamwork. Marshall formed a new office, the Policy Planning Staff, and appointed George F. Kennan to head it. He also worked closely with Army and Navy military officers and civilian officials whom he knew well, supporting the passage of the National Security Act that was designed to enhance political-military-economic coordination. More than anything, Truman and Marshall ranked priorities. Was the threat of economic disaster and communist subversion more likely than Soviet military aggression? They said yes and supported the Economic Recovery Act, which included what became known as the Marshall Plan. Should America pay more attention to western Germany and Western Europe or to China? Western Germany and Western Europe were put at the top of the list.

In addition to strategy, process, and personnel, Truman and Marshall

grasped that they needed to link foreign-policy priorities to a budgetary strategy and domestic goals. Much to the chagrin of James Forrestal, the newly appointed and first secretary of defense, and much to the annoyance of his former military colleagues, Marshall supported a budget that constrained defense expenditures and highlighted economic aid abroad. Truman demanded that his military chieftains fall in line and abide his budgetary ceilings. And meanwhile, in 1947 and 1948, with the help of Marshall, Dean Acheson, and Robert Lovett, the president cultivated relations with Republican foes in Congress and put together a bipartisan consensus that was critical to the success of his policies in the early stages of the Cold War. This meant legislative support for a gigantic foreign aid program as well as incurring ongoing military commitments in Europe — the origins of NATO — that would have been regarded as unthinkable just 18 months before.

President Donald Trump sits with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a bilateral meeting at the Mar-a-Lago estate in West Palm Beach, Florida, on April 6. (JIM WATSON/AFP/Getty Images)

There are some lessons here for the Trump administration.

First, a president needs to take charge. When taking office, past presidents have often been inclined to rely on their foreign policy, intelligence, and national security advisors and focus on their domestic priorities. Certainly, this was the case for Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama. In the early months of every administration, process often is inchoate and the vetting of important options improvised. Presidents are bombarded with information, bludgeoned by pressure groups, and distracted by never-ending crises of the day. Trump wants to focus on health care, tax cuts, infrastructure, and immigration, and he turns his attention to foreign policy episodically when faced with unexpected and portentous actions like Syrian use of chemical weapons and North Korean nuclear testing, or when visiting dignitaries trek into the White House. He must learn, as did his predecessors, that national security requires his systematic attention, that quick decisions based on a momentary crisis or an initial conversation invite larger problems down the road. In short, Trump needs to get involved in a sustained way and think strategically. Whether he has the personality and temperament to do so is another question, but that is how other presidents have recovered from the trying

experiences of their first months in office.

Thinking strategically means ranking threats, delineating priorities, and linking means and ends. Today, there are many threats, including China's growing power, Russia's adventurism, nuclear proliferation, radical Islamic terrorism, and climate change. Trump must decide which of these is most worrisome, which requires his greatest attention, and which should command the greatest allocation of America's resources. These choices are incredibly difficult to make, and reasonable people will disagree, but having a strategic perspective is essential in order to allocate budgetary resources appropriately, redeploy military assets, and prioritize weapons programs. If you are fighting terrorism as your first priority, you need different assets than if your main focus is on containing Russian inroads in Ukraine and the Baltic; if you think thwarting North Korea's nuclear arsenal is your overriding priority, your dealings with China need to be reconfigured accordingly. Thinking strategically is essential for defining priorities, resolving the tradeoffs between competing goals, and making budgetary decisions.

Thinking strategically also demands ongoing efforts to reconcile interests and values. All U.S. presidents since World War II have put America first, all of them have pursued U.S. interests, all of them have been attentive to U.S. military power, and most have quested for military dominance. But all of them also have grasped that America's values and cultural influence — its soft power — constitute key ingredients of America's influence and appeal. To their credit, Trump's advisors like Cohn, McMaster, and even Tillerson occasionally have tried to say that "America First is rooted in confidence that our values are worth defending and promoting." But the president's relentless stress on "interests" and his dalliances with ruthless and repressive authoritarians tarnish America's image abroad, agitate democratic allies, and demoralize courageous proponents of liberal values around the globe. "Making America great again" cannot possibly mean obfuscating or demeaning America's values.

Abandoning human rights, democratization, and multilateral economic and legal agreements would guide U.S. foreign policy in new and dangerous directions. Perhaps that is what Trump wants, but a purely transactional foreign policy erodes trust and predictability, essential ingredients for world order and U.S. national

security. Reliability is what reassures friends and deters adversaries.

Thinking strategically also means integrating foreign policy with a sensible domestic agenda. We should not forget that when Roosevelt and Truman embraced the Bretton Woods monetary system after World War II, their intent was to use institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to foster international financial stability and commercial growth abroad while allowing for macroeconomic management at home. When this system collapsed in the 1970s, these goals were not abandoned. Today, as in the past, Trump's overriding goal of domestic economic growth should not be incompatible with a well-conceived strategic agenda abroad. But it is. The president wants better jobs, higher wages, and improved living standards and opportunities for U.S. workers. Yet Trump's mantra, "buy American, hire American," actually endangers U.S. interests abroad and undermines his goals at home. America's best-paying jobs are located in its export sector, and the factory jobs that have disappeared, according to most economists, are the result of automation. If "buy American, hire American" means repudiating NAFTA, terminating bilateral free trade accords with nations like South Korea, and retaliating against China, the resulting higher prices paid by most workers for many of their necessities will hurt them in the aggregate far more than they will benefit by the marginal increase in jobs. And, meanwhile, the retaliatory countermeasures will hurt American workers in America's best-paying manufacturing sectors.

In reality, the economic nationalism that Trump espouses jeopardizes his relations with key allies, interferes with his efforts both to contain and to cooperate with China, and offers little help to U.S. workers. That is not to say that Trump and his advisors should not negotiate to redress infringements on patents, curtail foreign governments' inappropriate subsidies, and remove their illegal impediments to U.S. exports. But if Trump wants to "make America great again" he must not undermine the liberal international order on which America's greatness has been premised. He must make that order work better by embracing a strategy that seeks to redress its defects while ameliorating the conditions of American workers at home. To do so, he must jettison the rhetorical trope "hire American, buy American" and embrace policies that stimulate demand at

home, promote the competitive ability of American businesses abroad, and support displaced, unemployed, and underemployed workers. This could be done through infrastructure expenditures, tax reforms (not tax cuts), antitrust practices, and retraining programs. Such domestic priorities could harmonize with a far-sighted strategic program abroad.

Thinking strategically requires teamwork and process. One can imagine that with the dismissal of Flynn, Steve Bannon, and Reince Priebus, Trump's first chief of staff, there is the prospect for improved process, coordination, and staffing. Retired Gen. John Kelly, the new chief of staff, like McMaster and Mattis shares a commitment to the alliances that the United States has forged and to the global order it has managed. As military men, they also grasp the importance of a disciplined process and collaboration. But they remain hampered by a president who has failed to fill critical positions in the Defense and State departments and ambassadorial posts abroad. Dealing with the Korean crisis without an ambassador in Seoul and announcing new tough policies toward Pakistan without an ambassador in Islamabad invite unnecessary difficulties. Trying "to make America great again" with a decimated and demoralized State Department is a recipe for failure. These problems are easy to solve if there is the will to address them.

Forging an effective national security policy is a formidable enterprise, but other presidents have recovered from shaky beginnings. It takes more than a formal strategy paper, which this administration, like its predecessors, is now preparing. It requires a president and a group of advisors who can think strategically, rank threats, agree on priorities, link means and ends, and work with Congress. It requires a president and a group of advisors who can work collaboratively, respect one another, abide by a process, and forge trusting relationships with key legislators. It takes a president who is more than a dealmaker.

Transactional predilections based on expediency cannot substitute for strategic thinking, orderly process, and capable staffing. Past presidents often have learned these lessons after bitter setbacks, but they did learn. We'll all soon learn whether Trump can do the same.

Photo credit: MANDEL NGAN/AFP/Getty Images

Melvyn P. Leffler is Compton Visiting Professor in World Politics at the Miller Center, University of Virginia. His latest book is

Trump Issues Dire Warning to North Korea in Address to U.N. (UNE)

Eli Stokols and
Farnaz Fassih

8-10 minutes

Updated Sept. 19, 2017 7:45 p.m.
ET

UNITED NATIONS—President Donald Trump threatened to annihilate North Korea if the U.S. has to defend itself or its allies against the Pyongyang regime, delivering the dire warning Tuesday during his first address to the United Nations General Assembly.

Mr. Trump began his speech by espousing a form of international cooperation based on the nationalism that propelled his 2016 presidential campaign before using unusually blunt language for a U.N. address to weigh in on some of the world's most intractable problems—first among them North Korea.

"No nation on Earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals arm itself with nuclear weapons and missiles," the president said, adding that denuclearization is the "only acceptable future" for Kim Jong Un's regime.

"Rocket Man' is on a suicide mission, not only for himself but for his regime," he said, using a nickname for Mr. Kim he first applied in a Twitter message over the weekend.

The GOP president also excoriated Iran, calling it an authoritarian regime and denouncing the 2015 nuclear disarmament agreement between Iran and six world powers, including the U.S.

That deal, negotiated by Mr. Trump's Democratic predecessor, Barack Obama, was "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into," Mr. Trump said. "Frankly, that deal is an embarrassment to the United States and I don't think you've heard the last of it, believe me."

Mr. Trump's speech drew a mixed reaction from delegates. He received applause early in his speech for defining his "America first" outlook as a way for independent, sovereign nations to cooperate. Israel, a close U.S. ally, applauded his stand on Iran.

"In over 30 years in my experience with the U.N., I never heard a bolder or more courageous speech," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of

Israel said in a statement issued after the address.

But the antipathy Messrs. Trump and Netanyahu share toward the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement runs counter to the consensus among other world leaders, who see the agreement as working.

Some said they found Mr. Trump's stance on North Korea alarming. Among his most forceful comments: "The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea."

"There was visible shock in the room," one diplomat said. A U.N. official said, "He used the U.N.'s platform to declare war on North Korea."

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, was openly critical of Mr. Trump's remarks. "We never talk about destroying another country, but bringing peace," she said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif tweeted in response to Mr. Trump's speech: "Trump's ignorant hate speech belongs in medieval times—not the 21st Century U.N.—unworthy of a reply."

In an earlier address, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres appeared to refer to Mr. Trump and other international leaders by saying: "Societies are fragmented. Political discourse is polarized. Trust within and among countries is being driven down by those who demonize and divide."

French President Emmanuel Macron, speaking to world leaders after Mr. Trump on Tuesday, drew a contrast with his U.S. counterpart by delivering an emphatic defense of multilateral diplomacy. He adjusted his address after hearing the U.S. president speak, according to a European diplomat.

"We have allowed the idea to proliferate that multilateralism is a kind of game, a game for diplomats sitting around a table," Mr. Macron said. "Today more than ever before, we need multilateralism" to address global issues ranging from war to climate change.

At a later news conference, the French leader openly disagreed with Mr. Trump on key issues. "President Trump, he has his position but we have disagreements," Mr. Macron said. "We each have our own beliefs and

positions. History will judge us on Iran and on North Korea and on climate."

On North Korea, he said France "rejects escalation and will not close any door to dialogue." On the Iran nuclear agreement, he said he had urged Mr. Trump in a meeting Monday to retain the deal.

"I don't understand what the substitute plan is. If we simply throw away this agreement we can't replace it," Mr. Macron told reporters.

Mr. Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement earlier this year, but Mr. Macron, saying the "planet will not negotiate with us," left the door open for a return.

In his address, Mr. Trump also singled out Cuba and Venezuela as civil-rights violators. He said Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government was collapsing, criticizing it in energetic terms.

"The problem in Venezuela is not that socialism has been poorly implemented, but that socialism has been faithfully implemented," he said.

Mr. Trump said the U.S. has applied "tough, calibrated" diplomatic and economic sanctions against Mr. Maduro's government and wanted other countries to add to their weight. "We are prepared to take further action" if needed, he said, but didn't reiterate past threats of military intervention.

Venezuela dismissed the criticism before it was uttered. "President Trump has a fatal obsession with Venezuela, the product of his white supremacist ideas," the Venezuelan government said in a statement issued shortly before the U.S. president's speech. "We will defend our independence with firmness against the attacks of the racist government of the United States."

Mr. Trump didn't criticize China or Russia by name, but implicitly did so by saying he rejected "threats to sovereignty, from Ukraine to the South China Sea." He also thanked both countries for backing a U.N. resolution imposing new sanctions on North Korea that passed the Security Council with unanimous support.

Mr. Trump said the world faced "both immense promise and great peril," and its leaders must decide "whether we lift the world to new

heights or let it fall into a valley of disrepair."

As his speech went on, the president ratcheted up his rhetoric and left behind the more-unifying tone of his opening remarks, promising to crush "the loser terrorists" and asserting that some parts of the world "are going to hell."

After touting a healthy U.S. economy under the first eight months of his administration, Mr. Trump pushed leaders to pursue their own national interests. "The success of the United Nations depends upon the independent strength of its members," he said.

"I will always put America first, just like you as the leaders of your countries—and should as the leaders of your countries—put your countries first," Mr. Trump said.

Some observers suggested the darker tones and blunt rhetoric the president used in addressing conflicts overshadowed his initial call for greater cooperation.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, criticized Mr. Trump for using the U.N. "as a stage to threaten war."

"Trump's bombastic threat to destroy North Korea and his refusal to present any positive pathways forward on the many global challenges we face are severe disappointments," she said. "He aims to unify the world through tactics of intimidation, but in reality he only further isolates the United States."

Some political activists saw Mr. Trump's speech as aggressive and confrontational.

"From a belligerent approach with America's allies to escalating tensions with North Korea, from slashing foreign assistance to pulling away from global efforts to tackle climate change, Mr. Trump continues on a path that will cost America its global influence and leadership," said Abby Maxman, president of the anti-poverty advocacy group Oxfam America.

At the same time, some political leaders offered praise. "President Trump gave a strong and needed challenge to U.N. members to live up to its charter and to confront global challenges," said Mitt Romney, the 2012 GOP presidential candidate and former contender to be Mr. Trump's Secretary of State.

Corrections & Amplifications
President Donald Trump in his U.N. speech threatened to “destroy”

North Korea. An early version of this article incorrectly stated he

threatened to “annihilate” it. (Sept. 19, 2017)

Write to Eli Stokols at eli.stokols@wsj.com and Farnaz Fassihi at farnaz.fassihi@wsj.com



At U.N., Trump Threatens to ‘Totally Destroy’ North Korea

Paul McLeary |
57 mins ago

7-9 minutes

U.S. President Donald Trump delivered a fiery, combative speech to the United Nations General Assembly, threatening to “totally destroy” North Korea, denouncing the Iran nuclear deal as an “embarrassment” to the United States, and hinting that he might be willing to break with much of the world and walk away from the agreement.

The threats were part of a provocative inaugural address to the 193-member U.N. General Assembly that Trump used to drive home his “America first” approach to foreign affairs. It stood in sharp contrast to his appearance Monday at a forum on U.N. reform, which he used to express a personal commitment to work with U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, whom he credited with doing a “fantastic” job.

Urging states to act uncompromisingly in their self-interest is actually not in America’s national interest.

The remarks represented a full-fledged rejection of calls from allies and rivals alike to tone down the rhetoric on North Korea and pursue a diplomatic path to resolving the crisis.

Speaking in highly belligerent terms that triggered murmurs through the General Assembly hall, Trump warned Pyongyang that he would wipe out North Korea if their leader didn’t halt his development of nuclear weapons.

“Rocket man is on a suicide mission for himself and his regime,” Trump said, referring to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

“Rocket man is on a suicide mission for himself and his regime,” Trump said, referring to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Trump also took rhetorical aim at the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran that most countries believe has successfully curtailed the prospects of Tehran developing a nuclear

weapon. On Tuesday, Trump signaled clearly that he is ready to walk away from the accord, risking further U.S. diplomatic isolation on a hot-button issue.

“The deal was an embarrassment to the United States, and I don’t think you’ve heard the last of it, believe me,” he said.

Following Trump’s address, French President Emmanuel Macron swung back, warning in his General Assembly speech that renouncing the Iran deal would be “a grave error.” He added that “not respecting it would be irresponsible, because it is a good accord that is essential to peace at a time when the risk of infernal conflagration cannot be excluded.”

He also said it was important to keep the door open to a diplomatic settlement of the nuclear crisis in North Korea.

The U.S. and French presidents’ remarks were delivered after Guterres opened the 72nd U.N. General Assembly session with an appeal to pursue diplomacy with North Korea.

Guterres foreshadowed, in more diplomatic language, some of the president’s concerns about North Korea’s nuclear program, noting that “millions live under the shadow of dread cast by the provocative nuclear and missile tests of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.”

But he voiced alarm over the belligerent threats coming out of Pyongyang and Washington, saying the nuclear standoff would only be resolved through diplomacy.

“Fiery talk can lead to fatal misunderstandings,” he said. “This is a time for statesmanship. We must not sleepwalk into war.”

Guterres’s own inaugural address to the U.N. General Assembly amounted to a step-by-step rebuke of Trump’s foreign policy — though without naming him — on a host of issues, including terrorism, refugees, climate change, Iran, and North Korea.

Describing himself as an immigrant, the former Portuguese prime minister and U.N. refugee chief said

he has “been pained to see the way refugees and migrants have been stereotyped and scapegoated — and to see political figures stoke resentment in search of political gain.”

The secretary-general also took a swipe at the Trump administration’s dismissal of climate science and plans to withdraw from the 2015 Paris climate-change accords, which were meant to limit the emission of greenhouse gases.

Citing destructive hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, Guterres appealed to U.N. members “to get off the path of suicidal emissions.”

“We should not link any single weather event with climate change,” he added. “But scientists are clear that such extreme weather is precisely what their models predict will be the new normal of a warming world.” (Another monster storm, Maria, hurtled toward Puerto Rico on Tuesday.)

The tenor of Trump’s first speech to the world assembly was lifted from his campaign rallies, including boasts about achievements during his first months in office and a bombastic tone about restoring American sovereignty.

“As president of the United States, I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your countries, will always and should always put your countries first,” said Trump.

The president’s speech didn’t just dismay the international delegations watching it live.

“We’re kind of just helpless,” one State Department official told Foreign Policy, describing U.S. diplomats watching Trump’s U.N. speech. “He’s going to say what he’s going to say, and we just have to put out the fire afterwards ... all we can hope is that it won’t be that bad.”

While Trump was speaking in New York, literal fire alarms went off at the State Department in Washington. It turned out to be a drill.

While Trump was speaking in New York, literal fire alarms went off at

the State Department in Washington. It turned out to be a drill.

While vowing to “forever be a great friend to the world, and especially to its allies,” Trump griped that the United Nations was taking advantage of the United States, making it shoulder an unfair share of the U.N. financial burden.

But Trump saved his strongest denunciations for traditional American rivals, including Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, and North Korea.

“The scourge of our planet today is a small group of rogue regimes that violate every principle on which the United Nations is based,” he said. “If the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph.”

Trump accused the “depraved regime in North Korea” of starving millions of North Koreans, murdering its leader’s brother with nerve agent, and mistreating an American college student, Otto Warmbier, who died just days after he was released in a coma by North Korean authorities.

“If this is not twisted enough, now North Korea’s reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles threatens the entire world with unthinkable loss of life,” he said. “It is an outrage that some nations would not only trade with such a regime, but would arm, supply and financially support a country that imperils the world with nuclear conflict.”

“The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.”

He continued, “The United States is ready, willing and able. But hopefully, this will not be necessary. That’s what the United Nations is for. Let’s see how they do.”

Robbie Gramer contributed to this piece. The article was updated Tuesday afternoon.

Photo credit: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

The New York Times With Combative Style and Epithets, Trump Takes America First to the U.N. (UNE)

Peter Baker and Rick Gladstone

10-13 minutes

Trump's U.N. Speech Targets North Korea, Iran and Venezuela

President Trump threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea, and said that Iran masked a corrupt dictatorship under "the false guise of a democracy."

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS. Photo by Chang W. Lee/The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

UNITED NATIONS — President Trump brought the same confrontational style of leadership he has used at home to the world's most prominent stage on Tuesday as he vowed to "totally destroy North Korea" if it threatened the United States and denounced the nuclear agreement with Iran as "an embarrassment" that he may abandon.

In his first address to the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Trump framed the conflicts as a test of the international system. The bombastic flourishes that generate approving roars at political events were met by stony silence, interrupted a few times by a smattering of applause, as Mr. Trump promised to "crush loser terrorists," mocked North Korea's leader as "Rocket Man" and declared that parts of the world "are going to hell."

The president's tone carried real-world implications for the future of the United Nations and the escalating confrontations with international outliers. In the space of 42 minutes, he upended decades of rhetorical support by the United States for the collective philosophy of the United Nations as he defended his America First policy. He repeatedly extolled "sovereignty" in a setting where the term traditionally has been brandished by nations like Russia, China, Iran and North Korea to deflect criticism.

"As president of the United States, I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your countries, will always and should always put your countries first," he said, generating light applause in parts of the chamber. But he argued that nationalism can be the foundation for strong nations to join common causes.

"If the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph," he said. "When decent people and nations become bystanders to history, the forces of destruction only gather power and strength."

Mr. Trump singled out North Korea, broadening his indictment of the Pyongyang government beyond its pursuit of nuclear weapons to its treatment of its own people and

captured foreigners like the American college student who died shortly after being sent back to the United States.

"No nation on Earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals arm itself with nuclear weapons and missiles," Mr. Trump said. "The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime."

Without mentioning it by name, Mr. Trump also chastised China for continuing to deal with its rogue neighbor, calling it "an outrage that some nations" would trade, arm and support North Korea.

He assailed the Iran agreement, which was negotiated by President Barack Obama and leaders of five other powers and ratified by the United Nations Security Council to curb Tehran's nuclear program for a decade in exchange for lifting international sanctions. Under American law, Mr. Trump has until Oct. 15 to certify whether Iran is complying with the agreement, which he has done twice so far since taking office. But he has made clear that he would prefer not to do so again, which could unravel the accord.

"The Iran deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into," Mr. Trump said. "Frankly, that deal is an embarrassment to the United States, and I don't think you've heard the last of it, believe me."

The tough words cheered the delegation from Israel, whose prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, applauded from the gallery and called it the boldest speech he had heard at the United Nations in 30 years. In his own address later, he said Mr. Trump had "rightly called the nuclear deal with Iran an embarrassment" and pointed to North Korea as an example.

"In the last few months, we've all seen how dangerous even a few nuclear weapons can be in the hands of a small rogue regime," Mr. Netanyahu said. "Now imagine the danger of hundreds of nuclear weapons in the reins of a vast Iranian empire, with the missiles to deliver them anywhere on earth."

Others called Mr. Trump's speech excessively belligerent. "If Trump was determined to demonstrate to the world that he is unhinged and an imminent danger to world peace, he has succeeded with this speech, and will only make it harder for him to win over the world to his self-

destructive goals," said Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council, a Washington-based group that criticizes the Tehran government but advocates more engagement.

Neither Hassan Rouhani, Iran's president, nor Mohammad Javad Zarif, its foreign minister, was in the hall for Mr. Trump's speech. North Korea's ambassador left his seat before the president started speaking.

In an interview taped before the speech, Mr. Rouhani castigated Mr. Trump for considering a withdrawal from the nuclear accord. "The exiting of the United States from such an agreement would carry a high cost, meaning that subsequent to such an action by the United States of America, no one will trust America again," he told NBC News.

North Korea's Ambassador to the United Nations, Ja Song Nam, left his seat prior to the arrival President Trump. Brendan McDermid/Reuters

Mr. Zarif said on Twitter that "Trump's ignorant hate speech belongs in medieval times — not the 21st Century UN."

Mr. Trump's choice of words raised hackles among allies too, as Federica Mogherini, the European Union foreign minister, made clear at a reception on Tuesday evening. "We never talk about destroying countries," she said.

President Emmanuel Macron of France, who has a friendly relationship with Mr. Trump and whose country was one of the negotiating parties for the Iran deal, likewise took exception. In his General Assembly address, Mr. Macron called the agreement "solid, robust and verifiable," and said renouncing it would be a "grave error."

While he shared Mr. Trump's view that North Korea's nuclear belligerence was dangerous and unacceptable, Mr. Macron said multilateral diplomatic pressure was the best solution. "France rejects escalation and will not close any door to dialogue," he said.

The French president also confronted a big issue Mr. Trump conspicuously omitted, climate change. "The planet will not negotiate with us," Mr. Macron said, referring to the Paris climate accord that Mr. Trump has renounced.

The United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, likewise implicitly rebuffed Mr. Trump on climate change. "We know enough today to act," he said as he opened the General Assembly session. "The science is unassailable."

The early reaction from China was relatively mild, perhaps a reflection of Mr. Trump's phone call to President Xi Jinping the night before. In an editorial on Wednesday, the state-run China Daily scolded the United States for not doing more to start talks with North Korea. "His threat to 'totally destroy' the D.P.R.K. if need be will, therefore, likely worsen the already volatile situation," the paper said, using an acronym for North Korea.

Republican lawmakers and conservative leaders cheered the president's strong stance against international outliers like Iran and North Korea.

"It was the best speech of the Trump presidency in my view," John R. Bolton, a former ambassador to the United Nations, told Fox News. "It's safe to say in the entire history of the United Nations there has never been a more straightforward criticism of the behavior, the unacceptable behavior of other member states."

Mr. Trump arrived at the United Nations with a more overtly nationalist approach than past American presidents, predicated on a belief that the United States has been taken advantage of in areas like trade, security and other international affairs. In addition to abandoning the Paris accord, he has renounced the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact and threatened to scrap the North American Free Trade Agreement if it is not renegotiated to his liking.

In his speech, he used the word "sovereign" or "sovereignty" 21 times. "The United States will forever be a great friend to the world, and especially to its allies," he said. "But we can no longer be taken advantage of, or enter into a one-sided deal where the United States gets nothing in return."

Mr. Trump mentioned only in passing one of the most prominent examples of a violation of sovereignty in recent years, the still-unresolved Russian intervention in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea. But he went on to denounce the actions of Venezuela's government against its own people without explaining how that fit into his concept of respecting sovereignty.

"The Socialist dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro has inflicted terrible pain and suffering on the good people of that country," Mr. Trump said. "This corrupt regime destroyed a prosperous nation by imposing a failed ideology that has produced poverty and misery everywhere it has been tried."

Still, he avoided some of the harsh language he has used in the past

about the United Nations itself. "For years, I've been a critic," he said in a toast at a luncheon given by Mr. Guterres, "but I've also been somebody that said the United Nations has tremendous potential."

The president met separately with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani,

the emir of Qatar, a Persian Gulf state Mr. Trump has accused of being a "funder of terrorism." He eschewed such characterizations on Tuesday, instead calling the emir a longtime friend and renewing his offer to mediate a standoff between Qatar and other Arab countries.

"We are right now in a situation where we're trying to solve a problem in the Middle East and I think we'll get it solved," Mr. Trump said. "I have a very strong feeling that it will be solved pretty quickly."

The emir welcomed his help. "As you said, Mr. President, we have a

problem with our neighbors and your interference will help a lot and I'm sure we can find a solution for this problem," he said.

**The
New York
Times**

Trump Offers a Selective View of Sovereignty in U.N. Speech (UNE)

Mark Landler
8-10 minutes

countries Mr. Trump condemned would someday fling his words back at him.

"His definition of sovereignty comes from a very narrow domestic prism."

There was an echo of George W. Bush's democracy promotion agenda in Mr. Trump's words. And two of the countries on Mr. Bush's "axis of evil" — Iran and North Korea — featured in Mr. Trump's hit list. But unlike Mr. Bush, this president made it clear he had no desire to impose America's political system on other countries.

That did not stop him from railing against the policies of his three major nemeses. North Korea, he said, starved and tortured its people, and had ordered the assassination of Kim Jong-nam, the half brother of its tyrannical ruler, Kim Jong-un. Iran's regime had transformed a proud nation into an "economically depleted rogue state." Venezuela's leader, Nicolás Maduro, had stolen power and left his people in poverty and misery.

All three, he warned, could feel the full fury of American might, going so far as to say that if the United States were forced to defend itself, "we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea."

But Mr. Trump said nothing about human rights abuses in countries that are either allies, like Saudi Arabia, or that do not rise to the level of strategic threat, like Myanmar, which is systematically persecuting its Muslim minority, but which went unmentioned in his speech.

"The Iranian regime's support for terror is in stark contrast to the recent commitments of many of its neighbors to fight terrorism and halt its finance," he said, before singling out Saudi Arabia for praise.

Mr. Trump was also more cautious about the imperial ambitions of two great powers, Russia and China. "We must reject threats to sovereignty from the Ukraine to the South China Sea," he declared in his only reference to Russia's destabilization of its neighbor and China's establishment of a chain of military outposts in disputed waters off its coast.

His failure to mention Russia's interference in the 2016 election was in keeping with his general reluctance to criticize Moscow. But

it was nevertheless remarkable, given that few actions constitute a more direct threat to American sovereignty than that one.

Mr. Trump did take China to task for its reluctance to do more to curb its neighbor, North Korea. "It is an outrage that some nations would not only trade with such a regime, but would arm, supply and financially support a country that imperils the world with nuclear conflict," he said.

Some analysts played down the inconsistency in Mr. Trump's approach, saying it was a recurring feature of American foreign policy, under presidents from both political parties, because the nation's values and strategic interests do not always align.

"His specific comments about Venezuela, Cuba, and Iran indicate he does not believe the concept of sovereignty immunizes them from criticism or endless abuse of their citizens," said Elliott Abrams, a senior State Department official during the Bush administration.

Mr. Abrams said he believed the president "squared the circle" by linking the concept of sovereignty with a coalition of successful sovereign states. Such a coalition, he said, could act together to confront threats like North Korea's nuclear program under the banner of the U.N.

For Mr. Abrams, who described his overall reaction to the speech as positive, there were two omissions. Mr. Trump did not mention the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, even though the president has declared it to be a major goal of his administration. Mr. Abrams said that spoke to the diminishing strategic importance of the issue for the Middle East.

The president, he said, was also obviously still grappling with how to deal with the concept of human rights. Though Mr. Trump spoke broadly about freedom, he never explicitly referred to individual rights.

"How does the promotion of freedom fit in?" Mr. Abrams said. "I still don't think we know the answer to that."

UNITED NATIONS — President Trump, in declaring Tuesday that sovereignty should be the guiding principle of affairs between nations, sketched out a radically different vision of the world order than his forebears, who founded the United Nations after World War II to deal collectively with problems they believed would transcend borders.

Mr. Trump offered the General Assembly a strikingly selective definition of sovereignty, threatening to act aggressively against countries like North Korea, Iran and Venezuela, whose policies he opposes, yet saying almost nothing about Russia, which seized territory from its neighbor Ukraine, and meddled in the American presidential election.

But more important than how he defined sovereignty was Mr. Trump's adoption of the word itself — language more familiar to small countries, guarding themselves against the incursions of larger neighbors or defying the judgments of a global elite, than to a superpower that fashioned a web of global institutions to enshrine its national interests.

"I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your countries, will always and should always put your countries first," Mr. Trump declared to a smattering of applause from an audience that included gimlet-eyed diplomats from some of the countries he criticized.

Mr. Trump rooted his philosophy in President Harry S. Truman, the Marshall Plan and the restoration of Europe. But the vision he articulated was smaller and more self-interested. America, he said, would no longer enter into "one-sided" alliances or agreements. It would no longer shoulder an unfair financial burden in bodies like the United Nations.

"As long as I hold this office, I will defend America's interest above all else," the president declared.

It was a defiant speech, peppered with threats and denunciations. Some critics predicted that the very

But it was more remarkable for how Mr. Trump departed from decades of bipartisan foreign-policy consensus. Even if they fell short, American presidents have generally staked out a global role for the United States in confronting the world's problems.

Mr. Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, pledged America's commitment to global institutions the first time he appeared before the United Nations in September 2009. In his speech, he used the word sovereign only once and cited it as an explanation for why "this body has often become a forum for sowing discord instead of forging common ground."

Mr. Trump, by contrast, used the words sovereign or sovereignty 21 times. "Our success," he said, "depends on a coalition of strong, independent nations that embrace their sovereignty, to promote their security, prosperity, and peace for themselves and for the world."

Strong, sovereign nations, he said, keep their citizens safe and enable them to prosper economically. Strong, sovereign nations, he said, can join together to fight common threats and constitute the irreducible building blocks of world institutions like the United Nations.

Mr. Trump is hardly the first leader to invoke sovereignty as a credo. Its roots go back to Roman times. It has been elaborated in agreements like the Peace of Westphalia, which gave rise to the principle of noninterference in a country's internal affairs. And it has been litigated through 20th-century upheavals like the Communist revolution in China.

Yet some foreign-policy experts said Mr. Trump's definition was problematic because he applied it inconsistently.

"It looks like we will respect the sovereignty of countries we like, whether they are dictatorships or democracies, but we will not respect the sovereignty of countries we don't like," said Vali R. Nasr, the dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Trump defends 'America first' foreign policy at U.N., threatens to 'totally destroy' North Korea (UNE)

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

8-10 minutes

NEW YORK — President Trump on Tuesday delivered a toughly worded defense of his "America first" foreign policy in his inaugural address to the United Nations and threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea if necessary.

The president, speaking at the United Nations' hallowed green-marble rostrum, also excoriated the international nuclear deal with Iran as an "embarrassment" and strongly hinted that his administration would soon back out, against the wishes of many nations in the room.

The defiant and pugilistic speech put the General Assembly hall of more than 150 delegations on notice that the United States, under Trump's leadership, is willing to pursue an unpopular and unpredictable course to protect its interests across the globe.

Trump called on world leaders to rally in the fight to defeat murderous regimes and "loser terrorists," and he derisively referred to North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, who oversees an expanding nuclear arsenal, as "Rocket Man." Reflecting on the United Nations charter of promoting world peace, the president asserted to the room full of diplomats: "Major portions of the world are in conflict, and some, in fact, are going to hell."

"To put it simply," Trump declared, "we meet at a time of both of immense promise and great peril. It is entirely up to us whether we lift the world to new heights or let it fall into a valley of disrepair."

President Trump ran his campaign on the message of economic nationalism. What does "America first" mean? President Trump ran his campaign on the message of economic nationalism. What does "America first" mean? (Victoria Walker/The Washington Post)

President Trump ran his campaign on the message of economic nationalism. What does "America first" mean? (Victoria Walker/The Washington Post)

Most of the president's views were well known before he arrived at the annual U.N. gathering. But his 42-minute speech, delivered in a combative tone rare for an American leader, put them in stark relief at a time of widespread

anxiety among U.S. allies and partners over the nation's traditional role of world leader.

In contrast to Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron used his own first U.N. address later Tuesday to defend the principle of global cooperation.

"Today, more than ever before, we need multilateralism" to deal with worldwide threats such as climate change and terrorism, Macron said. "We can only address those challenges through multilateralism," he said, "not through survival of the fittest."

Macron, in an interview with CNN, also said the rhetoric toward North Korea should be toned down and warned against abandoning the nuclear deal with Iran.

"Look at the map — if we talk of a military solution, we speak about a lot of victims," he told the network about the tensions on the Korean Peninsula. "Building peace is what we have to do in this region."

If Trump was eager to use his U.N. address to set the terms for his engagement with an international organization that he derided as ineffectual during his presidential campaign, his rhetoric also set up a potentially dangerous test of his administration's credibility to carry out the promises and threats he issued.

The president said the United States has "great strength and patience," but he emphasized that if forced to defend America or its allies, "we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea." He said that Kim "is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime."

Kim, the leader of a nation of 25 million, has responded to past threats from Trump by highlighting his government's nuclear weapons program and conducting ballistic missile tests. Foreign affairs analysts contend that a U.S. military response would risk sparking a regional conflict that would result in millions of deaths in densely populated South Korea and Japan.

Despite his past criticism of the United Nations — including a 2012 tweet mocking the "cheap" green marble backdrop in the General Assembly hall — Trump extended a hand to fellow leaders and praised those who offered help in the wake of the hurricanes that destroyed areas of Texas, Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

But he also called repeatedly for all nations to embrace sovereignty and self-reliance at a body founded after World War II on the idea that all countries are stronger when they work together.

"As president of the United States, I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your countries, will always, and should always, put your countries first," Trump said, returning to a campaign theme and the "America first" phrase, which has been criticized as isolationist and nationalistic.

Trump, who campaigned as an iconoclast who would speak for a marginalized middle class and focus on domestic priorities, made clear that his administration would not shrink from global challenges, including the escalating economic and political crisis in Venezuela.

At the same time, however, he took care Tuesday to send signals to the mostly white, middle-class voters who form the core of his political support. He took a swipe at "mammoth multinational trade deals" and "powerful global bureaucracies," and he emphasized that "uncontrolled migration is deeply unfair."

"The substantial costs . . . are borne overwhelmingly by low-income citizens whose concerns are often ignored by both media and government," Trump said.

But it was Trump's strong criticism of authoritarian regimes that drew the most reaction in the U.N. assembly hall and on Capitol Hill.

"The goals of the United Nations are to foster peace and promote global cooperation," Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) said. "Today, the president used it as a stage to threaten war."

After the president's address, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders sought to temper the idea that Trump's remarks on North Korea represented a break from long-standing U.S. policy. In a tweet, she cited President Barack Obama's U.N. address last year when he said that the United States "could, obviously, destroy North Korea with our arsenals" — though Obama appeared to be stating a fact rather than a step that his administration was considering.

On Iran, Trump called the U.N.-backed nuclear deal "one of the worst and most one-sided" agreements ever. His administration

has said that Tehran is violating the spirit if not the letter of the landmark 2015 accord through its alleged support for terrorism and other activities. Iran, the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency and other parties to the deal disagree.

"We cannot let a murderous regime continue these destabilizing activities while building dangerous missiles, and we cannot abide by an agreement if it provides cover for the eventual construction of a nuclear program," Trump said Tuesday.

His voice rising, Trump strongly hinted that his administration could soon declare Tehran out of compliance, which could unravel the accord.

"I don't think you've heard the last of it — believe me," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a vehement opponent of the deal, looked pleased as he and his wife, Sara, listened to Trump's address.

"In more than 30 years of my acquaintance with the U.N., I have not heard a more courageous and sharp speech," Netanyahu said of Trump in his own speech Tuesday.

Iranian leaders sharply rebuked the U.S. president.

In a meeting with American media executives ahead of the speech, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Iran has complied fully and predicted that the United States will be the loser if it "tramples upon" the agreement.

Local Politics Alerts

Breaking news about local government in D.C., Md., Va.

"Everyone will clearly see that Iran has lived up to its agreements and that the United States is therefore a country that cannot be trusted," Rouhani said.

On Twitter, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that Trump's threats amount to "ignorant hate speech" that "belongs in medieval times."

Aides have rejected the notion that Trump's rhetoric and name-calling fall outside the bounds of international norms, suggesting that the president is merely employing language his rivals understand.

"The scourge of our planet today is a small group of rogue regimes that violate every principle on which the United Nations is based," Trump

said. "... If the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then

evil will triumph."

Martin Baron and Carol Morello contributed to this report.

The
Washington
Post

Jitters and surprise in South Korea and Japan over Trump's speech to the U.N.

<https://www.facebook.com/simon.denyer?ref=ts>

8-10 minutes

TOKYO — The United States' closest allies in Asia seemed blindsided by President Trump's latest outburst against North Korea, in which he threatened not just to act against Kim Jong Un's regime, but also to destroy an entire country of 25 million people.

In his maiden speech to the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, Trump derided Kim as "Rocket Man" and said the United States would "totally destroy North Korea" if needed to protect its allies.

Those allies, Japan and South Korea, were silent on Trump's threat to bring war to their neighborhood, while China and Russia both warned that Trump risked fueling tensions.

China's nationalist Global Times newspaper ran a cartoon captioned "Bully pulpit" showing Trump holding a megaphone, shouting "America First," while the state-owned China Daily newspaper said Trump's speech was "full of sound and fury."

"Today's dangerous deadlock has been the result of Pyongyang's and Washington's persistent pursuit of their own interests in disregard of other countries' efforts to persuade the two antagonists to talk," the China Daily wrote in an editorial Wednesday morning. "His threat to 'totally destroy' [North Korea] if need be will, therefore, likely worsen the already volatile situation."

At the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 19, President Trump called for preservation of sovereignty and slammed leaders in North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela. Here are key moments from that speech. Key moments from Trump's speech at the United Nations General Assembly, where he lauded sovereignty and slammed leaders in North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

At the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 19, President Trump called for preservation of sovereignty and slammed leaders in North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela. Here are key moments

from that speech. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

The silence from Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was particularly telling, because he has been eager to agree with Trump's every utterance on dealing with North Korea. A spokesman for Abe, Motosada Matano, declined to comment on Trump's speech.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, whom Trump accused of trying to "appease" North Korea by wanting to talk to the regime, has also been trying hard in recent weeks to show he is in sync with the U.S. president.

Moon's spokesman pointedly avoided reacting to Trump's "total destruction" line, saying the speech underscored the urgency of dealing with North Korea and that Seoul believed Trump remained committed to peace.

"We believe he expressed a firm and specific stance regarding the important issue of maintaining peace and security now facing the international community and the United Nations," the spokesman, Park Soo-hyun, said in a statement.

"Also, we believe he clearly showed how seriously the U.S. government takes this issue by allocating an unprecedentedly long period of time to address the North Korean nuclear and North Korean issues in his U.N. address as a U.S. president," he said.

[Why Trump's threat to 'totally destroy' North Korea is extraordinary — even for him]

In his speech, Trump said that if Kim Jong Un's regime continued to threaten the United States and to destabilize East Asia, his administration was prepared to use force.

"The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea," Trump said.

Tensions between the Trump administration and Kim's regime have risen to new heights as North Korea has fired increasingly long-range missiles, including two that are theoretically able to reach the mainland United States, and has detonated a hydrogen bomb.

As these tensions have mounted, Trump has warned Kim that he will

feel the full "fire and fury" of the United States and that the United States was "locked and loaded."

Successive U.S. administrations have long considered military options for dealing with North Korea highly problematic because the Kim regime could immediately retaliate by unleashing waves of conventional artillery on the South Korean capital, causing widespread devastation. The greater Seoul area is home to 25 million people, almost all of whom are within range of North Korean artillery.

Analysts said that Trump's speech would ring alarm bells in the region.

"American rhetoric on North Korea has traditionally been quite restrained, they haven't been trying to match the North Korean rhetoric," said John Delury, an American professor of international relations at Yonsei University in Seoul.

"So there is a genuine concern here: Is the Trump administration serious? Are they going to take us into the war we've avoided having since 1953?" he said, referring to the end of the Korean War.

Narushige Michishita, a Korea expert at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo, said that while the Abe government supported a hard line on North Korea, many Japanese people would also be concerned about Japan's suffering during any conflict.

"The use of massive force would cause a huge amount of destruction in South Korea, but Japan might also suffer," he said.

[Trump's menacing United Nations speech, annotated]

For China, the military option was "unimaginable" and "too costly," said Cui Zhiying, director of the Korean Peninsula Research Center at Tongji University in Shanghai.

"War is an unimaginable option, and it should not be an option at all. It would hurt all parties, everyone on the peninsula and in the Northeast Asia region," he said. "Peaceful, diplomatic dialogue is the only way to solve this issue," he said.

Cui cautioned that military action from the United States would drag China into a difficult position as it would have no choice but react.

"China does not want to see war or chaos in North Korea," he said. "If the United States were to take military actions, China would have to react, simply because it's right on its doorstep."

In Russia, which has largely defended North Korea's interests although it supported the tightened sanctions, Trump's remarks were seen as a dangerous harbinger of instability.

Leading members of the Russian foreign policy establishment said that Trump's statements echoed his inexperience and were potentially dangerous for U.S. allies.

"Any military conflict means deaths of civilians. It is especially odd as the U.S. considers South Korea and Japan its allies, and they could be affected in case of a strike," Andrei Klimov, chairman of the foreign affairs committee in Russia's upper house of parliament, told the Interfax news agency in an interview Tuesday.

Act Four newsletter

The intersection of culture and politics.

While Russian officials were initially excited about Trump's readiness to overturn the international order, a promised detente with Russia has failed to materialize, while bellicose rhetoric against Russian partners such as North Korea and Iran has been stepped up.

At least "unlike his predecessors, he didn't put Russia among the main threats to mankind and even praised our country for cooperating with the Security Council on North Korea," Konstantin Kosachyov, another senior member of Russia's upper house of parliament, wrote in a post on Facebook.

But Trump's speech was "disappointing," said Kosachyov, who was in New York for this week's summit, particularly for "the extremely dangerous statements about the readiness to 'totally destroy North Korea' and exit the Iran deal as 'one of the worst for the U.S. and an embarrassment.' Plus Syria, Cuba and Venezuela as though they were the worst dictatorships in the history of mankind."

Denyer reported from Beijing. Luna Lin in Beijing and Andrew Roth in Moscow contributed to this report.

In Trump's U.N. speech, emphasis on sovereignty echoes his domestic agenda

<https://www.facebook.com/greg.jaffe.5>

9-11 minutes

National Security

Analysis

Analysis Interpretation of the news based on evidence, including data, as well as anticipating how events might unfold based on past events

At the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 19, President Trump called for preservation of sovereignty and slammed leaders in North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela. Here are key moments from that speech. Key moments from Trump's speech at the United Nations General Assembly, where he lauded sovereignty and slammed leaders in North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

At the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 19, President Trump called for preservation of sovereignty and slammed leaders in North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela. Here are key moments from that speech. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

By Greg Jaffe and Karen DeYoung

National Security

Analysis

Analysis Interpretation of the news based on evidence, including data, as well as anticipating how events might unfold based on past events

September 19 at 1:01 PM

President Trump took a domestic agenda that has emphasized nationalism and sovereignty and in his first address to the United Nations on Tuesday made it the foundation of his foreign policy.

The speech before the global body was notable for its tone, which largely sidestepped the statesmanlike language of his other foreign policy addresses. In his attacks on the United States' enemies — especially North Korea and Iran — Trump was bellicose and direct. In those moments, he sounded a lot like his Twitter feed.

Trump referred to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as "Rocket Man" and accused him of being on a "suicide mission for himself and for his regime." The president promised to "totally destroy" North Korea if it attacked the United States or its allies.

He hinted that he would soon pull the United States out of the international nuclear deal with Tehran, a move that would unnerve U.S. allies who are also parties to it.

"That deal is an embarrassment to the United States, and I don't think you have heard the last of it," he said. "Believe me."

How Trump is changing America's foreign policy

In previewing the speech for reporters, one senior White House aide described it as "a deeply philosophical address" that would explain "how America fits into the world, how it operates, what its values are."

These have been subjects of often intense debate in a White House split between foreign policy traditionalists and Trump's senior political advisers who have helped shape his "America first" agenda. Trump's initial instincts often have been to upend U.S. foreign policy — or at least question the core principles that have guided it — before pivoting back to a more traditional stance.

Trump's U.N. speech struggled with these conflicting impulses to the point of incoherence. In paying homage to American generosity on the world stage, Trump cited several U.S.-funded global health programs that the budget his administration released May 7 calls for significantly cutting.

He praised the Marshall Plan, which rebuilt Europe after World War II, even as he has repeatedly vowed that the United States' days of nation-building are finished.

In some moments, Trump suggested that his commitment to sovereignty — a word that he repeated 21 times in the 40-minute speech — would lead to a less interventionist foreign policy.

"Strong, sovereign nations let diverse countries with different values, different cultures and different dreams not just coexist but work side by side on the basis of mutual respect," he said. He vowed to follow a policy of "principled realism" that would be guided solely by the United States' interests.

In other instances, Trump outlined a far more expansive role for the United States. The president was selective in his view of bad actors — North Korea, Iran, Cuba, Syria and Venezuela — whose sovereignty did not merit respect. He made little mention of China or

Russia, congratulating both on their recent U.N. vote for more sanctions on North Korea and offering only a brief mention of Moscow's violations of Ukraine's sovereign territory.

President Trump addresses the U.N. General Assembly at U.N. headquarters in New York on Tuesday. (Drew Angerer/Getty Images)

He cast Iran as a "murderous regime" whose destabilizing activities in the world must be stopped. "The Iranian government masks a corrupt dictatorship behind the false guise of a democracy," he said.

Trump's message seemed most muddled when he extended to Venezuela his list of enemies who had forfeited some aspects of their sovereignty. In this instance, Trump said that the United States' respect for sovereignty is also "a call to action."

In an unintentional echo of President George W. Bush's activist freedom agenda, he said the United States should help Venezuela's people "regain their freedom, recover their country and restore their democracy."

Trump attributed Venezuela's near-collapse to the imposition of a "socialist dictatorship" rather than the authoritarianism and corruption most experts blame. He vowed the United States would "take further action" if the Venezuelan government "persists on its path."

Trump cast his presidency as an avatar of international renewal — "a great reawakening of nations" — built around his unique vision of global leadership and sovereignty. He described the world as weak and divided but suggested that a renewed patriotic spirit, national self-interest and cooperation among sovereign nations in pursuit of shared goals could cure most international ills.

"The true question for the United Nations today and for people all over the world ... is a basic one," Trump said. "Are we still patriots? Do we love our nations enough to protect their sovereignty and take ownership of their future?"

As he has repeatedly at home, Trump used the principle of sovereignty to mount an attack on "mammoth multinational trade deals" that he said had empowered faceless global bureaucracies over nation-states. At home, he said, the

deals sent factory jobs overseas and hollowed out the middle class.

"Our great middle class, once the bedrock of American prosperity, was forgotten and left behind. But they are forgotten no more, and they will never be forgotten again," Trump said.

It was unclear, though, how Trump's emphasis on sovereignty would lead to the "great reawakening" and global comity that he was promising.

There is general agreement on the threat posed by North Korea, but China and Russia have a somewhat different idea on where their national sovereign interests lie in determining how to confront Pyongyang. On Iran, while the Sunni Muslim world and Israel largely share the U.S. view that the nuclear agreement is detrimental, most European allies differ.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

Global issues that occupied Trump's predecessors went unmentioned or were noted only in passing. President Barack Obama used his last speech before the United Nations to warn of the severe strains on the international system that the United States built in the wake of World War II.

By contrast, Trump complained about "unaccountable international tribunals and powerful global bureaucracies" that sapped the sovereignty of nations. He did not discuss climate change, nonproliferation, human rights or the Middle East peace process that had been a staple of previous presidents' speeches. Nor did he acknowledge the suffering in Burma, also known as Myanmar, where U.N.-described "ethnic cleansing" has driven nearly a half-million people from the country in recent weeks.

White House officials described the speech as part of a trilogy that began in May in Saudi Arabia, where Trump first described a foreign policy of "principled realism," and continued during his July remarks in Poland. His U.N. address echoed those earlier speeches' emphasis on "real-world outcomes" over "inflexible ideology."

But the U.N. speech cast the United States and Trump in a far bigger role on the global stage. In looking after U.S. interests and defending the principles of sovereignty and

patriotism, Trump said he was hoping to spark a "rebirth of devotion" across the world.

At the United Nations, Trump was an "America first" president with grand and global ambitions.

Greg Jaffe is a reporter on the national staff of The Washington

Post, where he has been since March 2009. Previously, he covered the White House and the military for The Post.

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Karen DeYoung is associate editor and senior national security

correspondent for the Washington Post.

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Trump Returns U.S. to Realpolitik in World Affairs

Gerald F. Seib

5-7 minutes

Sept. 19, 2017 3:58 p.m. ET

Early in his maiden speech to the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, President Donald Trump offered fellow world leaders the best, most concise summary he's ever provided of his approach to world affairs: "We are guided by outcomes, not ideology," he declared.

Having signaled that his listeners should be prepared for some blunt, hard-nosed pragmatism, Mr. Trump proceeded to deliver just that. In many ways, in fact, Mr. Trump's address marked the return of American foreign policy to realpolitik: a set of principles and precepts based on practical considerations rather than philosophical or moral calculations.

And while his predecessors might have cloaked their threats and grievances in a rhetorical velvet glove while at the U.N., Mr. Trump took off that glove while delivering the most important and most revealing speech of his young presidency.

He declared that if the U.S. is forced to defend against North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, "we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea." In the president's terminology, Kim Jong Un wasn't the leader of North

Korea, but rather the "Rocket Man...on a suicide mission."

Iran, a country his predecessor spent years seeking to engage, was in Mr. Trump's description a nation engaged in the "pursuit of death and destruction." As for the nuclear deal with Iran that President Barack Obama's team labored for years to negotiate, Mr. Trump branded it "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into" and "an embarrassment."

Mr. Trump also warned that the U.S. is prepared to take further, undefined steps to change the course of Venezuela's socialist regime. And, while he offered words of thanks to China and Russia for help on other matters, he indirectly called them out for their aggressive behavior in their neighborhoods:

"We must reject threats to sovereignty, from the Ukraine to the South China Sea. We must uphold respect for law, respect for borders and respect for culture, and the peaceful engagement these allow."

Both the stark nature of Mr. Trump's messages and his willingness to deliver them from the U.N. podium were unprecedented for an American president. The U.N. audience got Trumpism in its pure, unvarnished form.

In one of the most intriguing sections of the speech, Mr. Trump attempted to define what his "America First" approach to the presidency really means, in terms specifically designed to appeal to

fellow world leaders nervous about the concept:

"As president of the United States, I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your countries, will always and should always put your countries first. All responsible leaders have an obligation to serve their own citizens, and the nation-state remains the best vehicle for elevating the human condition."

That final line represented a dig at the notion that a global economy, instantaneous world-wide communications and the free flow of goods and people are making traditional national identities obsolete. The Trump message is the opposite: Nations and borders matter no less in the era of globalization.

Afterward, some said they found the president's bluntness refreshing, others alarming. But all who listened came away understanding that the Trump Doctrine is the doctrine of transactions: I am not disengaging from the world, he seemed to be saying, but rather engaging with it on my terms, and purely in pursuit of American interests.

The address had some broader strokes as well. In fact, it was almost two speeches back-to-back.

The first segment offered some of the more traditional odes to American ideals and leadership: "In America, we do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to watch," Mr. Trump

declared. "In America the people govern, the people rule and the people are sovereign."

From there, he moved into the second section, marked by direct messages to American foes. His barbed warnings to North Korea will get the most attention, and raise the question of whether such threats are more likely to scare North Korea away from nuclear weapons or deepen its belief they are needed for protection.

Yet the most dramatic departure from the approach of the Obama administration actually came elsewhere, in his discussion of Iran. Mr. Obama saw Iran as a country to be engaged and slowly pulled away from its revolutionary moorings and into the international mainstream.

Mr. Trump suggested no patience for such a course. Instead, he virtually called for Iranians to effect a regime change:

"Oppressive regimes cannot endure forever, and the day will come when the people will face a choice: Will they continue down the path of poverty, bloodshed and terror, or will the Iranian people return to the nation's proud roots as a center of civilization, culture and wealth, where their people can be happy and prosperous once again?"

Write to Gerald F. Seib at jerry.seib@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 20, 2017, print edition as 'Trump Signals U.S.'s Return to Realpolitik.'

POLITICO Trump's U.N. Speech Was Bad, But Let's Not Lose Our Heads

By JAMES P. RUBIN

7-8 minutes

Washington And The World

The president didn't convert his fellow world leaders to his apocalyptic view of Iran and North Korea. But he didn't lay the groundwork for war, either.

Contrary to assertions by all those breathless commentators on cable

news, President Donald Trump's maiden speech to the United Nations was not a rallying cry for war akin to President George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union that hyped the Iraqi threat and was followed several months later by the U.S. invasion of Iraq. That was also the speech in which Bush famously declared an "axis of evil" comprising North Korea, Iraq and Iran, all dangerous states developing weapons of mass destruction and supporting global terrorism.

Fifteen years later, those three countries have ended up on starkly different paths. Iraq is struggling but not collapsing, with a representative government confronting instability, ethnic conflict and the depredations of the Islamic State. Iran, meanwhile, is free of its most economically crippling sanctions as a result of an agreement with the world's major powers to neutralize an enrichment program perilously close to enabling nuclear weapons and to verify that shutdown with unprecedented on-site inspections

by international experts. And North Korea, despite increasingly tighter international sanctions, now possesses an arsenal of nuclear weapons and has, or soon will have, the know-how to deliver those weapons on medium- and long-range missiles capable of striking not only Japan and much of Asia, but also the continental United States.

Story Continued Below

In Tuesday's address, Trump made an earnest effort to place Kim Jong

Un and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the pantheon of global villains. "If the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph," he declared. "When decent people and nations become bystanders to history, the forces of destruction only gather power and strength." But these words could easily have been uttered by any of his predecessors, and not just George W. Bush. American presidents have often sought to turn world affairs into a morality play, with the United States cast as the hero. It doesn't change the fact that very few, if any, serious observers believe the U.S. has realistic military options in Pyongyang or Tehran.

As for the screaming headlines about Trump's threat to destroy North Korea, that comment was merely a somewhat blunter statement of U.S. declaratory policy going back decades. Many focused on the president's childish "Rocket Man" nickname for Kim and ignored the fine print: The elimination of North Korea will take place only if the U.S. were "forced to defend ourselves or our allies."

That promise of assured destruction is nuclear deterrence 101. The other side must know that, if attacked, the United States will use overwhelming force in retaliation. This is the apocalyptic logic that kept the Soviet Union and the United States wary of war for four decades. It is also the reason nuclear weapons may be a lot less useful than North Korea's dictator seems to think.

Which is not to say that Trump advanced his policy on North Korea, or for that matter Iran. Normally, a U.S. president goes to the U.N. to convince world leaders of a gathering danger and to try to persuade them to join the U.S. effort to deal with that danger. Trump certainly took a novel approach: While alienating allies with over-the-top language and frightening friends with a Manichean division of the world into good and evil, most of what the president said seemed like a bad class in international relations led by a teacher who emphasizes the wrong words and syllables. Some White House officials must have thought it was a breakthrough to emphasize that states are

sovereign. But for many years now Democratic and Republican administrations alike have been explaining to U.N. skeptics on Capitol Hill that the U.N. is not some separate entity but rather a group of nation-states that can achieve their common goals through collective action. It's hardly the world government of the far right's fever dreams.

America's problem goes well beyond Trump, of course. During the Bush years, the wholesale scuttling of international treaties and the Iraq War took a big toll on goodwill toward Washington. But the Obama administration lost goodwill too, for the opposite reason: European and Asian leaders saw that Washington was stepping back from global leadership, dumping Russia's invasion of Ukraine in Angela Merkel's lap and leaving no one to deter Moscow from a dramatic return to the Middle East on behalf of Syria's Bashar Assad.

If there was any goodwill left toward the U.S., Trump has now emptied the account with his threat to withdraw from the Iran deal, which

he ripped as "an embarrassment" and "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into." The U.N. hall was filled with individuals who participated personally in a dozen years of diplomacy related to Iran's nuclear program. All of them believe the Iran accord is a major diplomatic achievement. The last thing they wanted to hear was more carping from a U.S. president who has not offered a better alternative.

Trump seems to lack any comprehension of the need to bring other countries around to the U.S. point of view. As much as he insisted that "America First" is just the way the world really works, Tuesday's speech was a stark departure from seven decades of U.S. presidents who worked to inspire and lead international alliances to meet new threats. The looks on the faces of Trump's counterparts seemed to say it all: Few of his fellow world leaders have the trust and confidence in him that is necessary to follow his lead. While no policy was advanced with his speech, U.S. international influence suffered another blow.



Trump's nationalist vision: Does it promote or endanger peace?

The Christian Science Monitor

5-7 minutes

September 19, 2017 United Nations, N.Y.—President Trump used his first appearance before world leaders assembled at the United Nations' annual opening session Tuesday to offer a vision for international cooperation that was part red meat, part kumbaya.

On the philosophical side, the "America First" president laid out a nationalist basis for international interaction, saying that national sovereignty and not multilateralism should be the foundation for international efforts to address the world's pressing issues.

"I was elected to give power to the American people where it belongs," Mr. Trump said, adding, "just like you, the leaders of your countries, will always, and should always, put the citizens of your countries first."

Yet Trump's full-throated praise of national sovereignty left no room to recognize that it was national sovereignty run amok that resulted in the global ashes from which the United Nations and an unprecedented era of multilateral cooperation arose seven decades ago.

And then came the red meat.

Trump lashed out at a group of "rogue nations" led by North Korea and Iran that he said were using their national sovereignty to spread violence and challenge international security. And he called on other nations to join the United States to stop these "wicked few" who are threatening world peace.

In the stark terms that thrill his domestic political base but which only rarely echo in the UN'S green-marbled diplomatic hall, Trump threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea if it proceeds with its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. And he vowed to take on the "murderous regime" in Tehran that "masks a corrupt dictatorship."

Sounding more like candidate Trump than the American president, Trump belittled the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, describing him as a "rocket man on a suicide mission."

Trump had harsh words as well for the Iran nuclear deal, labeling it an "embarrassment" and "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into."

With such unequivocal language, the president seemed to be putting the world body on notice that the US will soon put Iran back on the international center stage, where it was before the nuclear deal was concluded in 2015.

'Deeply philosophical' or throwback to past?

While Trump's harsh words for North Korea and Iran were largely reiterations of existing positions, it was the theme of national sovereignty that offered what sounded like an earnest effort to explain a leadership approach that jarred the world.

A senior White House official speaking Monday on condition of anonymity portrayed Trump's speech as "in essence explaining how the principle of 'America First' is not only consistent with the goal of international cooperation, but a rational basis for every country to engage in cooperation."

The official described the speech as a "deeply philosophical address" reflecting a worldview the president has been developing "for decades."

But for some longtime analysts of international relations, Trump's emphasis on national sovereignty sounded like a chilling throwback to an era of unbridled nationalist ambitions fueling conflict.

"There was a core contradiction at the heart of this speech, and it was this: If each individual nation puts itself before all others and pursues a hard nationalistic sovereignty, then the cooperation that Trump called for will be unattainable," says Charles Kupchan, a senior fellow at

the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington.

If anything, a reaffirmation of national sovereignty might end up a boon to the very dictators Trump condemned by name in his speech — including Syria's Bashar al-Assad and Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro — by reinforcing the argument that other nations should stay out of their internal affairs.

'Great reawakening of nations'

But perhaps even more alarming than the implicit contradiction in the speech is the danger it carries for the world of rekindled nationalism, says Dr. Kupchan.

"We heard the president praise a 'great reawakening of nations' — but that's a recipe for going back to dark days in history when it was each country for itself — and when that hard nationalism led to centuries of war," he says.

Trump was followed a few speeches later by French President Emmanuel Macron, whom many are seeing this year as the West's standard-bearer against Trump's vision of nationalism and rejection of postwar multilateralism.

Mr. Macron lauded the Paris climate accord from which the US has announced it is withdrawing, and other senior French officials in New York have insisted there is no alternative to the Iran nuclear deal,

which they highlight as an example of international diplomacy averting war.

Kupchan, who served on the National Security Council as special adviser on Europe in the Obama second term, says Europeans

understand better than many others the dangers in deconstructing the international order that followed World War II.

"The Europeans know that it was hard nationalistic sovereignty that fed a zero-sum competition that

resulted in conflict, but they also know that it was the international order – an order for which Americans have expended tremendous blood and treasure since Pearl Harbor – that allowed them to escape centuries of bloodshed."

Interpreting Trump's speech as "taking a wrecking ball to that order," Kupchan says, "It's hard to see why anyone would want to do that."

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : Warmongers and Peacemakers at the U.N.

The Editorial Board

5-7 minutes

Illustration by Joan Wong; Obama photo by Stephen Crowley/The New York Times and Trump photo by Chang W. Lee, via The New York Times

The United Nations isn't the venue one would expect for threatening war. Yet that's what President Trump did in his first address to the General Assembly.

Mr. Trump's performance had echoes of President George W. Bush's infamous "axis of evil" demonizing of Iran, North Korea and Iraq in 2002. This time, Iraq was spared, having disappeared from Mr. Trump's enemies list. Iran came across as "reckless," savage and not to be trusted despite an Obama-era agreement to halt Iran's nuclear weapons program. North Korea was even more clearly in the president's cross hairs. He warned that he would "totally destroy North Korea" to defend the United States and its allies, and he again disparaged North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, as "Rocket Man." He said Mr. Kim was on a "suicide mission for himself and for his regime."

In all this fury, before a world body whose main purpose is the peaceful

resolution of disputes, there was hardly a hint of compromise or interest in negotiations. It's a telling contrast to President Barack Obama's approach to many of the same problems in the same setting in 2009. Mr. Obama warned the General Assembly that "North Korea and Iran threaten to take us down this dangerous slope" and must be "held accountable" if "they put the pursuit of nuclear weapons ahead of regional stability." But he also said he respected "their rights as members of the community of nations" and was "committed to diplomacy that opens a path to greater prosperity and more secure peace for both nations if they live up to their obligations."

Like Mr. Obama, other presidents have used this setting to talk sternly to adversaries and exhort the world body to do more to confront international challenges. Mr. Trump's dark tone and focus seemed a significant deviation, not least his relentlessly bellicose approach to North Korea. "No one," he said, "has shown more contempt for other nations and for the well-being of their own people than the depraved regime in North Korea."

Iran fared little better under Mr. Trump's withering assessment. "It is far past time for the nations of the world to confront another reckless regime, one that speaks openly of mass murder, vowing death to America, destruction to Israel and

ruin for many leaders and nations in this room," he said of the Shiite-led government in Tehran. He called the 2015 Iran nuclear deal "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into" and gave a clear signal that he means to back out of it, despite strong evidence that Iran is complying with the terms.

Under law, Mr. Trump is supposed to certify to Congress next month that Iran is still complying, and Tuesday's comments were the strongest sign that he will not, very likely forcing Congress to deal with the politically contentious issue. If America withdraws from the agreement, it will outrage the other major powers that are party to the deal — France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China — and give Iran an excuse to resume a full-blown nuclear program. Why Mr. Trump would risk that when North Korea's program is a full-time concern is a mystery.

Mr. Trump's largely benign comments about the United Nations were encouraging, considering he once condemned it as useless and having no place in his "America First" vision. But his references to the body as a collection of sovereign nations seemed intended for his base, most of which applauds Mr. Trump's nationalism and much of which suspects the United Nations is bent on establishing a world government.

While Mr. Trump praised the world body for its work with refugees and health and commended the secretary general, António Guterres, for his efforts to reform the institution, he complained that the United States, at 22 percent of the budget, pays "an unfair share of the burden."

Mr. Obama was not blind to the United Nations' weaknesses, observing that "this body has often become a forum for sowing discord instead of forging common ground; a venue for playing politics and exploiting grievances rather than solving problems." And he told members that "responsibility and leadership in the 21st century demand more." But he was also more committed to multilateralism in general, noting that after the George W. Bush years, his administration had "re-engaged the United Nations. We have paid our bills."

As to presidential bearing, there was all the difference in the world. Mr. Trump, still obsessed with his victory, asserted that the United States has done "very well" since Election Day and that the military would soon be "the strongest it has ever been." Mr. Obama spoke of being humbled by the office and determined to "act boldly and collectively on behalf of justice and prosperity at home and abroad."

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Editorial : Trump Shock at Turtle Bay

The Editorial Board

5-6 minutes

Sept. 19, 2017 7:13 p.m. ET

Donald Trump's method has been to use his speeches on the world stage to roil diplomatic convention, and he did it again Tuesday in his address to the United Nations. No coterie of complacency deserves candor more, and perhaps Mr. Trump's definition of "America First" is even evolving to recognize the necessity of American global leadership.

The President abandoned any nuance, even by his standards, in

denouncing the "rogue regimes" in North Korea and Iran. He was especially unabashed in describing North Korea's offenses, calling it a "depraved regime." These aren't words typically heard at Turtle Bay, where others among the depraved sit on the Human Rights Council, as Mr. Trump also had the effrontery to point out.

But he really rattled the seats with his threat to act against North Korea if the U.N. fails to do so. "No nation on Earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals arm itself with nuclear weapons and missiles," Mr. Trump said. "The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket Man is

on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime."

The threat to destroy the North offended the foreign affairs cognoscenti, who view Mr. Trump as a barbarian. And at first hearing the "Rocket Man" reference to dictator Kim Jong Un does sound like an insult better left to teenagers in the school yard.

Then again, Mr. Trump inherited the North Korean nuclear crisis, and he is trying to get a cynical world's attention that he intends to do something about it. Traditional diplomacy isn't getting through to Mr. Kim and his entourage, or to their patrons in Beijing. After years of Barack Obama's diplomatic niceties that ducked the problem,

maybe the world needs to be told some unpleasant truths about an evil regime with a weapon of mass murder and the means to deliver it.

Mr. Trump added a challenge that most of the media ignored: "The United States is ready, willing, and able, but hopefully this will not be necessary. That's what the United Nations is all about. That's what the United Nations is for. Let's see how they do."

This is another hard truth. The U.N. was founded on the promise to provide what Mr. Obama often called "collective security." But the U.N. has nearly always failed in that duty amid Russian vetoes at the Security Council, as during the Cold War and this decade in Syria, or out

of indifference as in the Rwanda genocide of the 1990s.

The great exception was the first Iraq war, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when George H.W. Bush rallied the U.N. to resist Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. The U.S. provided the military muscle to enforce the U.N.'s will, but at least the U.N. wasn't an obstacle. Alas, Turtle Bay has since returned to its previous habit of abetting the world's rogues by preventing collective security.

Mr. Trump on Tuesday also tried to make a case for national "sovereignty" as

the basis for U.N. purpose, and here he was less successful. He is right that national interests can be the basis for global action, but Mr. Trump defines that interest too narrowly.

"We do not expect diverse countries to share the same cultures, traditions, or even systems of government," he said, "but we do expect all nations to uphold these two core sovereign duties, to respect the interests of their own people and rights of every other sovereign nation."

How about the *rights* of their own people? Defined in such narrow

terms, "sovereignty" and "interests" don't include room for how nations govern themselves, which matters to how dangerous they are to their neighbors. In his own speech Mr. Trump rightly spent many sentences deploring how North Korea and Iran treat *their* people.

This view of "sovereignty" also leaves authoritarians too much room to claim dominant spheres of influence. China's Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin might both say they are exercising Trumpian sovereignty in the South China Sea and Ukraine. Yet those leaders are the main obstacles now to

defanging North Korea and Iran. This is the contradiction of narrow Trumpian national interest.

Mr. Trump is right to challenge the U.N., but the hard truth he may be learning is that there is no substitute for U.S. leadership on behalf of American values and interests if he wants to build a more peaceful world.

Appeared in the September 20, 2017, print edition.



gtonpostopinions

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). President Trump addresses the U.N. General Assembly. (Richard Drew/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 19 at 7:31 PM

FOR THOSE who have been alarmed by President Trump's retreat from traditional American values, there were reassuring moments Tuesday in his first address to the U.N. General



TODAY

4-5 minutes

'No choice but to totally destroy North Korea': Our view

President Trump addresses the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 19, 2017. (Photo: Andrew Gombert, epa)

Teddy Roosevelt embraced a principled standard for a muscular foreign policy when he repeated the West African proverb to "speak softly and carry a big

Editorial : Trump undermines his own advocacy for human dignity

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

Assembly.

Mr. Trump rightly and scathingly attacked regimes that deprive their own people of liberty, such as those in North Korea and Venezuela, but he did not limit his attacks to easy targets. He criticized "authoritarian powers" that "seek to collapse the values, the systems and alliances that prevented conflict and tilted the world toward freedom since World War II." Specifically, he came to the defense of the sovereignty of Ukraine and the South China Sea — that is, in the face of challenges from Russia and China. He said the United States expects all nations "to respect the interests of their own people" and the United Nations to be "a much more accountable and effective advocate for human dignity and freedom around the world." These represent a heartening endorsement of enduring American goals.

Less reassuring were Mr. Trump's schoolboy taunts of "Rocket Man," his sobriquet for North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, and his threats, if the United States is "forced to defend itself or its allies ... to totally destroy North Korea."

The leader of a powerful nation makes himself sound simultaneously weak and bellicose with such bluster.

Evening Edition newsletter

The day's most important stories.

And then, somewhere in between, there was Mr. Trump's repeated emphasis on sovereignty. He talked often and admiringly of "strong sovereign nations" and "strong and independent nations."

We agree that "the nation-state remains the best vehicle for elevating the human condition." But there was something discordant in using the United Nations podium to proclaim the virtue, essentially, of national selfishness over international cooperation and multilateral organization. No doubt Presidents Xi Jinping of China and Vladimir Putin of Russia will welcome this aspect of Mr. Trump's address. They, too, have insisted on the unassailable "sovereignty" of their formidable states and demanded that others not lecture them about values such as democracy and human rights, which they fear and abhor. Mr. Putin once

rolled out a concept he called "sovereign democracy," which turned out to be nothing more than a cover for eventually crushing Russia's nascent democracy.

Indeed, Mr. Trump seemed to repudiate his own advocacy for human dignity and freedom when he said that "we do not expect diverse countries to share the same cultures, traditions or even systems of government" — as if democracy should be optional under the U.N. Charter. Mr. Trump cast the Polish, French and British resistance to Nazi dictatorship as motivated by "patriotism" for the "nations that they loved." This is a superficial rendering of what was in fact an existential drive to save democratic and free societies from a genocidal steamroller. The United States, too, fought and sacrificed for these hallowed principles. And when World War II ended, the United Nations was created to protect these values — the charter says to protect "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person" — and not just to provide a new system for nation-states to get along.

Editorial : At the United Nations, Trump tries to out-bluff 'rocket man'

The Editorial Board, USA

stick." In other words, he was saying, the mere projection of overwhelming military might was more effective than loud, rancorous threats.

President Trump — with his name-calling, annihilation-threatening harangue against North Korea before the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday — turned this standard on its head. "We will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea" if provoked, Trump vowed.

Set aside for a moment the deeply unsettling imagery of killing 25 million people, most of them suffering under Kim Jong Un's

totalitarian regime. Or the incongruity of such apocalyptic utterances before an assembly that, as Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., later pointed out, was created to "foster peace and global cooperation."

Can this kind of tough-guy talk actually work? Call us skeptical.

OTHER VIEWS: Trump's threats are no big deal

Just ask Steve Bannon, Trump's former chief strategist, about the limitations of an attack on North Korea, which would likely unleash a barrage of missiles against South Korea and U.S. troops stationed there. "Until somebody solves the

part of the equation that shows me that 10 million people in Seoul don't die in the first 30 minutes from conventional weapons ... there's no military solution here, they got us," Bannon told *The American Prospect* last month.

And consider the record. In August, Trump folded his arms during a staff meeting, glared at cameras and promised "fire and fury like the world has never seen" raining down on North Korea if it threatened the United States. Two weeks later, Kim test fired three missiles in one day. A week after that, he carried out his nation's sixth underground nuclear test with an explosion so large it collapsed part of a mountain.

Perhaps there's a case for making Kim, and his Chinese enablers, think you are crazy enough to start a nuclear conflagration. But North Korea has for years threatened to reduce countries to ashes or sink them into a sea of fire, using language so over the top that it has become comical and lost its menace. Trump risks something similar with his bellicosity.

Before the General Assembly, Trump rightly called upon all nations to isolate Kim's murderous regime. Then the

president undermined that goal with the kind of man-to-man tabloid bombast — "Rocket Man is on a suicide mission" — that raises Kim's stature and makes him more, rather than less, likely to cling to the nuclear arsenal that he thinks will guarantee his survival.

To be sure, the Obama-era policy of "strategic patience" toward North Korea was a failure. More assertive steps are necessary to deal with the threat of North Korea developing an intercontinental ballistic missile with

a nuclear warhead that could reach the U.S. mainland.

Such efforts include even tougher economic sanctions than the ones approved in recent U.N. Security Council resolutions, as well as crackdowns on financial institutions that help Kim pay for his weapons program.

Meanwhile, Secretary of Defense James Mattis has promised options — likely to include cyber sabotage and sophisticated missile interception programs — that could

stymie Kim's missile testing without provoking the long-feared conventional attack on Seoul.

All of these are promising alternatives short of the devastating options Trump keeps blustering about. America's 45th president needs to take a lesson from its 26th. America has by far the world's biggest diplomatic and military sticks. That speaks volumes.

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

Trump's 'Rocket Man' UN Speech Laid Out Emerging Foreign Policy

5-6 minutes

It will be known, at least for now, as the Rocket Man speech, but it was more than that.

In his first address to the United Nations, Donald Trump delivered a solid and necessary defense of the importance of national sovereignty, defended an American-centered world order, and spoke forthrightly about threats to international peace and security emanating from North Korea and other rogue states.

Trump laid out the essentials of his emerging foreign policy. The foundation of a healthy international order is a "coalition of strong and independent nations that embrace their sovereignty to promote security, prosperity, and peace for themselves and for the world." Trump specifically rejected the notion that nations must conform to the same political or cultural ideals, but he did not simply fall back on an international relativism. Trump declared, "We do expect all nations to uphold these two core sovereign duties: to respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation."

He underlined those standards when blasting the world's bad actors. His best line was directed at Venezuela.

Offering a

moment of clarity to a world that often acts puzzled as to why a once-prosperous nation is sinking into poverty and chaos, Trump said, "The problem in Venezuela is not that socialism has been poorly implemented, but that socialism has been faithfully implemented." That's exactly right, and it's a sad testament to socialism's enduring ideological appeal that what should have been an applause line was met with stony silence.

Regarding North Korea, Trump was his usual bellicose self — even working in his new pet insult for Kim Jong-un, calling him "Rocket Man" "on a suicide mission." That line is already burning up the Internet, but a nickname doesn't constitute a policy. Yes, the president memorably pledged to "totally destroy" North Korea if the U.S. "is forced to defend itself or its allies." Yet massive retaliation and regime change in the event of a renewed Korean War has been American policy for decades.

It is still not clear what Trump's North Korean strategy is, nor is it clear if Trump will meaningfully shift American policies regarding Iran. He declared the nuclear deal an "embarrassment." It's clear that he wants to opt out of the deal, but he hasn't thus far, and it's far from certain that he will in the future. Clearly (and rightly) Trump is frustrated with both regimes and the

diplomatic status quo. But forging something different is much easier said than done; both nations have consistently and successfully defied his predecessors.

Trump ended his address with an ode to patriotism, noting that a desire for a free nation has inspired some of history's most admirable fights: "Patriotism led the Poles to die to save Poland, the French to fight for a free France, and the Brits to stand strong for Britain." In a rebuke to those who imagine a body like the U.N. eventually growing into a global government, Trump argued that the world is best served when nations "defend their interests, preserve their cultures, and ensure a peaceful world for their citizens."

Indeed, earlier in the speech, he referred to the post-World War II Marshall Plan as being "built on the noble idea that the whole world is safer when nations are strong, independent, and free." Yes, the rebuilding of our allies (and the remaking of our former foes) did result in prosperous, independent nations, but America's post-war strategy put a heavy emphasis on the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, and markets — not just because these things are conducive to human thriving, but because it is in our cold-eyed interest to see them spread around the world.

Trump's speech was a bit of a shotgun marriage between conventional Republican foreign-policy thinking — with Trump accepting America's international role, despite his complaints about the costs — and a few of his signature nationalist themes. He wants to avoid the vaulting idealism of George W. Bush in favor of a more modest vision, and yet Bush could have made the same critiques of the rogue nations in largely the same terms.

Trump's foreign policy is a work in progress. So far he has steered clear of the follies that seemed possible during the campaign — turning his back on NATO, for instance — and, in fact, hasn't plowed much new ground. With the exception of the welcome pullout from the Paris accords, the president has accepted the status quo. In North Korea and Iran, that means failure. Trump has put the world unmistakably on notice that he's unhappy with this state of affairs. Now, he and his team need concrete strategies that better serve our interests — as a sovereign nation and a world leader.

READ MORE:
A Donald Trump Speech, a Barack Obama Foreign Policy Trump's Successful U.N. Speech 'Holy Sh**': Trump at the U.N.



Boot : 'Me first' speech abandons Truman's 'security for all'

Max Boot,
Opinion columnist

6-8 minutes

Published 4:46 p.m. ET Sept. 19, 2017 | Updated 7:49 p.m. ET Sept. 19, 2017

During his speech at the U.N. General Assembly, President Donald Trump called on countries to stop trade with North Korea and stop its nuclear program. He also targeted Iran, calling it a 'reckless

regime' that funds terrorism. (Sept. 19) AP

Truman would have been appalled to see a U.S. president threatening war and praising national sovereignty as the greatest good.

President Trump (Photo: Mary Altaffer, AP)

Harry Truman was a modest man from a humble upbringing who served his country in war and peace. In other words, the anti-Trump. Thus it is no surprise that

when he addressed the conference that founded the United Nations in 1945, his message was pretty much the opposite of what his bombastic successor Donald Trump said at the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday.

Truman's speech in San Francisco was all about the need for countries to curb their exercise of self-interest for the greater good of mankind. He urged the assembled delegates to act on the "lessons of military and economic cooperation" learned during World War II by creating a

"great instrument for peace and security and human progress." He warned U.N. members against using their power "selfishly — for the advantage of any one nation or any small group of nations."

More: The 'Make America Great Again' crowd finally turning their backs on Trump

More: From DACA to North Korea, Trump's BS and bluffs put America at risk

"We all have to recognize — no matter how great our strength —

that we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please," Truman said. "If any nation would keep security for itself, it must be ready and willing to share security with all. That is the price which each nation will have to pay for world peace."

Truman's words laid the foundation for the liberal postwar order underwritten by America. Rather than pursuing our narrow self-interest, the Greatest Generation chose to help defeated enemies and devastated allies, sending generous aid via the Marshall Plan and creating lasting institutions such as NATO and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (forerunner of the World Trade Organization) to promote prosperity and security for all.

Truman and his aides would have been appalled if they had lived long enough to see Trump preening before the U.N. General Assembly, praising national sovereignty as the greatest good in the world, while threatening war and warning that "major portions of the world ... are going to hell."

"Our government's first duty is to its people, to our citizens, to serve their needs, to ensure their safety, to preserve their rights, and to defend their values," Trump said. "As president of the United States, I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your

countries, will always and should always put your countries first."

The Trump doctrine is selfishness squared. Just as Trump has never done anything in his life that did not benefit him personally, so he cannot imagine any nation acting for the general good. In his private life, it's me first. In his foreign policy, it's America First.

Trump abjured any desire to address human rights abuses abroad. "In America," he said, "we do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to watch."

That would come as news to the Truman administration, which successfully imposed "our way of life" on Italy, Germany and Japan, turning them from hostile dictatorships into friendly democracies.

Having spent the first part of his speech preaching a non-judgmental, non-interventionist foreign policy, Trump then upended that message by vowing to intervene against Iran and North Korea. Coherence has never been his strong suit.

More: Obamacare repeal is an ideological crusade past its sell-by date. Give it up, GOP

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

"Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime," he said, using a juvenile (and not unflattering) nickname for the dictator of North Korea, whose country he threatened to "totally destroy."

Then it was Iran's turn, with Trump demanding that its "government must stop supporting terrorists, begin serving its own people, and respect the sovereign rights of its neighbors." He also hinted that he'd abrogate the nuclear deal, even though there is no evidence that Iran has violated its terms.

And onto Syria and "the criminal regime of Bashar Assad," whose actions "shock the conscience of every decent person," and the "socialist dictatorship of Nicolas Maduro," which has "inflicted terrible pain and suffering on the good people of" Venezuela.

It did not occur to Trump that Kim Jong Un, Ayatollah Ali Khameni, Assad, Maduro and other dictators are all pursuing the same kind of "me first" policy that he advocates. They are committing atrocities and stockpiling weapons of mass destruction precisely in order to protect their "sovereignty," as they define it. And Trump's bellicose speech will only convince them that they are right to do so, because it reinforced the widespread impression that he is a war-mongering madman.

Trump may think that his bullying and swaggering will win respect for himself and his country, but he is wrong. As public opinion polls show, respect for America abroad has plummeted. Foreign leaders don't even take Trump's threats seriously: North Korea has conducted three missile tests and a massive nuclear test since he threatened "fire and fury" on Aug. 8.

Truman, who dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, clearly was not afraid to stand up to America's enemies. But he did not believe in empty threats, and he knew the importance of alliances. He made America trusted and respected, because he did not seek to take full advantage of its power. Other nations, in turn, were willing to curb their own demands for sovereignty — by, for example, hosting U.S. troops on their soil — for the greater good. The system of collective security that Truman created grew out of one world war and prevented the outbreak of another. It is now in serious danger of dismantlement at Trump's reckless hands.

Max Boot, a member of USA TODAY's Board of Contributors, is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. Follow him on Twitter: @MaxBoot.



Bloomberg : Stronger Global Relations Require Business Leadership

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7-9 minutes

As attention focuses on the UN General Assembly in New York, it's important to remember that in a global economy, America's relationship with the world does not depend solely on the state of politics along Pennsylvania Avenue. The ties that bind nations together today are deeply connected to trade and investment. Diplomatic relations are often grounded in economic relations, and while chief executives are not diplomats, they can be voices for cooperation on a wide range of issues in which the private sector can play a constructive role, from security to climate change. That dialogue cannot replace official diplomatic channels, but it can help affirm America's commitment to our allies in concrete ways. Actions taken by private companies can often carry more weight than words spoken (or tweeted) by public officials.

Since January, the Trump administration has been signaling a retreat from the institutions that have played a central role in preserving world order and advancing economic progress over the past seven decades. The president's failure to affirm Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty at last spring's NATO summit, his decision to pull out of the UN's Paris climate agreement, his proposed cuts to foreign aid, and his snail-paced filling of the highest-ranking State Department positions have left world leaders questioning America's commitment to global engagement. They have also diminished the ability of the U.S. to exercise soft power.

It is my hope, and the hope of many business leaders in both parties, that the Trump administration will reverse course and recognize that the U.S. is stronger as a nation when it leads on the global stage, including through international institutions, than it is when it retreats from it. But we are not holding our breath. Instead, we are seizing the opportunity to remind world leaders that the private sector

can repair and strengthen ties that the public sector allows to fray.

This week, leaders of more than 100 companies -- many of them U.S.-based -- will convene in New York for the first-ever Bloomberg Global Business Forum. More than 50 heads of state, who will be in town for the UN General Assembly, will join them for discussions about how government and business can work more closely together to create jobs, raise living standards and promote security.

While trade policy plays an important role in breaking down barriers between nations, the simple act of increasing dialogue among companies and countries can raise awareness of existing opportunities for, and obstacles to, new investment. Such talks can also lead to public-private partnerships aimed at tackling difficult -- and potentially profitable -- challenges, from improving agricultural efficiency to building modern infrastructure (where current trends indicate a \$15 trillion shortfall in the estimated \$94 trillion needed in global infrastructure in the next 15 years).

Governments cannot and will not close the gap on their own -- and on a wide array of issues, from public health and safety to broadband access and anti-poverty efforts, they are inherently limited in what they can get done. To address these and other issues, partnerships with companies will be necessary -- and also beneficial, because the private sector is often better at allocating resources productively, controlling costs, and using cutting-edge technology to solve problems.

It is important that we find ways to encourage governments to build stronger partnerships with the private sector, and to encourage business leaders to think about the larger public challenges facing societies.

When political alliances are strained, public-private partnerships can pick up the slack, as is now happening with climate change. When Donald Trump announced he was pulling the U.S. out of the Paris climate agreement, chief executives from every major industry announced that the decision would have no impact on their drive to curtail emissions and increase

investment in cleaner forms of energy. They recognize that such actions are in their long-term financial health, and many have joined mayors, governors and university leaders in signing on to "America's Pledge," an effort to meet and even exceed the emissions-reduction goal that the U.S. set in Paris.

Business leaders have a long tradition of supporting global engagement, through both their work and philanthropy. Bringing chief executives around a table with heads of state carries benefits for both groups. And with so much ambivalence at the White House, and with challenges around the world growing in number and complexity, private-sector leaders

should pull up their chairs and get down to the business of using markets, and partnerships, to build a stronger, more stable world.

This originally appeared on FT.com.

To contact the editor responsible for this story: David Shipley at davidshipley@bloomberg.net

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Michael R. Bloomberg, the former mayor of New York City, is the founder and majority owner of Bloomberg LP, the parent company of Bloomberg News. He is the UN secretary-general's special envoy for cities and climate change.



Lake : Trump at UN Evangelizes for American Exceptionalism

by Eli Lake
@elilake More

stories by Eli Lake

7-8 minutes

Foreign Policy

His foreign policy platform was "America First," but his UN speech hints at a neocon conversion.

September 19, 2017, 3:51 PM EDT

Have you heard the good news?

Photographer: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

If you want to get a sense of the enduring power of American exceptionalism, watch President Donald Trump's address Tuesday to the United Nations General Assembly. Here we got a clear message from the candidate whose foreign policy platform was "America first": He implored the regimes of weaker rogues to clean up their acts, or else.

The president threatened total destruction for North Korea. Its leader, whom Trump called "rocket man," is on a "suicide mission for himself and for his regime," Trump warned. "The United States is ready, willing and able, but hopefully this will not be necessary."

Iran? The deal his predecessor struck to temporarily limit the

nuclear program was an "embarrassment to the United States." But it doesn't end there.

Trump says that sooner or later revolution is coming to the Mullahs. He asserted the whole world "understands that the good people of Iran want change, and, other than the vast military power of the United States, that Iran's people are what their leaders fear the most."

This was just the warmup. Trump went full neocon for Venezuela. Its leader, Nicolas Maduro, is a dictator "stealing power from his own people."

Whereas Trump was vague about what his plan was for North Korea and Iran, for Venezuela he came very close to calling for regime change. "The United States has taken important steps to hold the regime accountable," Trump said. "We are prepared to take further action if the government of Venezuela persists on its path to impose authoritarian rule on the Venezuelan people."

For a moment, I closed my eyes and thought I was listening to a Weekly Standard editorial meeting.

To be sure, this is not quite a return to the days of George W. Bush, who in 2005 made it briefly U.S. policy to seek democratic transformation for friend and foe alike. Trump offered no critiques for the illiberal systems

and strongmen that rule Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Russia or China. He briefly called out threats to the sovereignty of Ukraine and the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, without mentioning Russia and China by name.

And yet Trump, who ran in part against the folly of neoconservative nation-building, is also not quite ready to give up the power of America's values in determining its interests. He calls his approach "principled realism." And on the surface it nods to the respect traditional foreign policy realists pay to national interests. But there is also a paradox. Trump still wants nation states to serve the interests of their people.

Consider this line from the speech: "We do not expect diverse countries to share the same cultures, traditions or even systems of government, but we do expect all nations to uphold these two core sovereign duties, to respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation."

On the one hand, Trump is correct. States with governments that respect their own people are almost always less bellicose than states ruled by authoritarians. Dictators like Vladimir Putin often must start foreign wars to distract from their own corruption at home.

At the same time, Trump's formulation leaves a lot of wiggle room for what traditional foreign policy realists deride as military adventurism. After all, who determines when a nation is respecting the interests of its people? Trump certainly isn't saying that is for the UN to decide. He spent a good portion of his speech threatening unilateral action against Iran, North Korea and Venezuela.

Trump's newfound enthusiasm is familiar to the public. America has been spreading its gospel for centuries, according to Robert Kagan's 2006 book, "A Dangerous Nation," which traced U.S. foreign policy from the founders to the dawn of the 20th century. Kagan argues persuasively that because America is a country founded on democratic revolution, it has always threatened unfree countries by its very existence. From the very early days of the republic, U.S. leaders have supported a kind of American exceptionalism we usually associate with the 20th century.

Trump's speechwriters are beginning to understand this. It's a lot better than some of Trump's early signals on foreign policy, when he ingratiated himself to dictators like Filipino strongman Rodrigo Duterte or Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan.



Miller and Bordsky : Trump's threats and themes don't add up

Aaron David Miller and Jason

Brodsky

8-10 minutes

Story highlights

- Authors: Trump's UN speech was a hodgepodge of tropes, themes and threats
- The speech made one unmistakable point: There is no coherent Trump Doctrine, they say

Aaron David Miller is a vice president and distinguished scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and author of "The End of Greatness: Why America Can't Have (and Doesn't Want) Another Great President." Miller was a Middle East negotiator in Democratic and Republican administrations. Follow him @aarondmiller2. Jason Brodsky is policy director at United Against Nuclear Iran, an advocacy group. The opinions expressed in this commentary are theirs.

(CNN)President Donald Trump's maiden speech to the UN General Assembly was a confusing

hodgepodge of tropes, themes and threats that made one unmistakable point: There is no coherent Trump Doctrine.

He awkwardly tried to reconcile the notion of "America First" with a global outreach and planetary humanism designed to appease and placate his largely international audience. Still, almost without exception, the key threats he identified -- North Korea and Iran -- will require, whether he likes it or not, the abandonment of America First in favor of cooperation with others. Here are the key takeaways:

Senior and junior 'Axis of Evil'

Trump seemed to be most comfortable -- consistent with his tough confrontational image likely to play well with his base -- when it came to his language about a new list of evildoers with which America and the world need to deal. Trump has amended George W. Bush's famous 2002 "Axis of Evil" list -- dropping Iraq and maintaining both North Korea and Iran, for which he reserved the toughest threats and language.

He seemed to create another category of what you might call junior evildoers, including Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro, Syria's Bashar al-Assad and maybe

the leaders of Cuba. It's almost certain that Syria would have made the big boys list were it not for Trump's desire to preserve his ties with Vladimir Putin and US-Russian cooperation there. Undoubtedly, given his politics and persona, this part of the address had to be Trump's favorite and the one most likely to make headlines.

Planetary humanism

At the same time, Trump tried to soften other parts of the address by trying to project the image of a leader who was by no means an isolationist or who saw America leading from anywhere else other than the front. Whether he believes any of this or seized it as an opportunity to placate his audience isn't clear.

The process of trying to reconcile his anti-globalist sentiments with his America First message actually began Monday during his meeting on UN reform, where he struck a more conciliatory line toward an organization he'd mocked and pilloried. It was striking how much of the speech was spent talking about collective action -- humanitarian assistance and a variety of programs, from empowering women to anti-slavery campaigns and global health.

He spent considerable time laying the groundwork about no nation carrying a disproportionate share of the costs but steered clear as he did earlier this year in threatening NATO allies who didn't. There's little doubt that Trump went into this speech not to seem the outlier or the disrupter when it came to America playing a role on the world stage in concert with others even while he challenges them to step up and do their share.

What happens in Las Vegas stays there

On one issue, Trump tried to be crystal clear: The

United States would not seek to intervene in the affairs of other nations and would respect their systems of government. There was plenty of talk about promoting prosperity, security and counterterrorism but little about human rights and democracy promotion. The whole trope was riffed off the importance Trump attached to the sovereignty of every nation -- almost to do whatever they wanted within their own borders. If you happened to be Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Myanmar's military, Saudi Arabia and Putin -- indeed any other authoritarian or autocratic regime -- you would have taken heart in this message.

Still, Trump called out Cuba, Venezuela and Syria for how they treat their own people and implied that the United States could pressure them because the sovereignty of their persecuted peoples was being violated. It was a tricky line to walk. One might conclude that if you're an important authoritarian for US interests, you get a pass; if you're less so, you don't.

Iran

The President is famous for bragging about his prescience on a wide array of global hot spots -- and if his remarks Tuesday morning before the United Nations are any guide, he signaled he is committed to decertifying Tehran's compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action by a congressionally mandated deadline of October 15. Of course, it's not that simple or clear-cut.

Calling the mullahcracy a "rogue nation," the nuclear accord itself "an embarrassment," Trump is all but telegraphing that the status quo -- despite the International Atomic Energy Agency's technical seal of approval -- remains unsustainable.

In Trump's worldview, the nuclear accord was just a deal, and a bad one at that. Despite the rhetoric emanating out of the Obama administration casting the deal as a potential "game changer" in regime behavior, there is no evidence that Tehran has abandoned its revolutionary dogma. Think Syria, where, according to Israeli intelligence, Hamas, a designated terrorist organization, is setting up shop in Lebanon with Iranian support. Yahya Sinwar, Hamas' leader in Gaza,

recently told reporters

that Iran is now "the largest backer financially and militarily of Hamas' armed wing."

Nevertheless, Trump is running into European head winds. In some capitals -- especially those of the P5+1 (the United States, China, Russia, Britain and France plus Germany) -- the nuclear deal has become too big to fail. Think Germany and France.

Hence, in the end, it's likely the Trump administration will likely split the difference -- by taking a more holistic view, and dubbing Iran as acting outside the bounds of the Iran deal, while continuing to waive sanctions embedded in federal legislation. He may indeed feel that such a strategy -- of uncertainty -- will give Washington the leverage it needs to try to affect Iranian behavior.

North Korea

The other headline is likely to be North Korea, where Trump broke little new ground on what to do but used the toughest language yet toward Kim Jong Un -- a threat to destroy North Korea totally if it attacks the United States or its allies. It's important though to point out that Trump's threat was conditioned on the hypothetical that Pyongyang would attack the United States or its allies first -- a position

that was in line with previous statements by Defense Secretary James Mattis and Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Trump mocked Kim again as "Rocket Man," but more seriously, spent time attacking his regime as evil and criminal. Trump's address Tuesday came no closer to suggesting the outlines of a broad approach to address the North Korean missile crisis. Indeed, if he goes ahead and decertifies the Iran deal, he'll likely have one fewer option to address the North Korean problem. Kim will interpret walking away from Iran as the end of any diplomatic option should he be interested in one.

America First can't mean America only

Trump tried unsuccessfully to reconcile his America First nationalist strategy with a globalist one. He went through all the motions of saying that he -- like other world leaders -- needed to protect their own country's sovereignty and interests first. At the same time, the reality is that unless the United States is going to go solo to solve the crises and problems around the world, it will have no choice but to build coalitions and not withdraw into some kind of fortress America.

Trump knows he can't solve North Korea without the Russians and the Chinese and has built his entire Mideast peace process policy on working with the Arabs. Even if he withdraws from the Iran deal, he'll need the Europeans and others to build an effective Plan B.

The biggest problem Trump faces abroad -- working solo or with others -- is that he still has no strategy to address the tough challenges he's identified.



McManus : Will Trump's 'Rocket Man' speech lead us to war?

Doyle McManus

7-8 minutes

The ostensible purpose of President Trump's speech at the United Nations on Tuesday was to explain to the world why "America First" is an idea other countries should embrace. It was to be "a deeply philosophical address," a White House official promised. Instead, the speech will inevitably be remembered for just two words: "Rocket Man," Trump's derisive nickname for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Never mind grand strategy. Trump made sure the media's favorite soundbite would be a schoolboy taunt and a threat of mass annihilation.

"Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and his regime," the president told the world's diplomats. "The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea."

The problem with Trump's threat wasn't only the juvenile language he chose, or that it inevitably distracted attention from the rest of his

message. His taunt, far from serving an underlying strategy, was probably counterproductive.

Trump's conflicting messages won't increase Kim Jong Un's interest in negotiating a deal.

Ridiculing Kim Jong Un is "more likely to persuade North Korea to increase its nuclear weapons and missiles than limit them [or] give them up," warned Richard Haass of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Successful diplomatic negotiators usually take pains to treat their adversaries with respect and provide them a dignified way to retreat from their original positions.

That often means offering positive incentives as well as threats, carrots as well as sticks.

Trump didn't do any of that. He said the only way for North Korea to defuse the crisis was to give up its entire nuclear program. He offered no guarantee that the regime would be secure if it took that risky step (although his secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, has said the United States does not seek regime change). Trump made a maximum demand, added a maximum threat and tossed in a gratuitous insult.

That approach may have worked in New York real estate, but it's less

likely to succeed against a deeply suspicious sovereign state with nuclear weapons.

Oh, yes: sovereignty. That was supposed to be the president's "deeply philosophical" theme. Trump called repeatedly for a world of "strong, sovereign nations" in which each country would defend its own interests — a universal version of "America First."

"We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone," he promised. "We want harmony and friendship, not conflict and strife. We are guided by outcomes, not ideology."

But he added an important caveat. He said every government has two "sovereign duties": to refrain from threatening other countries, and to "respect the interests of their own people."

And he listed countries that apparently don't deserve all the

benefits of sovereignty, because they've broken one of those rules.

One, of course, was North Korea, whose nuclear program threatens its neighbors. That's an easy case.

But he also denounced Venezuela, because its socialist government "has inflicted terrible pain and suffering on [its] good people. ... This situation is completely unacceptable."

And he denounced Iran, not only for interfering in other countries, but also for repressing its own citizens.

"Oppressive regimes cannot endure forever," he warned, and hinted, again, that the United States might walk away from the 2012 agreement under which Iran halted its nuclear program.

Sovereignty for me, in other words, but maybe not for thee.

In the case of Iran, Trump has now threatened to abandon a six-nation nuclear agreement his predecessor made, and added that a change of regime in Tehran would be a good idea, too. Why should North Korea expect better treatment? Those conflicting messages won't increase Kim Jong Un's interest in negotiating a deal.

Perhaps Trump's real target, though, was China. The president's strategy has been to press leader Xi Jinping to impose tough sanctions on North Korea, and to warn that war is inevitable if diplomacy fails. So far, it hasn't worked. Xi has politely promised cooperation, but in practice he's acting as if he doesn't think Trump will pull the trigger.

"China's strategic priorities are just different from those of the United States," Stewart M. Butler, a former State Department strategist, observed. "It's hard to know how

much more leverage we can get them to bring to bear."

"Rocket Man" isn't likely to impress Beijing, either. Insults are no longer their diplomatic style. They're more interested in predictability and stability.

Trump may think he's backing North Korea and China into a corner, but he risks backing himself into one at the same time. If North Korea crosses the "red line" the president has drawn — putting a nuclear warhead on a long-range missile — his bluff will have been called. And then he will face two bad outcomes: Back down or go to war. If the result is war, a war the United States doesn't want to fight, Tuesday's "Rocket Man" speech will be remembered as one of the steps that took us there.

doyle.mcmanus@latimes.com

Twitter: @DoyleMcManus



Ignatius : The most surprising thing about Trump's U.N. speech

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

6-7 minutes

At the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 19, President Trump called for preservation of sovereignty and slammed leaders in North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela. Here are key moments from that speech. Key moments from Trump's speech at the United Nations General Assembly, where he lauded sovereignty and slammed leaders in North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

At the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 19, President Trump called for preservation of sovereignty and slammed leaders in North Korea, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela. Here are key moments from that speech. (Sarah Parnass/The Washington Post)

NEW YORK

When you discount the rhetorical overkill, the most surprising thing about President Trump's address to the United Nations on Tuesday was how conventional it was. He supported human rights and democracy; he opposed rogue regimes; he espoused a global community of strong, sovereign nations. Pretty shocking stuff.

Because he's Trump, the zingers got the headlines: He repeated his childish, snarky (but sort of funny) playground denunciation of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un: "Rocket Man is on a suicide

mission." And he offered a bombastic threat that if North Korea attacks the United States or its allies, "we will have no choice but to totally destroy" it.

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Okay, got that: It's a restatement of the existing U.S. policy of nuclear deterrence. Trump also thanked China and Russia for their diplomatic help and pushed them to do more. He said the Iran nuclear deal was "an embarrassment" and Iran's regional actions were a "scourge," but he didn't say he would tear up the deal. He appealed to the Iranian people, without exactly calling for regime change. He checked all the hard-liner boxes, in other words, without making any new commitments.

It was a well-cooked pudding, the sort of speech Trump might have given at his inauguration back in January if he hadn't been so angry. Back then, he spoke like a wrecker (raging about "American carnage"). Now he's using the alliterative phrases that are speechwriters' earwigs, as in calling for "a renewal of will, a rediscovery of resolve and a rebirth of devotion." Stirring, pleasant to hear, otherwise incomprehensible.

Trump even had one of those JFK-style false-dichotomy "ask not ... but what ..." passages when he talked about the choice between lifting the world to a new height or letting it fall into a "valley of disrepair."

The speech was reportedly written by Stephen Miller, a.k.a. Darth Vader to many in the mainstream media, but this seemed to be Miller 2.0, and perhaps the language left his now-deposed mentor Stephen K. Bannon gnashing his teeth: What happened to the insurgent populist Trump who talked a year ago as if he wanted to topple the global order? On Tuesday, Trump seemed instead to embrace an updated version of it.

Trump's address offered a heavier dose of nationalism and self-interest: he wanted to root collective action in sovereignty and reciprocity, rather than a vaguer "globalism." He spoke about righteousness defeating evil, a "great reawakening of nations" and other fuzzy Reaganisms. But at its core, this was a speech that any president since Harry S. Truman probably could have delivered. (Interestingly, Trump twice favorably mentioned Truman, the haberdasher from Kansas City whose stubborn common sense shaped the liberal order.)

Trump was something of an interventionist in his remarks. He wanted to bash not just North Korea and Iran but also other undemocratic rogue regimes, such as Cuba and Venezuela. He even spoke up for human rights, decrying the authoritarian nations on the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Trump even invoked the Marshall Plan, the very cornerstone of the liberal international order. He added a Trumpian touch, saying it had been built with "three beautiful pillars" — sovereignty, security and

prosperity. He was right in that, as in saying that North Korea shouldn't be the United States' responsibility, because "that's what the United Nations is for." (Warning to base: Has POTUS been kidnapped by the black-helicopter crowd?)

Watching Trump give his biggest speech since the inauguration, I was modestly reassured to see him operating within the four walls of rationality, albeit reading from a teleprompter. "Rocket Man" aside, the tone seemed a bit like last week's bipartisan legislative opening to Democrats Charles E. Schumer and Nancy Pelosi.

After a miserable nine months, Trump is sick of losing. He wants to "win," and he evidently has realized that he can't do so with a collection of right-wing outliers as his only allies. The U.N. speech, especially its repeated emphasis on the U.N. itself, struck me as the international version of his rebranding.

So what worries me about Trump's speech? Oddly, it's precisely that it was so conventional. If Trump is going to deal successfully with North Korea, he'll truly have to think outside the box. If he wants a better, longer-lasting deal with Iran, he needs in some way to engage that nation and its people.

And most of all, Trump needs to bring America with him in making a reformed United Nations a place that actually solves problems. The Great Disrupter says he wants to revive the global community and make it work better. Okay, Mr. President, let's see what you've got.

Netanyahu Vows to Curb Iran in U.N. Speech

Rory Jones
4-5 minutes

Updated Sept. 19, 2017 4:58 p.m. ET

TEL AVIV—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday told the United Nations General Assembly that his country would act to prevent Iran from establishing a permanent military presence in Syria, the same day the Israeli military said it shot down an Iranian-made drone.

Echoing a speech by U.S. President Donald Trump, the Israeli leader also lambasted the landmark 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers, telling the group of nations to “fix or nix” the agreement.

“Those who threaten us with annihilation put themselves in mortal peril,” Mr. Netanyahu told the U.N., in a direct message to Iran.

Earlier Tuesday, the Israeli military said it had downed an unmanned aerial vehicle with a Patriot missile-defense system over the Golan Heights after it came near but failed to reach Israeli-controlled airspace.

The drone took off from the Syrian

capital of Damascus on a reconnaissance mission for the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, an ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the military said.

There was no immediate response to Israel’s claim about the downed drone from Hezbollah or the Syrian regime.

The incident is the latest point of tension between Israel and the Iran-backed Syrian regime and Hezbollah. It comes as both sides amp up hostile rhetoric and talk of a future war.

In his speech at the U.N., Mr. Netanyahu criticized the Iranian nuclear deal as it sets a time frame for winding down, after which Israel fears Tehran will be able to accelerate the development of nuclear weapons.

“The greater danger is not that Iran will rush to a single bomb by breaking the deal but that Iran will be able to build many bombs by keeping the deal,” he said.

Mr. Trump, in his own speech to the U.N. earlier in the day, called Iran an authoritarian regime and denounced the nuclear deal as “one of the worst and most one-sided

transactions the United States has ever entered into.”

Other world powers, including European nations, have said Iran is maintaining the nuclear deal and stated their opposition to changing the agreement.

Messrs. Netanyahu and Trump met Monday in New York to discuss the accord. The Israeli leader has long opposed it and has recently ratcheted up his criticism as he tries to win support from the U.S. and other world leaders to limit Iran’s role in Syria.

Israel has in recent months accused Iran and Hezbollah of setting up weapons factories in Syria. The country fears the partners will take advantage of the fall of Islamic State to set up a land corridor from Tehran to the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.

Majority Shiite Iran and Hezbollah have fought alongside Mr. Assad’s forces for five years, helping the Syrian leader fend off an assault by Sunni rebel groups allied with different powers.

Israel and other Arab states also have accused Iran of promoting government change in Yemen and of establishing a presence in Iraq.

Mr. Netanyahu on Tuesday called Iran’s attempts to influence geopolitics in the region a “curtain of terror.”

Israeli officials have already made clear to the U.S., which backs opposition groups, and Russia, a key supporter of Mr. Assad, that Israel won’t allow an Iranian or Hezbollah presence on its northern border with Syria.

This month, Israel launched airstrikes on a Syrian military compound in what former Israeli officials said was an attack meant to thwart military threats from Iran and Hezbollah. It came as the Israeli military held a 10-day exercise along its border with Lebanon, the largest such drill in nearly 20 years.

Israel won control of the Golan Heights plateau from Syria in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

In a bid to in part limit Hezbollah and Iranian presence on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, the Israeli military in recent years has supplied Sunni rebels there with cash and aid in a program known as the Good Neighborhood policy.

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

Madadzadeh: Iran Remembers the Murderous Summer of 1988

Shabnam Madadzadeh

4-5 minutes

Sept. 19, 2017 6:58 p.m. ET

When Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani speaks to the United Nations Wednesday, I will be thinking about the events of 1988, which the regime has tried to erase from history. In school our lessons contained no reference to that summer of blood. But I heard one firsthand story in 2012 from Maryam Akbari Monfared while we were both being held in Tehran’s Evin Prison for our political activities.

“They brought my brother’s belongings—a bag containing his clothes, bloodied and torn from torture,” I recall Ms. Akbari saying. “I will never forget that moment. My parents had gone to visit him, returning instead with his effects. Neither of them could talk. As if they had no words to describe that horrible scene.” By 1988 her brother had been a prisoner for eight years. She said he had been arrested at age 17 for distributing the

opposition newspapers of the Mujahedin-e Khalq, or MEK.

The look on Ms. Akbari’s face conveyed the whole scene: the grim mother and father, with no corpse to bury or grave to mourn over. “We will not let this be forgotten,” she whispered.

I am an Iranian political activist. In 2009, as a 21-year-old university student, I was arrested on suspicion of being sympathetic to the opposition. For five years I languished in prison, three months in solitary confinement. Two years after being released in 2014, I was smuggled out of the country by the MEK.

Although the regime has tried to force Iranians to forget 1988, the crimes committed were so vast that this was impossible. An estimated 30,000 people, mainly MEK activists, were executed. Their “trials” usually lasted minutes.

How could their families possibly forget? Before my arrest I met a young woman whose uncle was executed that summer. “To this day,” I remember her telling me, “my entire family stands up in respect whenever his name is

mentioned. My uncle was the most human of humans.”

The mass burial sites of 1988 remain largely unknown, and the public is banned from visiting any that have been uncovered, like those in Tehran’s Khavaran area. Nevertheless, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers have been doing so for the past 29 years.

The massacre exemplified the ruthlessness of Iran’s leaders, many of whom still hold power today. Mostafa Pourmohammadi, justice minister during President Rouhani’s first term, was a member of the 1988 “death commission” in Tehran. The current justice minister, Alireza Avayi, was on the “death commission” in the southwestern province of Khuzestan.

Despite the regime’s efforts, the taboos on discussing the massacre are being weakened, little by little, by young people who had not even been born in 1988. In line with a call by Maryam Rajavi, the leader of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (an MEK-affiliated group), people across the country have been writing, talking and asking questions about the summer of blood. Families who had remained

silent for fear of reprisals have begun discussing the victims and revealing the locations of secret graves.

This social movement picked up speed last year when an audio file surfaced of a 1988 meeting between Tehran’s “death commission” and Hossein-Ali Montazeri, who was then the heir-apparent to Iran’s supreme leader. Montazeri decried what he called the regime’s worst crimes, telling the perpetrators that they would go down in history as murderers.

The Iranian people’s demands are simple: Break the silence and stop refusing to admit the mullahs’ atrocities. Talk of a new era in Tehran can be taken seriously only when the ayatollahs are held accountable. The first step is to establish an independent international investigation into the 1988 massacre to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Ms. Madadzadeh is a political activist and former political prisoner in Iran.

Appeared in the September 20, 2017, print edition.

Russia and Belarus Hold Joint Drills, and Tensions Emerge

Thomas Grove
5-6 minutes

Sept. 19, 2017 5:30 a.m. ET

MINSK, Belarus—War games that Russia and neighboring Belarus are currently staging have sharpened tensions with the West—and exposed a rift between Moscow and its closest military ally.

On paper, Belarus and Russia have a tight alliance. The former Soviet republic, which shares borders with three NATO members, is sworn to come to Moscow's aid in the event of an attack.

But Minsk bristled when Russia sought to move more of its soldiers into Belarus during the joint exercises, which continued Monday as Chinese naval vessels arrived in Russia's far-eastern port of Vladivostok for separate joint exercises. When Russia's defense ministry said a premier tank unit was rolling toward the Belarus border and that three Russian paratrooper divisions were to land on Belarusian soil, the Belarus defense ministry contradicted that.

"None of this was agreed with Belarus beforehand," said Arseny Sivitsky, director of the Minsk-based Center for Strategic and Foreign Policy Studies, which has ties to the Belarus foreign and defense ministries.

Relations have fallen to such an extent that Russian President

Vladimir Putin and his counterpart in Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, are likely not to meet during the exercises, a break with tradition.

Mr. Lukashenko's spokeswoman told the Belarusian state news service that he wasn't even invited to watch parallel exercises that Moscow is conducting in Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said no problems existed between the two presidents and their failure to meet was due to the busy schedules of the leaders.

The rift is emerging as Mr. Lukashenko, often called "Europe's last dictator," takes steps to normalize ties with the West. Belarus has said it wants to join the World Trade Organization in the next three years to give the country a chance to negotiate trade deals with the European Union.

Such overtures have irritated the Kremlin, especially following the uprising that ousted a pro-Russian president in Ukraine, which borders both Russia and Belarus. Moscow subsequently invaded and annexed Crimea in 2014, which ratcheted up tensions between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The current joint military exercises, known as Zapad, are one of the largest such events Russia has conducted since the end of the Cold War. Officially, the exercises are supposed to involve 12,700 soldiers deployed in both countries, with most of the training taking place on Belarusian soil.

But Western and Belarusian observers have put the number of Russian troops involved in the war games at between 70,000 and 120,000. Mr. Putin on Monday watched one of the Zapad drills at a training range outside of his hometown of St. Petersburg.

The military drills, set to last until Wednesday, had already increased tensions between Russia and the West. Before the exercises, Western officials and Belarusian analysts said that Russia might try to use the cover of the exercises to establish a permanent military contingent on Belarusian soil.

Russia is also carrying out a number of maneuvers on its own territory that involve large numbers of troops, military experts say. Russia hasn't said how many soldiers are participating in those overlapping exercises, but its Northern Fleet and Southern military district have also been involved in maneuvers since the start of Zapad.

"The exercise is to see how Russia fights a big war against the West and how well other military units can come in to form a second line of defense," a person close to the Russian defense ministry said.

Analysts say participation in such war games is a way for militarily weak Belarus to appease its more powerful neighbor. Mr. Putin has pressured Mr. Lukashenko to allow for the building of a Russian military base on his territory. Mr.

Lukashenko has repeatedly refused the request, most recently in February.

But even as ties between Minsk and Moscow show strain, Belarus has increasing strategic importance for Moscow, observers say. NATO has deployed some 4,000 troops in the Baltic region as a deterrent since the Crimea annexation.

While Mr. Lukashenko must please Moscow, analysts say, his government has taken concrete steps in recent years to open up to the West and integrate itself more fully with European and Asian markets.

Belarus liberalized its visa regime early this year, giving visa-free entry to a number of European countries. Minsk refuses to recognize Russia-supported breakaway regions in Georgia or Ukraine and has failed to unequivocally consider Crimea part of Russia.

Such measures have increased Russia's diplomatic isolation, experts say.

"I don't think Lukashenko even wanted to do the exercises in the complicated regional security environment, but he had to or else have his loyalty and commitment called into question," Mr. Sivitsky said.

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

Iraqi forces launch battle against Islamic State footholds in vast Anbar province

<https://www.facebook.com/tamer.elghobashy>

5-6 minutes

Iraqi forces outside the town of Akashat in Anbar province on Sept. 15 prepare for military operations against the Islamic State. (Moadh Al-Dulaimi/AFP/Getty Images)

IRBIL, Iraq — Iraqi forces backed by U.S. airstrikes began an assault on the Islamic State in western Anbar province Tuesday, breaching one of the last two militant strongholds in Iraq where the group's elusive leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is thought to be possibly hiding.

A force composed of army units, police and tribal fighters from the area launched the attack at dawn near the town of Ana, located on the

Euphrates River about 60 miles from the Syrian border, Iraq's military said in a statement.

Additional troops from Iraq's elite counterterrorism forces are expected to join the fight as it moves west toward the border with Syria.

The battle for the remaining Islamic State bastions in Anbar is expected to be complex because of the porous Syrian border and the vast desert terrain, which is difficult to surround and choke off. The challenges in Anbar are well known to U.S. forces after years of combat against al-Qaeda in the province a decade ago.

U.S. intelligence officials believe that 5,000 to 10,000 militants are in the area, moving easily between Anbar and the neighboring Syrian

province of Deir al-Zour, which they still largely control.

Iraqi and U.S. military officials have said Baghdadi is probably holed up in the region, moving between safe houses along the border.

There have been frequent claims that Baghdadi was killed in an airstrike, but the reports have not been corroborated. Last month, the outgoing commander of U.S. coalition forces, Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, said he believes that Baghdadi is still alive, contradicting Russian assertions that the militant leader probably died in an airstrike.

[U.S. abandons outpost in Syria, ceding ground to Iranian proxies]

Tuesday's announcement came without the usual fanfare that has accompanied such campaigns in the past, underscoring how far Iraq

has come in diminishing the Islamic State's influence and territorial dominance in the country.

The Islamic State has been evicted from 90 percent of the Iraqi cities and towns it held, including the northern city of Mosul, and the launch of each battle was usually accompanied by a televised speech from Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.

The Anbar campaign is expected to push westward from Ana along the Euphrates to the town of Rawah and end in the border outpost of Qaim.

Brett McGurk, the White House envoy for the campaign against the Islamic State, said in a Twitter post early Tuesday that "major operations" were underway in western Anbar. A spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition confirmed in a

separate Twitter post that the Iraqi forces were being backed by American airstrikes.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

The Islamic State is now under pressure from three large offensives in one of its last major territorial holdings, the Euphrates River

Valley, which straddles Iraq and Syria. From the west, Syrian regime forces backed by Russia and Iran are moving on Deir al-Zour. Meanwhile, U.S.-backed forces are pushing into the province from the north. With the start of operations in Iraq on Tuesday, the Islamic State is also being pressed from the east.

The convergence of these forces, which often have competing

interests and loyalties, sets the stage for a complicated military campaign that puts rival forces fighting a common enemy into proximity, raising the possibility of clashes.

Iraqi forces are separately preparing to fight for the northern town of Hawijah, a battle that has been delayed and complicated by a political dispute over who will

control it once the Islamic State is evicted.

Hawijah sits in Kirkuk province, which is due to participate Monday in a controversial referendum on Kurdish independence from Iraq. Kurds and Arabs both have a historical claim to the province and have jockeyed for position over who should lead the fight for Hawijah.



Iraqi Kurds set to vote on independence, panicking neighbors and Washington

<https://www.facebook.com/tamer.elghobashy>

10-12 minutes

KIRKUK, Iraq — Iraqi Kurds are set to vote next week on independence from Iraq in what many say is a popular expression of their desire for self-determination after suffering for a century under war and dictatorship.

But their staunchest ally, the United States, opposes the move, as do Iraqi rivals and regional powers. They say it could spark new conflicts and aggravate old ones at a time when the nation is on the cusp of defeating the Islamic State.

Kurdish officials pushing the Sept. 25 referendum say there is no need to panic. The poll, which is widely expected to result in a resounding vote to secede from Iraq, is simply an important first step in what would be a lengthy but amicable divorce from the Iraqi state, they say.

"We will ourselves not initiate a clash or a fight," said Rowsch Shaways, a former deputy prime minister of Iraq and the head of the Kurdish delegation negotiating with Baghdad. "We are pledging dialogue and a peaceful solution."

Still, the lead-up to next week's vote has already resulted in political fallout and threats of violence, and the United States has shown little ability to persuade the Kurds to delay the referendum in favor of continued negotiations with Baghdad over disputed territories and revenue-sharing. Iraqi Kurds take part in an event in Irbil on Sept. 16 to urge people to vote in the independence referendum. (Safin Hamed/Agence France-Presse/Getty Images)

Neighbors Turkey and Iran, concerned over calls for independence by their own sizable Kurdish populations, have threatened to close borders and cancel trade and security agreements with Iraqi Kurdistan.

Anxiety over the referendum was most evident in Kirkuk, a province in central Iraq that has vast oil reserves and is populated by a mix of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens. Over several decades, it has been the center of demographic manipulation projects based on the ethnicity of whoever hoped to rule it.

Violence flared in the provincial capital, also called Kirkuk, on Monday night when gunfire outside the headquarters of a local Turkmen party left two Kurds dead, prompting Kurdish riot police to descend on the scene. Najat Hussein, an official with the provincial government, said several vehicles and motorcycles drove by the headquarters and opened fire. Guards at the party office shot back, killing two of the alleged attackers, he said.

Hussein said it was not immediately clear whether the violence was related to the referendum. "We hope it won't be the spark that will be the beginning of a fire that will inflame the whole city," he said.

Police imposed a curfew following the fatal shooting and other smaller skirmishes that broke out between Kurds and Turkmens, local officials said. In one instance, people torched a police car.

Kirkuk has been claimed by both Arabs and Kurds for decades, and a U.S.-brokered process after the 2003 invasion to determine the city's disposition has gone nowhere.

It is legally under the authority of the central government but has been governed by Kurds since 2014, when Kurdish peshmerga fighters took Kirkuk as the Iraqi military buckled and retreated under the threat of an Islamic State assault. Turkish tanks are seen near the Habur crossing between Turkey and Iraq during a military drill on Sept. 18, 2017, a week before Iraq's Kurdish region holds an independence referendum. (AFP/Getty Images/AFP/Getty Images)

[Battle for Mosul: How Iraqi forces defeated the Islamic State]

Since then, the semiautonomous Kurdistan Regional Government, which the United States helped create in northern Iraq after 1991, has asserted its power, exporting oil independently and patrolling its prosperous streets.

Iraq's parliament last week voted to oust the Kirkuk provincial governor, a Kurdish physician with dual U.S. citizenship, over his support for the referendum. He has refused to step down. For months before that, he and his Arab deputy governor stopped talking because of differences over the independence vote.

Streets here are bereft of the green, orange and white Kurdish regional government flags and banners urging participation that have lined boulevards in other Kurdish cities.

Entreaties to vote "yes" are more subtle, and the loud campaign for high turnout that has produced massive rallies in the Kurdistan capital, Irbil, has been replaced with quieter debates among neighbors and friends who hope the referendum will not disturb their fragile coexistence.

"I have lots of Kurdish friends, and there are no tensions," said Ahmed Waleed, a 31-year-old Arab who owns a men's clothing shop. "No one knows if this will continue after the referendum."

The United Nations has opposed the referendum, saying it threatens Iraq's unity. No international observers will participate in monitoring the vote, raising questions about its credibility.

Rakan Saeed al-Jobouri, the Arab deputy governor of Kirkuk, said Arabs there have come to him with fears of forced displacements by Kurdish security forces under the rubric of fighting terrorism. Human Rights Watch said this has already happened since late last year.

"Legally, constitutionally and practically, [the referendum] is totally compromised," he said.

Jobouri said that if independence is approved, he and other Arab officials in the city will ask Baghdad for federal protection — which raises the specter of Iraq's military entering the city to assert control and potentially sparking armed conflict with peshmerga forces already in Kirkuk.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who opposes the referendum, said he would deploy Iraq's military to restore order if unrest breaks out in response to the vote. On Monday, Iraq's Supreme Court ordered the suspension of the referendum after Abadi argued that it is unconstitutional. But Kurdish officials did not budge.

Kirkuk has also been the focal point of internal Kurdish disagreements about the prospect of an independent state. It is controlled by a political party whose members have questioned the intentions of Kurdistan President Masoud Barzani's party.

[Barzani: The time has come for independence vote]

Kurdish critics of Barzani say he is using the vote to solidify his power and legacy at a time when his authority is weak because of a financial crisis. Declining oil prices have stalled the economy, and civil servants and peshmerga fighters have not received full salaries for years. The regional government is billions of dollars in debt, and its deputy prime minister said the economic decline is a greater threat to Kurds than the Islamic State.

Enthusiasm for the referendum has also been tepid in Sulaymaniyah, one of the three large provinces that make up the Kurdistan region.

Analysts say Barzani is overreaching by including Kirkuk in the referendum. If the vote for independence there comes back "no," or if "yes" fails to win by a large margin, Baghdad could use the results for leverage to scuttle the overall project for Kurdish independence. "Holding a

referendum there without concern for Arab and Turkmen interests could result in the refusal of independence and resorting to violence," said Kamal Chomani, a Kurdish analyst with the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Peace, who opposes the referendum.

Kirkuk's status has implications beyond Iraq's borders and could ignite a wider regional conflict.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has chided Barzani — a longtime ally — for "political inexperience" in pressing ahead with the referendum. Erdogan has repeatedly described the territorial integrity of neighboring Iraq as sacrosanct and a matter of national security for his country.

Opposition leaders have pressed Erdogan to take a harder line on the vote, citing Turkey's deep ties to Turkmens in Iraq, especially in Kirkuk.

The Turkish army said Monday that it has launched military exercises on the border with Iraqi Kurdistan, according to local Turkish news reports.

[Quest for independent Kurdistan enters a new phase]

The United States has used the rhetoric of fighting terrorism to encourage Barzani to postpone the referendum, but the episode has illustrated a rare instance of U.S. impotence in swaying Kurdish leaders. After months of failed talks, the White House issued a blunt statement last week urging the Kurdish government to call off the vote, which it described as "provocative and destabilizing."

A U.S. official involved in negotiations with the Kurds, who requested anonymity to discuss sensitive talks, said that the Trump administration has not threatened to withhold the Defense Department's

\$22 million fund for the peshmerga but that it could be used as a "lever of influence."

Defunding the peshmerga, however, would damage U.S. interests in Iraq, where it is heavily involved in the fight against the Islamic State, the official said. Instead, diplomats have urged the Kurds to consider Iraq's unpredictable politics.

They have argued that Abadi, a pro-U.S. prime minister who has pushed back against Iranian influence, is the best partner the Kurds have to secure their interests. Holding the referendum could empower more-sectarian political forces and bring them to power in Iraqi elections next year, the official said.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

Kurdish officials leading the referendum effort acknowledge that it will not lead to a sovereign state soon. Instead, they say it is a democratic exercise that strengthens their hand with Baghdad in ongoing talks over a future independent state and its borders, said Shaways, the Kurdish negotiator.

For their part, Kurds eager for their own country said they are willing to endure any hardships resulting from the vote.

"Being part of Iraq has never brought us peace and never will," said Saman Xoshnaw, 46, a grocery shop owner. "We are ready to face any difficulties as a result of our decision. We have to sacrifice to get freedom."

Aaso Ameen Schwan in Irbil and Kareem Fahim in Istanbul contributed to this report.



Syrians Are Ready to Accept Bashar al-Assad as President

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

9-11 minutes

ALEPPO, Syria — Seedra, Zahra, and Faedele draw in the debris with a stick, seemingly oblivious to the destruction surrounding them. The girls are sitting amid chunks of fallen concrete, collapsed pillars, and a caved-in roof in what was once the Shado Medo school in Aleppo's Sheikh Saeed district.

"Have you come to rebuild our school?" Seedra asks.

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Seedra is the oldest and the leader of the small group. "The war is over, we were told," she says, but the walls in the classrooms are still riddled with bullet holes, the swing in the playground hangs unrepaired, and nobody has come to assess the damage. "When will the school reopen?"

The girls are not alone in their eagerness to return to school. Within minutes of my arrival, a crowd of families collects in the playground, showering me with questions and complaints. "The Syrian air force dropped barrel bombs," says Riyad Jadiyah, a resident of Sheikh Saeed. His children and his brother's children,

whom he now cares for, studied in the Shado Medo school.

The three-story school sat on the front line of the battle for Sheikh Saeed, a neighborhood in the formerly rebel-held east of the city. It provided the rebels with an ideal vantage point to fire at the Syrian army, positioned barely 650 feet away, and a perfect hideout to halt the advances of regime forces. But the defenses of the enclave, punished by intense bombing, would eventually collapse: On Dec. 12, the opposition gave in, and the regime marched into opposition-controlled eastern Aleppo.

Sheikh Saeed was regained through extreme violence, but the anger of the families I met was reserved for the regime and rebels in equal measure. Jadiyah's relative Fatima accused the rebels of ransacking the school and blamed them for inviting the wrath of the state. "Gunmen, the Nusra Front — they were here, and because of them it was bombed," she said.

This neighborhood provides a window into the mindset of many Syrians as President Bashar al-Assad consolidates his control over the country. During a 10-day visit,

I traveled over 600 miles of territory under Assad's control, driving from Damascus to apocalyptic Homs, and then crossing through a countryside littered with

I traveled over 600 miles of territory under Assad's control, driving from Damascus to apocalyptic Homs, and then crossing through a countryside littered with

checkpoints, manned by young soldiers and militiamen in ragged uniforms who vowed to wipe out Islamic State fighters hiding in nearby villages. Sheikh Saeed was my first stop upon landing in Aleppo, and the voices of its residents resonated in other war-torn neighborhoods of the city, such as Shaar, Saliheen, and Bustan al-Qasr. Everywhere, it seemed, Syrians have been left battered by a six-year war, disillusioned by a fractured and increasingly jihadi opposition, and desperate for the return of basic necessities of life.

The regime may have retaken Aleppo's formerly rebel-held districts, but it has done little to bring back jobs or basic services. Riyad, a day laborer, earns 7,000 Syrian pounds a month, or about \$14 at the current exchange rate. He spends a quarter of his salary on water, which is a scarcity here as neither the government nor the Syrian Arab Red Crescent can provide enough to meet local needs.

"There is no electricity," he said. "We buy water from the owners of private wells because there is no water supply from the government."

It is obvious that everyone regrets the war, and it is understandable that residents like these, whichever side they were originally on, if any, now cast blame on all sides. But while the regime has done little or nothing for them, they accept that it represents the only chance of restoring a semblance of normalcy to their lives. Sheikh Saeed's residents know that if they ever want Seedra, Zahra, and Faedele's

school to be rebuilt, they will have to count on Assad.

The prevalence of jihadis within the armed opposition also made the rebels an easy target of blame by all sides, not just regime propaganda. In Sheikh Saeed, it is easy to see how alliances between the Free Syrian Army factions and the Nusra Front, since renamed, delivered an unintended gift of legitimacy to Assad. When Fatima Jadiyah referred to "gunmen," she did not distinguish between the militias' ideological nuances — she associated any crimes committed by the al Qaeda affiliate with the rebels as a whole.

These dynamics are not unique to Aleppo but resonate in the capital as well. East of Damascus, the war continues in districts such as Jobar, where a multitude of Islamist and jihadi factions compete not just with the regime but with each other for dominance.

The nature of the opposition here, which sporadically but uselessly shells the city center, is another gift for the regime. One target is the Christian Bab Sharqi neighborhood of the Old City, famous for its nightlife, where the heavily armed Islamists a few miles away were never going to win much sympathy.

At one bar, a group of young men and women sat drinking wine and smoking water pipes. "Look, dead men walking," said one man as he pointed to the internally displaced people camped out on the pavement outside. I wondered if he was trying disguise war exhaustion with morbid jokes and a half smile.

"You have come at the right time. This is high season for terrorists," he continued.

"You have come at the right time. This is high season for terrorists," he continued.

"Waiting for the war to end is like waiting for Godot," he said. "We hear — not just hear, we feel the mortars thrown at us. The jihadis and their lackeys are in Jobar. They are attacking us and also fighting among themselves. What sort of an opposition is this?"

The sense that there is no alternative to Assad is, of course, not just restricted to Syria itself. In the last few weeks, a chorus of the opposition's former backers has urged it to come to terms with Assad's continued rule. Saudi Arabia, a prominent backer of the armed opposition, summoned rebel negotiators to tell them to find a new strategy, and British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson finally admitted that forcing Assad to quit as a precursor to peace talks was unrealistic.

But growing acceptance that Assad will remain does not mean that the Syrian president has won over his people or his country. A section of Syrians is making a quiet pact with themselves to wait for another day to assert their political beliefs. For now, the priority is peace.

"At the moment, we need to fight these guys," my new friend in the Damascus bar told me, of the jihadis and rebels. "But then we should look again at what is to be done next."

Even in areas where Assad has largely fulfilled his promise of stability, fear and resentment of his government sometimes bubble to the surface. In western Aleppo's Mocambo neighborhood, for instance, coffee shops and designer outlets are filled with upper middle-class customers, and waiters cater to water pipe smokers.

The area, a government stronghold, came under attack by the rebels, but the destruction here doesn't even come close to the annihilation of the east. Contrary to the pitch-dark nights in eastern Aleppo,

businessmen here tell me that they can afford to buy power, even though the cost is eating into their profits. Electricity costs \$400 a week, compared with \$40 a month before the war.

"We had no buyers until mid-last year, but now business is flourishing," said Rami, the owner of a patisserie. "There are more customers than we can serve."

Is he satisfied with how quickly services are returning? "We'd have to ask if we can be upset," Rami said wryly.

In line for the swimming pool at the Ittehad sports club, a young woman named Jenan Shamma said she had lived in Lebanon during the conflict. Who does she blame for the war that exiled her? "Actually, I don't want to say anything about the government," she answered.

On the basketball court, Feras al-Farra, a coach and national player, spoke of his teammates killed in rebel shelling but would not talk politics. "I am a sportsman. This question is not about sports," he

said. "Sorry, I can't talk about the government."

It's no secret why Syrians don't want to criticize the resurgent regime. Whether or not they truly are the saviors of "secular Syria," as they portray themselves, the Assad family hegemony has been sustained by their intelligence agencies. Amnesty International reported in August that at least 75,000 Syrians had been "disappeared" since the start of the uprising. As many as 13,000 people were killed in Saydnaya prison alone between September 2011 and December 2015.

After so many hundreds of thousands of deaths, many Syrians are reconciled to whatever comes next, as long as it is not more war. The regime, however, is benefiting not from an upsurge of genuine support but from war weariness, the sins of the opposition, and the desperation of millions of people for the return of basic services. Hatred of war and contempt for the rebels are not the same thing as a permanent peace.

The
Washington
Post

Militants assault government targets in western Syria, complicating cease-fire talks

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

4-6 minutes

An ultrasound machine and a hospital bed are covered in rubble and debris on Tuesday after a reported airstrike by Syrian government forces in a village in northwestern Idlib province. (Omar Haj Kadour/AFP/Getty Images)

ISTANBUL — Militants linked to al-Qaeda began a large-scale offensive Tuesday against government targets in western Syria, state media and opposition activists said, prompting a fierce response by pro-government forces and potentially impeding international efforts to quell fighting in that part of the country.

The campaign started Tuesday morning when insurgents — led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a former al-Qaeda affiliate — launched attacks on government-held villages in Hama province, just south of extremist-controlled Idlib province.

Their offensive was met with airstrikes and mortar fire, including attacks on medical facilities and personnel in rebel-held areas, activists said. One medic was reported killed in an airstrike on al-

Tih hospital in southern Idlib, according to activists. Further strikes were reported on field hospitals in Khan Sheikhoun, the site of a deadly chemical-weapons attack in April that the United Nations has blamed on Syrian government forces.

[Russian-backed deal on Syria 'safe zones' leaves U.S. wary]

The fresh fighting threatened to upend a months-long initiative by Iran, Russia and Turkey to establish what they call "de-escalation zones" in four regions of Syria, including parts of Hama and Idlib, which also hosts a growing number of displaced civilians. People walk through rubble past a damaged ambulance Tuesday following a reported airstrike by Syrian government forces in the village of al-Tahh, in northwestern Idlib province. (Omar Haj Kadour/AFP/Getty Images)

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, rejected talks that took place over months in the Kazakh capital of Astana. The militant group denounced the negotiations as a "betrayal" and a plot to hand opposition areas over to the Syrian government.

Iran and Russia are staunch backers of President Bashar al-

Assad and have contributed troops and military assets to crush Syria's rebellion. The conflict began in 2011 as a popular uprising but quickly morphed into a brutal civil war, sucking in world powers and fueling the rise of the Islamic State militant group.

[Bin Laden's son steps into father's shoes as al-Qaeda attempts comeback]

The Turkish Foreign Ministry announced last week that Iran, Russia and Turkey had agreed to deploy armed observers on the edge of Idlib, where troops would provide a cordon with checkpoints and watchtowers. It was unclear when those forces would be deployed.

The insurgent offensive Tuesday was the largest in the area since March, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The Britain-based monitoring group said the campaign kicked off with heavy shelling and machine-gun fire on government-held villages in northern Hama, including along a highway that links the capital, Damascus, with other provinces.

[Syrian rebels losing out to al-Qaeda-linked extremists]

A spokesman for HTS, Imad al-Din Mujahed, told an opposition outlet that the group did not want to broadcast its reasons for launching the offensive. The outlet, Enab Baladi, quoted a media activist linked with HTS as saying that the battle was in response to the agreement on de-escalation zones.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

The militants will continue to fight to prevent the establishment of such a zone in Idlib, said the activist, Abu Baraa al-Qahtani.

Zakaria Zakaria in Istanbul and Heba Habib in Stockholm contributed to this report.

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Erin Cunningham is an Istanbul-based correspondent for The Post. She previously covered conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan for the Christian Science Monitor, GlobalPost and The National.

Brands : Why Beating Islamic State Could Start a Crisis With Iran

by Hal Brands
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10-12 minutes

Middle East

The next stage in the Middle East conflict is coming, and the U.S. is headed toward a confrontation it cannot afford.

September 19, 2017, 9:30 AM EDT

Back to being the Great Satan?

Source: AFP via Getty Images

The U.S. is rapidly heading down the path of confrontation with a rogue-state adversary, a potential foe that has proved rational yet ruthless in pursuit of its interests, including the aggressive development of its nuclear program and associated military capabilities. The rogue state this description best fits, however, may not be North Korea, but Iran.

Although the slow-motion crisis involving North Korea's atomic and missile programs is undoubtedly perilous, it still seems likely that the logic of nuclear deterrence with promote a degree of caution on all sides. In the Middle East, however, the Donald Trump administration is barreling toward a potential conflict with Iran, one that the White House has shown little capacity to handle thus far.

That looming confrontation is being driven by three powerful factors that are now converging. First is the rapidly approaching endgame of the struggle against the Islamic State. The defeat of that terrorist army is removing a point of tacit cooperation between the U.S. and Iran while sharpening the regional competition between them. Washington and Tehran are gearing up for an intense political struggle for influence with the government of Iraq. The potential for violence between any U.S. troops that remain in Iraq and the Iranian-backed Shiite militias that strenuously oppose such a presence will be omnipresent.

In Syria, U.S. and Iranian-backed forces are also coming into closer proximity in and around the few areas the Islamic State still holds. The middle Euphrates River Valley has already seen clashes between

the U.S. military and Iranian-backed militias operating in support of the Assad regime. As the vise closes around the jihadist group and its enemies strive to stake out their spheres of influence in post-Islamic-State Syria, the potential for violence will intensify.

The second factor leading toward a new crisis is the Trump administration's determination to push back against Iran's pernicious influence throughout the Middle East. By the close of Barack Obama's presidency, there was a widespread sense in Washington -- and much of the Middle East -- that Iran was ascendant, and that it had exploited Obama's war-weariness and his desire to reach the nuclear deal with Tehran to push its influence from South Asia across the Middle East.

In reality, Iran's interest is more intense, and its influence far more pervasive, in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq -- which constitute something close to vital strategic interests -- than it is in a secondary theater such as Yemen. But the reality of expanded Iranian sway in the region -- and the alarm this has provoked among U.S. partners -- is incontestable. Add to this the understandable resentment of Trump administration officials -- some of whom served in Iraq a decade ago, and had friends and comrades killed by Iranian-backed militias and Iranian-provided improvised explosive devices -- and the outcome has been an increasingly confrontational posture toward Tehran.

That posture has been manifested in new economic sanctions, increased support for and deference to Saudi Arabia and other of Iran's Sunni rivals, and the willingness to make a small number of military strikes against Iranian-backed groups in Syria. And, according to recent reports, the administration is considering a wide-ranging regional offensive against Iran, to include increased interdiction of Iranian arms shipments headed to client forces in Yemen and elsewhere, along with more permissive rules of engagement for U.S. naval commanders whose vessels face Iranian harassment in the Persian Gulf.

The third and related factor is Trump's intense hostility to the Iran nuclear deal. It was only over

Trump's strenuous objections that the U.S. certified that Iran was in compliance with the terms of that agreement in July; there are signs -- not least Trump's own comments -- that he plans either to decertify the deal, thereby laying the groundwork for the re-imposition of nuclear-related economic sanctions, or otherwise undermine it come the next certification deadline in October.

The likely effect of doing so would be to empower Iranian hard-liners, create another serious point of friction in the bilateral relationship, and potentially touch off a renewed proliferation crisis should Iran respond by resuming its nuclear program.

Together, these three factors are fostering heightened tensions on a variety of issues, and they are creating a situation in which the potential for escalation -- in the Gulf, in Syria, in Iraq -- is significant indeed.

To be clear, this move toward confrontation is by no means entirely the administration's fault. It is fundamentally rooted in Iran's destabilizing behavior; it reflects a predictable return to rivalry as the shared threat from the Islamic State fades. And there is a reasonable argument for a stronger but calibrated approach to constraining Iranian expansionism -- indeed, even former Obama administration officials have acknowledged that previous U.S. efforts have been insufficient. The problem, however, is that Trump has shown little indication that he can undertake such a program responsibly, or even that he is sensitive to the dangers.

So far, the president's efforts to push back against Iran have been ill-considered and destabilizing. In May, Trump apparently decided to subcontract the confrontation with Iran to Saudi Arabia and its Sunni allies, by green-lighting -- whether tacitly or explicitly -- their plan for a showdown with a Qatari government whose offenses included being too friendly to Iran. The predictable result was a counterproductive confrontation between America's partners in the region, which has actually pushed an isolated Qatar closer to Iran.

Similarly, even if the desire for a tougher policy is not necessarily

misplaced, terminating or undermining the Iran nuclear deal is the wrong way to go about it. Leaving aside the fact that nearly all observers agree that Tehran is in technical compliance with the deal, taking such a step would likely have the effect of isolating the U.S. diplomatically -- particularly from its European partners, who would have to cooperate to make additional U.S. economic sanctions effective -- while reintroducing a nuclear dimension into the U.S.-Iran conflict. This is presumably why so many of Trump's own advisers have reportedly argued against his desire to undermine the accord.

It also seems unlikely that the president understands just how risky the current trajectory of events is becoming. Although Iran has varying levels of interest in the different conflicts and countries in which it is involved in the Middle East, as a general rule these conflicts -- purely for reasons of geography -- matter more to Iran than they do to the U.S. For example, the question of who controls the area around Deir Ezzor in western Syria, for instance, is of tertiary geopolitical importance for Washington; it is fundamental to Tehran, given the critical role that relationships with Syria and the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah play in Iranian foreign policy.

Accordingly, Tehran is undoubtedly willing to play dirtier and bloodier than Washington in the competition for influence in these areas. An intensified cold war -- let alone a hot one -- would be far more fraught for U.S. interests than Trump likely expects.

Indeed, the move toward confrontation with Iran has exposed a fundamental tension in Trump's statecraft toward the Middle East. As the president has made clear, he is not eager to invest large amounts of additional blood and treasure in a region that has proved so frustrating for America. Yet ramping up tensions with Iran risks incurring precisely the costs and dangers that Trump says he wants to avoid. An overriding theme of Trump's foreign policy so far has been the effort to act tough on the cheap. The president should understand that when it comes to Iran, this approach may well prove costly.

Updated Sept. 19, 2017 3:16 p.m. ET

Myanmar's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, defended her country's treatment of ethnic-Rohingya Muslims, saying her country had nothing to fear from international scrutiny after more than 410,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh over the past three weeks to escape Myanmar's armed forces.

Speaking to foreign diplomats in the national capital Naypyitaw on Tuesday, Ms. Suu Kyi said her government would investigate all allegations of human-rights abuses along her country's western border, and said that Myanmar would allow Rohingya who could prove they had lived in the country to return. "We are ready to start the verification process at any time," she said.

But Ms. Suu Kyi, who holds the post of state counselor, also urged the rest of the world to view the crisis as an opportunity to address all the ethnic conflicts in the Buddhist-majority nation, not just in troubled Rakhine State. Myanmar, she said, had never been "soft on human rights."

Ms. Suu Kyi's government has faced growing international pressure as refugees continue to pour into Bangladesh—many of them without any kind of documentation. Myanmar regards the Rohingya as illegal immigrants.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson discussed the plight of Rohingya refugees with Ms. Suu Kyi in a telephone call on Tuesday. He urged the Burmese government and military to facilitate humanitarian aid and to confront allegations of human-rights abuses, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said.

Former colonial ruler Britain warned at the United Nations on Monday that Myanmar, also known as Burma, would face close scrutiny if Ms. Suu Kyi didn't move to end the military's campaign against the Rohingya.

The U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Nikki Haley, said Washington "continues to urge the Burmese government to end military operations, grant humanitarian access and commit to aiding the safe return of civilians back to their homes."

Other countries, notably India and China, have been supportive of Myanmar's military operations along its western border. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres in New York on Monday that Beijing "understands and supports" Myanmar's efforts to step up security in the area, according to a statement from China's Foreign Ministry.

During a visit to Myanmar this month, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi blamed the turmoil in Rakhine State on extremists.

The exodus began on Aug. 25 when militants calling themselves the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army launched a series of coordinated attacks on government outposts in Rakhine State, on the country's western border, killing 12 people.

Myanmar's armed forces responded by torching Rohingya villages and in some instances shooting villagers as they fled toward the border with Bangladesh.

Just over half the 1.1 million Rohingya who were recorded to live in the country after a census in 2014 remain, many of them in relief camps, denied citizenship and the right to travel freely.

Ms. Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who took over from a series of military-backed governments after landmark elections in 2015, has drawn much of the international criticism.

Fellow peace 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.

Ms. Suu Kyi's circle sees itself boxed in by a politically powerful military that still controls the defense and interior ministries, people familiar with the situation say. Domestic support in the majority Buddhist country for the violent response to Rohingya rebel attacks is strong, too.

Before Tuesday's speech Ms. Suu Kyi said little on the matter, except to commend army commander Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's operations in Rakhine State.

Some commentators say the growing backlash against the purge of Rohingya might strengthen the growing nationalist sentiment in Myanmar, which is sandwiched between Asia's two political and economic giants, China and India.

In Yangon, the largest city, demonstrators gathered on Tuesday to proclaim their support for Ms. Suu Kyi, many holding up banners extolling their love for "Mother Suu."

Write to James Hookway at james.hookway@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 20, 2017, print edition as 'Myanmar to Allow 'Verified' Rohingya to Return Home.'

The New York Times Aung San Suu Kyi, a Much-Changed Icon, Evades Rohingya Accusations

Richard C. Paddock and Hannah Beech

12-15 minutes

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's de facto leader, arriving to deliver a speech in Naypyidaw on Tuesday addressing the plight of the country's Rohingya ethnic minority. Soe Zeya Tun/Reuters

NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar — Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and de facto leader of Myanmar, stood before a room of government officials and foreign dignitaries on Tuesday to at last, after weeks of international urging, address the plight of the country's Rohingya ethnic minority.

But those who expected her to eloquently acknowledge a people's oppression were disappointed.

In her speech, delivered in crisp English and often directly inviting foreign listeners to "join us" in addressing Myanmar's problems, she steadfastly refused to criticize

the country's military, which has been accused of a vast campaign of killing, rape and village burning.

"The security forces have been instructed to adhere strictly to the code of conduct in carrying out security operations, to exercise all due restraint and to take full measures to avoid collateral damage and the harming of innocent civilians," she said.

It has been a stunning reversal for Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, 72, who was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for her "nonviolent struggle for democracy and human rights."

As she spoke, more than 400,000 Rohingya, a Muslim minority long repressed by the Buddhists who dominate Myanmar, had fled a military massacre that the United Nations has called a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing." The lucky ones are suffering in makeshift camps in Bangladesh where there is not nearly enough food or medical aid.

A stark satellite analysis by Human Rights Watch shows that at least 210 Rohingya villages have been burned to the ground since the offensive began on Aug. 25. Bangladeshi officials say land mines had been planted on Myanmar's side of the border, posing a threat to the fleeing Rohingya.

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi tried to mollify her critics by saying she was committed to restoring peace and the rule of law.

Supporters of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, on Tuesday. Lynn Bo Bo/European Pressphoto Agency

"We condemn all human rights violations and unlawful violence," she said. "We feel deeply for the suffering of all the people caught up in the conflict."

But, asking why the world did not acknowledge the progress made in her country, she also boasted that Muslims living in the violence-torn area had ample access to health care and radio broadcasts. And she

expressed uncertainty about why Muslims might be fleeing the country, even as she sidestepped evidence of widespread abuses by the security forces by saying there had been "allegations and counter-allegations."

Her speech was remarkably similar in language to that of the generals who had locked her up for the better part of two decades, in the process making her a political legend: the regal prisoner of conscience who vanquished the military with no weapons but her principles.

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of the assassinated independence hero Aung San, who founded the modern Burmese Army. She is a member of the country's elite, from the highest class of the ethnic Bamar Buddhist majority.

Officials in her government have accused the Rohingya, who have suffered decades of persecution and have been mostly stripped of their citizenship, of faking rape and burning their own houses in a bid to

hijack international public opinion. She has done nothing to correct the record.

A Facebook page associated with her office suggested that international aid groups were colluding with Rohingya militants, whose attack on Myanmar police posts and an army base precipitated the fierce military counteroffensive. In a statement, her government labeled the insurgent strikes "brutal acts of terrorism."

During her address, made from a vast convention center in Naypyidaw, Myanmar's capital, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi tried to evoke a program of grand goals including democratic transition, peace, stability and development.

But she also cautioned that the country's long experience with authoritarian rule and nearly seven decades of ethnic conflict in Myanmar's frontier lands have frayed national unity.

Myanmar police officers at the Bangladesh border near Maungdaw Township in Rakhine State last month. Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

"People expect us to overcome all these challenges in as short a time as possible," she said, noting that her civilian government only took office last year. "Eighteen months is a very short time in which to expect us to meet and overcome all the challenges that we are facing."

There were worrisome signs from the moment she entered a power-sharing agreement with the military after her National League for Democracy won the 2015 elections.

Myanmar's generals — who ruled the country for nearly half a century and turned a resource-rich land also known as Burma into an economic failure — stage-managed every facet of the political transition. The Tatmadaw, as the Myanmar Army is known, kept the most important levers of power for itself.

It also effectively relegated Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi to the post of state counselor by designing a Constitution that kept her from the presidency.

"It's always a dance with the generals," said U Win Htein, an N.L.D. party elder and former military officer, who served

alongside some of the Tatmadaw's highest-ranking generals.

He warned that Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi had to placate an army with a history of pushing aside civilian leaders under the pretext of defending national sovereignty.

"The army, they are watching her every word," he said. "One misstep on the Muslim issue, and they can make their move."

Yet even before the compromises that accompanied her ascension to power, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi was already distancing herself from the hopes invested in her by the rest of the world.

Rohingya refugees resting after crossing into Bangladesh from Myanmar last month. Adam Dean for The New York Times

"Let me be clear that I would like to be seen as a politician, not some human rights icon," she said in an interview shortly after her release from house arrest in 2010.

Such a recasting of her role has disappointed Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's fellow Nobel Peace Prize laureates. In an open letter, Desmond Tutu, the South African former archbishop, advised his "dearly beloved younger sister" that "if the political price of your ascension to the highest office in Myanmar is your silence, the price is surely too steep."

Muhammad Yunus, the Bangladeshi social entrepreneur and recipient of the prize in 2006, was more pointed.

"She should not have received a Nobel Peace Prize if she says, sorry, I'm a politician, and the norms of democracy don't suit me," he said in a telephone interview with The New York Times. "The whole world stood by her for decades, but today she has become the mirror image of Aung San Suu Kyi by destroying human rights and denying citizenship to the Rohingya."

"All we can do," he said, "is pray for the return of the old Aung San Suu Kyi."

Beyond her personal legacy, the direction of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership carries global consequence.

"This is a democratic moment, and she represents Burma's democratic promise," said Derek Mitchell, the

former American ambassador to Myanmar. "The country sits at the crossroads of Asia in a region where democracy is in retreat, which makes Burma's success even more important."

In Tuesday's speech, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, acknowledged the state of democracy in her country.

"We are a young and fragile democracy facing many problems," she said, "but we have to cope with them all at the same time."

But she also stressed that "more than 50 percent" of Rohingya villages in Myanmar's western state of Rakhine remained "intact." And she seemed to borrow vocabulary from a self-help manual when she described the need to research why certain villages had not been touched by the violence.

Fires in Myanmar as seen from the Bangladesh side of the border this month. The Myanmar military has been accused of a vast campaign of killing, rape and village burning. Bernat Armangué/Associated Press

"We have to remove the negative and increase the positive," she said.

Through all of the current Rohingya crisis, and a series of military offensives against other ethnic armed groups, she has publicly supported the military.

"We do not have any trust in Aung San Suu Kyi because she was born into the military," said Hkapra Hkun Awng, a leader of the Kachin ethnic group from northern Myanmar, one of more than a dozen minorities whose rebel armies have fought the Tatmadaw over the decades. "She is more loyal to her own people than to the ethnics. Her blood is thicker than a promise of national reconciliation."

Even before the mudslinging of the 2015 election campaign, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi was sidestepping questions about the sectarian violence in Rakhine that disproportionately affected the Rohingya. Rather than condemning pogroms against the persecuted Muslim minority, she has dismissed accusations of ethnic cleansing and called, instead, for rule of law to solve any problem.

Because most Rohingya were stripped of their citizenship by the military, it has not been clear how any laws might apply to them. Even though Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi said

Tuesday that Myanmar was prepared to repatriate refugees who can establish that they are residents of Myanmar, that may be a formidable task for people who are unlikely to have documents proving that.

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi has largely shielded herself from the media and has holed up in the capital. Although a year ago, as the nation's new civilian leader, she attended the United Nations General Assembly, and was celebrated by world leaders, this year she chose not to attend, avoiding criticism of her stance on the Rohingya.

Several heads of state who spoke on the General Assembly's first day of speeches on Tuesday in New York assailed Myanmar for the Rohingya crackdown, with some describing it as an anti-Muslim atrocity.

The president of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, whose country's population of nearly 200 million is nearly half Muslim, said "the Myanmar crisis is very reminiscent of what happened in Bosnia in 1995 and in Rwanda in 1994." The president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose country is majority Muslim and who spoke with Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi recently, said the Rohingya had been "subjected to almost an ethnic cleansing, with provocative terrorist acts used as a pretext."

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi is attuned enough to public sentiment to understand the deep reservoir of anti-Muslim sentiment in Myanmar. If anything, her equivocations on the Rohingya have given currency to the widely held assumption in Myanmar that they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh who have occupied land that rightfully belongs to the Burmese.

Since Myanmar's political transition began, a virulent strain of Buddhist extremism has pushed such attitudes further into the mainstream. Influential monks have preached anti-Muslim rhetoric and pushed successfully for a law that circumscribes interfaith marriage.

"Buddhist nationalist radicalism has been allowed to spread basically unchecked," said Min Zin, the executive director of the Institute for Strategy and Policy Myanmar. "The government is doing very little to stop it."

The New York Times Mexico Earthquake Kills Hundreds, Trapping Many Under Rubble (UNE)

Kirk Semple, Paulina Villegas and Elisabeth Malkin 11-14 minutes

MEXICO CITY — A powerful Tuesday afternoon, toppling earthquake struck Mexico on buildings, killing children in a school

that collapsed, rattling the capital and sending people flooding into the streets for the second time in just two weeks.

Early Wednesday, the director of Mexico's civil protection agency, Luis Felipe Puente, said on Twitter that 216 people had been killed, revising an earlier toll of 248. Eighty-three people were killed in Mexico City, Mr. Puente said.

Rescuers were frantically digging out people trapped under rubble, including the children buried beneath their school, volunteers at the scene said Tuesday night. At least 21 students were believed to have been killed in the collapse of the school.

The earthquake hit shortly after 1 p.m. about 100 miles from Mexico City. It registered a preliminary magnitude of 7.1, causing heavy and prolonged shaking in the capital.

More than 40 buildings and other structures in Mexico City collapsed, including at least one other school, officials said, crushing cars and trapping people inside. Emergency workers and ordinary citizens raced to the site of downed office and apartment buildings, lifting rubble with their hands to free anyone stuck underneath.

Tuesday's earthquake struck on the 32nd anniversary of another major disaster: the 1985 quake that killed as many as 10,000 people in Mexico.

It also came less than two weeks after the most powerful earthquake in Mexico in a century, an 8.1 magnitude quake that killed at least 90 people, destroyed thousands of homes and was felt by tens of millions of people.

Residents in Mexico City, having just experienced shaking from that quake, said the tremors on Tuesday were far worse.

Strong Earthquake Strikes Near Mexico City

A deadly 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck close to Mexico City. It comes less than two weeks after the most powerful earthquake in Mexico in a century.

By CHRIS CIRILLO on September 19, 2017. Photo by Adriana Zehbrauskas for The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

"It's like Sodom and Gomorrah, like God is angry at us," said Jorge Ortiz Diaz, 66, a government employee who was assisting with the rescues on Tuesday, his eyes filling with tears. "Now is the moment when solidarity begins."

The scene at the collapsed school, Colegio Enrique Rebsamen in the southern part of the capital, was one of total anguish Tuesday night, as hundreds of volunteers clamored to unearth children they hoped were still alive beneath the structure's ruins. Dozens of workers carting megaphones called out contradictory instructions, while others yelled for resources like batteries, flashlights and diesel fuel.

Volunteers kept lists of every dead child's name that was confirmed by the rescuers as they emerged from the wreckage. Frenzied parents paced the scene, wondering about the fates of their sons and daughters or screaming in agony upon seeing their bodies.

In parts of the city, the wreckage was evident immediately, including damage to the main airport. Shattered glass and the splintered edges of buildings spilled onto sidewalks. Nearly all residents of the capital remained outside even after the shaking had faded, fearful of returning to their buildings.

An injured man was pulled out of a collapsed building in the Roma Norte neighborhood of Mexico City. Rebecca Blackwell/Associated Press

In the neighborhood of Roma Norte, an entire office building collapsed. Rescuers scrambled to save people caught in the rubble. Several of the injured were whisked away in ambulances. Others lay on the ground covered in dust. An unknown number remained trapped or crushed inside.

Talia Hernández, 28, was on the second floor of the building, taking a tattoo class. When the earthquake hit and tore through the structure, she said, she rolled down the stairs as they were collapsing. She managed to escape the building but broke her foot.

"I can't believe I'm alive," she said, weeping and in shock as medics pulled shards of glass from her foot.

Ms. Hernández said other people had also managed to flee, but even the perimeter of the building remained dangerous. The heavy smell of leaking gas permeated the air, as it did across damaged parts of the city. Emergency personnel at the scene were pushing bystanders away, fearing an explosion.

The scene was cordoned off, and the injured were being carted away on gurneys and placed in ambulances. The building itself was unrecognizable — it had fallen entirely. The rubble, a brown cement, rose nearly 20 feet high. The neighboring building was partly torn in the collapse as well.

Angela Cota, 52, an administrative secretary who worked in the building on the first floor, said that just as she and others were fleeing, parts of the building fell around them. They, too, managed to get out, but it was unclear how many people remained stuck beneath the rubble.

Gabriela Hernández, 28, lay on a gurney, covered in blood and nearly speechless. Her boyfriend stood beside her, clutching her IV bag. The blood was not hers, they said; it belonged to someone who had fallen on top of her when the building went down. She said she had been on the sixth floor when it happened, yet managed to escape.

The scene grew frantic as dozens of medical workers, police officers and firefighters shouted to see what people needed. They were hastily trying to make a pulley system to free people still trapped near the top of the rubble heap. Construction workers from a nearby site raced to the scene and lined up to help, bearing long wooden poles to help lift pieces of the structure.

Buildings also collapsed across the neighborhood of Condesa, another fashionable district in the city constructed atop soft soil and extremely vulnerable to earthquakes. Outside, thousands and thousands stood in the streets, avenues and sidewalks, filling the popular neighborhoods with a sense of dread.

On Laredo Street, an entire eight-story apartment building had fallen into the road, leaving an enormous heap of concrete and rubble pouring into the street. At least 100 people stood atop the pile clearing it by hand, piece by piece, passing boulders and twisted steel pipes along a human chain that radiated from the heap like spokes.

The sound of shouts filled the air, men barking orders at one another. Then came a call for silence — to listen for the voices of anyone trapped inside, screaming for help.

Standing on the sidewalk, Salomón Chertorivski, the secretary of economic development for Mexico City, said he believed that 10 people were trapped inside the structure. The rumble of a backhoe digging into the building's remains and the whir of helicopters overhead dominated. A stretcher was passed up to the top of the heap.

"Whoever isn't helping, leave," one worker shouted to no one in particular.

Witnesses had watched in horror as people tried to escape before the building collapsed.

"It fell straight down," said Moises Escobar, 25, a recent college graduate. "There was a lot of smoke and dust."

Workers continued their mad scramble to pull those from the wreckage. A man raced down Amsterdam Street, looking for tools.

"Saws, hacksaws — anything to cut wood and metal," he screamed.

Someone returned from a nearby building with a hacksaw and handed it to him, and he prepared to sprint back to the mound.

"I work near here, but we have to help," he said. "It's our country."

That collective spirit filled the disaster site, as neighbors and those passing by joined to help.

People cleared the rubble of a damaged building in Mexico City after a major earthquake struck on Tuesday, the second to hit the country in less than two weeks. Alfredo Estrella/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Alexia Meza, 23, was in a nearby building when the collapse occurred. "You could hear the screams," she said.

She raced into the crowd surrounding the fallen building, her arms raised to collect whatever debris workers were passing down to clear from the site.

People evacuated from office buildings during the earthquake gathered on Reforma Avenue in the capital. Rebecca Blackwell/Associated Press

The epicenters of Tuesday's earthquake and the larger one on Sept. 7 were more than 400 miles apart, but they both occurred in a region where one of the earth's crustal plates, the Cocos, is sliding beneath another, the North American.

Paul Earle, a seismologist with the United States Geological Survey, said it was too early to say whether there was any connection between the two quakes. Although the first was much stronger, the one on Tuesday was much closer to Mexico City, causing more damage in the capital.

There were also reports of deaths and extensive damage in Jojutla de Juárez, Morelos, a city about 60 miles west of the epicenter. Residents said that many buildings, including businesses and homes, had been destroyed. Electricity was cut, and water was scarce because water tanks — many located above ground or on rooftops — ruptured or cracked.

President Enrique Peña Nieto said on Twitter that he had been flying to Oaxaca at the time of the earthquake and had immediately returned to Mexico City. Earlier on Tuesday, Mr. Peña Nieto attended a memorial service for those killed in the 1985 earthquake.

Emotions ran high as everyone waited for people to be pulled from the fractured structure in the Roma Norte neighborhood. Tearful outbursts clashed with shouts for

help and the din of trucks and crews working feverishly.

Hours after the building fell, emergency personnel pulled Laura Rita Bernal Torres, 36, out of the rubble — alive.

She had been in the same tattoo class as Ms. Hernández, on the second floor. As she emerged, a round of applause erupted from the hundreds of workers and rescuers nearby.

"I can't feel my legs," she said. A block of concrete had fallen on her back.

Ms. Bernal then began to sob, asking about the fate of her classmate, Ms. Hernández, who was trapped beside her in the building. She figured she must have been killed.

When a New York Times reporter told her that Ms. Hernández had in fact made it out alive, Ms. Bernal began weeping anew.

"I can't believe it," she cried. "Thank God!"

More survivors emerged from the debris. Ernesto Sota Senderos, a 64-year-old engineer, was pulled out unconscious. But his son was still trapped inside the building. Others with loved ones inside urged rescuers to persist.

"You can do this," screamed a man in a suit as he ran beside a gurney. "Fight for your life, please!"

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Pérez

7-9 minutes

Updated Sept. 20, 2017 5:53 a.m. ET

MEXICO CITY—Soldiers, rescue workers and volunteers worked late into the night Tuesday, searching for the living and the dead beneath rubble left by a 7.1-magnitude earthquake that collapsed scores of buildings in Mexico's capital and surrounding states.

The Mexican Civil Defense Agency said early Wednesday that 217 people had died, lowering the toll from an earlier figure without explanation, the Associated Press reported.

In the south of the capital, a heart-wrenching scene played out at a primary school that collapsed. Twenty children and two adults were killed at the Enrique Rebsamen school, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto said late Tuesday after visiting the site. At least 30 second-grade students were still missing along with eight adults, some of them teachers, authorities said.

Scores of parents and other students, as well as volunteer rescue workers, surrounded the school awaiting news late into the night.

Tuesday's earthquake struck on the afternoon of the anniversary of a devastating 1985 earthquake and less than two weeks after another big quake struck the country. Officials said the death toll was sure to rise given the number of collapsed buildings. Messages flooded social media listing missing colleagues, students and loved ones.

The state of Morelos, whose border sits on the quake's reported epicenter, said at least 55 people had been killed. Mexico City's

Death Toll From Mexico Earthquake Surpasses 200

Dudley Althaus and Santiago

government reported another 49 killed, while Puebla state tallied another 32 dead. Other states also reported casualties.

The quake was unusually close to Mexico City, located just 60 miles south of the capital in Chiautla de Tapia, a small town in neighboring Puebla state, according to Mexico's seismological service.

Video footage from the capital soon after the quake showed large plumes of dust rising up from collapsing buildings. Thousands of residents gathered in the streets, many crying and frantically trying to contact loved ones. Within minutes, many rushed to help haul away rubble from toppled buildings and listen for the cries of those trapped beneath.

"It was horrible," said María José Jaso, a 17-year-old preparatory student at a Catholic school in Mexico City that was damaged by the tremor. "Everyone was trying to get out the door at the same time. We were terrified."

Tuesday's quake came just hours after authorities staged the annual earthquake drill in the capital that commemorated the 1985 quake, which destroyed large sections of central Mexico City and killed at least 6,000 people.

It was the second big earthquake in less than two weeks, following an 8.1 magnitude quake that struck southern Mexico on Sept. 7, killing nearly 100 people in Chiapas and Oaxaca states. This quake was felt much more strongly in Mexico's densely populated capital because of the proximity.

Mexico was also hit earlier this month by Hurricane Katia, which killed two. Even the Popocatepetl volcano southeast of the city sent a large cloud of ash into the sky on Tuesday.

"This is too much. It's like we're cursed or something," said Marcos Santamaría, a 62-year-old retiree.

Several buildings collapsed in the chic neighborhoods of Roma and Condesa in central Mexico City, where many foreigners live. In Condesa, rescue workers scrambled to find eight to 10 people believed trapped under the debris of a building that collapsed near Mexico Park, one of the city's most famous parks.

Hundreds of volunteers formed a human chain to help clear rubble and bring food and water to rescue workers.

Gabriela Magaña, who works in a nearby art gallery, was inside the building when the quake hit. She managed to make it to the street just before it fell.

"I just saw an immense black cloud of dust and heard a big bang. Then I started to hear crying, and the smell of gas was unbearable. It was a nightmare," she said.

When the earthquake hit, Micaela Guillén lifted her 85-year-old mother from her wheelchair and carried her down the stairs and out of her building.

"I managed to get down the stairs as glass broke all around us. I thought for sure the ceiling was going to fall on me," she said, crying as she spoke. Behind her, the building's exterior had several gaping holes, one showing an exposed bedroom.

A few blocks away, dozens of soldiers and rescue worker in red overalls stood atop what had been a six-story building. They occasionally asked for volunteers to be silent so they could hear pleas for help.

Fabian Chemlel, a French salesman who worked at an office in that building, said five of his colleagues were missing. Another trapped colleague had sent text messages to co-workers saying that his legs were stuck in the debris; he was later rescued.

"We were doing drills for the past two weeks, including today. We were supposed to be ready for this.

But there's not much you can do if a building falls on you," he said.

A steady stream of police helicopters flew across the city, while the nearly constant wail of sirens sounded in the distance.

Television images from the city of Puebla, 80 miles to the east of the Mexican capital in the state of the same name, showed rescue workers combing through a large collapsed building. Across central Mexico, there were scenes of damaged schools, hospitals and churches. A bridge collapsed on the highway between Mexico City and the resort city of Acapulco.

The Mexico City airport suspended operations until authorities could check infrastructure for damage. Pictures showed a large crack in the road leading to one of the airport's main terminals.

Federal authorities ordered schools in seven states, as well as Mexico City, closed until further notice. Patients were evacuated from many hospitals.

Hours after the quake, residents were still huddled on the streets, too afraid to go back inside. Along the boulevard Paseo de la Reforma, a strong smell of gas caused panic.

Much of Mexico City is built on an ancient lake bed, making the city shake during earthquakes as if it were on a bowl of gelatin. Many of the same neighborhoods hit hard on Tuesday were the same ones that suffered the worst of the damage in 1985.

After that quake, Mexico City upgraded its building codes and installed an earthquake alarm system. During the earthquake a few weeks ago, seismic alarms sounded about a minute before the quake struck the capital, giving people time to run outside. But on Tuesday, the city's alarms went off just a few seconds before the quake hit because the temblor was so close.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who had been criticized for taking days to contact Mexican Mr. Peña Nieto after the quake earlier this month, was quick to offer support.

"God bless the people of Mexico City. We are with you and will be there for you," Mr. Trump tweeted Tuesday afternoon.

—Robbie Whelan and Juan Montes contributed to this article.

Santiago Pérez at santiago.perez@wsj.com

Write to Dudley Althaus at Dudley.Althaus@wsj.com and

Appeared in the September 20, 2017, print edition as 'Earthquake Hits Mexico, Killing Scores.'

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Harrup

6-8 minutes

Updated Sept. 20, 2017 7:14 a.m. ET

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico—Hurricane Maria thrashed the eastern Caribbean, killing at least two people on Guadeloupe and devastating the tiny island nation of Dominica before making a beeline for Puerto Rico.

The storm weakened before making landfall in Puerto Rico early Wednesday, according to the National Hurricane Center.

It said some fluctuations in Maria's intensity could occur but Maria is forecast to remain an extremely dangerous hurricane as it passes over Puerto Rico. The U.S. territory was largely spared by Hurricane Irma, which tore through nearby islands nearly two weeks ago.

The eye of the storm tore into Dominica on Monday night with maximum sustained winds near 160 miles an hour, ripping away roofs, knocking out electricity and inundating streets and mountainsides with heavy rain.

Hours after the storm hit, Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit found himself in trouble after the "merciless" wind tore the roof off his home and he had to be rescued, according to a post on his Facebook account.

"So far the winds have swept away the roofs of almost every person I have spoken to or otherwise made contact with," Mr. Skerit wrote, saying initial reports were of widespread devastation on the island of 74,000 people.

Later he wrote: "So far we have lost all what money can buy and replace."

The prime minister had posted no additional news by early afternoon

Hurricane Maria Bears Down on Puerto Rico After Battering Dominica

José de Córdoba and Anthony

Harrup Tuesday, and calls to the island were unsuccessful.

Maria was the strongest storm on record to hit Dominica, an island that relies heavily on agriculture, offshore banking and some tourism. Tropical Storm Erika killed roughly 30 people there and left hundreds homeless in August 2015.

In 1979, Category 3 Hurricane David killed an estimated 56 people on the island and left three out of every four homes uninhabitable.

French Interior Minister Gérard Collomb said initial searches after the passage of the storm revealed limited damage on the island of Martinique, just south of Dominica.

In Guadeloupe, cleanup crews began work to clear roads and assess damage as the storm moved away from the island, where it left 80,000 homes without electricity. The island's prefecture said that in addition to one person who "did not comply with the confinement instructions" and was killed by a falling tree, another person died after they "fell in the sea," the Associated Press reported.

Jean-Michel Jumez, a local French official, said the storm had caused minimal damage around Pointe-à-Pitre, the administrative center of Guadeloupe.

There is more concern about the islands of Marie-Galante and Les Saintes, which lie closer to Maria's path to the south of Guadeloupe, and officials were still trying to establish contact with those islands, he said. "Communication has been very difficult."

Maria had intensified from a tropical storm to a Category 5 hurricane in just 30 hours, with its top winds increasing to 160 miles an hour from 65 from Sunday afternoon to Monday night, the National Hurricane Center reported.

In Puerto Rico, Gov. Ricardo Rosselló urged people in flood-

prone and coastal areas to evacuate.

"It's not safe to be out on the streets, it's not safe to be in a house with a zinc roof, or in a wooden house, or in a flood area," Mr. Rosselló said at a news conference. "This is very serious. It's the most dangerous storm in a century in Puerto Rico."

The governor urged private-sector employers to allow workers to leave by midday, adding that except in an emergency no one should be on the streets after 2 p.m. or 3 p.m.

"It is the priority of all Puerto Ricans to be safe," he said. "Don't put other people in harm's way." Government workers were sent home at midday Monday and the island's schools were closed.

As of midday Tuesday, there were 373 people in government shelters, a number Mr. Rosselló said he believed would grow "exponentially" by the afternoon.

Puerto Rican officials have warned that Maria's combination of massive amounts of rain and a storm surge could prove deadly. "People in flood-prone areas must evacuate," Hector Pesquera, the island's top public-safety official warned on Monday. "If not, you will die."

News radio stations crackled with repeated warnings as San Juan residents lined up to put gas in their cars, stocked up on bottled water and desperately searched for power generators.

Workers labored late into the night Monday boarding up San Juan storefronts.

"It's going to be ugly," hotel worker Pedro Rivera said as he rushed home to finish the last of his hurricane preparations.

Like many other island residents, Mr. Rivera was bracing for a long period without electricity. Many areas in Puerto Rico haven't had power since Hurricane Irma struck a

glancing blow nearly two weeks ago.

"We think the lights will go out for months," Mr. Rivera said. After watching Irma flatten neighboring islands, Mr. Rivera feared Hurricane Maria would bring the same destruction to Puerto Rico.

"I'm scared," he said.

Irma killed at least 38 people and damaged 90% of the buildings on some islands as it tore through the northeastern Caribbean before striking Florida. Tropical storm-force winds from Maria were also expected to affect St. Martin and the more northerly of the U.S. Virgin Islands—St. Thomas and St. John—later Tuesday.

Gov. Kenneth Mapp of the U.S. Virgin Islands said the eye of the storm was on track to hit the island of St. Croix after midnight. He said residents on the southern coast "may want to think about making a last-ditch effort" to evacuate to a shelter.

"In effect, it will be a direct hit," the governor said of St. Croix, which had been spared a major impact from Irma. "We want folks to be safe, this is an extremely, extremely dangerous hurricane."

Hurricane Jose, which had threatened the northern Caribbean a few days after Irma before turning north into the Atlantic, is moving slowly offshore of the central U.S. Atlantic Coast. Although they expect Jose to remain at sea, forecasters are warning of dangerously heavy surf along the New Jersey coast northward in the coming days.

—Dudley Althaus and Matthew Dalton contributed to this article.

Write to José de Córdoba at jose.decordoba@wsj.com and Anthony Harrup at anthony.harrup@wsj.com

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**The
New York
Times**

Islands Seek International Funding for Hurricane Recovery

Lisa Friedman

7-9 minutes

President Danilo Medina of the Dominican Republic at the United Nations on Monday. Mr. Medina and other Caribbean leaders are calling for money to help recover from devastating storms linked to

climate change. Justin Lane/European Pressphoto Agency

UNITED NATIONS — As Hurricane Maria thunders through the Caribbean, island leaders still

reeling from Hurricane Irma are calling on international organizations to provide money to help vulnerable countries recover from devastating storms linked to climate change.

In the Bahamas, emergency evacuations crippled the tourism on which the islands depend, said Darren A. Henfield, the country's minister of foreign affairs. The Dominican Republic, spared the worst of Hurricane Irma, fears a future of devastated beaches undermining decades of investment, President Danilo Medina said.

And on Barbuda, where Hurricane Irma destroyed everything in its path this month, there is not a single person left, officials said. In one day, the population of neighboring Antigua swelled when it took in about 1,400 men, women and children who fled Barbuda. Rodney Williams, the governor general of Antigua and Barbuda, said that in addition to the estimated \$300 million cost of rebuilding Barbuda, Antigua was grappling with how to provide shelter, schools and medical care to hundreds of displaced people.

Winds from Hurricane Irma lashed a seawall in Nassau, the Bahamas, on Sept. 9. Tim Aylen/Associated Press

"Today I ask how your governments will respond to this international crisis. We ask the international community to help us, not because we want to outstretch a begging bowl, but because forces far beyond our control have pushed us to this dire situation," Mr. Williams told the United Nations on Monday. "Rebuilding Barbuda is not a task

we can undertake alone."

Roosevelt Skerrett, the prime minister of Dominica, where Hurricane Maria made landfall late Monday as a Category 5 hurricane, pressed "friendly nations and organizations" to provide a helicopter so that he could survey the "widespread devastation," which he described as "mind-boggling."

In a special session convened by Secretary General António Guterres before the official opening of the 72nd United Nations General Assembly, those Caribbean leaders and others appealed to the body to rethink humanitarian aid. They asserted that because climate change is fueling more intense storms, vulnerable countries must have a better way to recover than to beg for money with each new devastation.

Climate change, they said, is no longer a distant threat. Islands are already suffering millions of dollars in losses that they can barely afford because of planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions baked into the atmosphere, the leaders said.

"Climate change and its consequences should not be a subject of speculation or debate," Mr. Medina said. "It's a truth which hits us and which causes great uncertainty."

Leaders did not make explicit demands at the formal United Nations session. Behind the

scenes, though, several said it was past time for the creation of a special funding mechanism to help countries deal with the unavoidable consequences of climate change. No amount of planning in Barbuda, for example, could have protected the island from the utter collapse of its infrastructure, Walton Alfonso Webson, Antigua and Barbuda's ambassador to the United Nations, said in an interview.

"The small islands have been saying for so many years in the climate change discussions that this is possible," Mr. Webson said. "It's no longer possible. It's happened."

The issue of whether countries should be assured of some aid to rebuild from storms or droughts, or to relocate citizens if need be, is known in United Nations parlance as "loss and damage." The question of wealthy nations' responsibility for providing this compensation has never been fully resolved. Industrialized nations have consistently rejected being held legally liable for their decades of carbon pollution.

After a protracted debate, the Obama administration allowed the Paris agreement in 2015 to acknowledge the special needs of vulnerable countries, but American negotiators supported a provision saying that doing so "does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation."

Island leaders said this week that it was time to forget the issue of

compensation and focus on ways rich and poor countries could work together. Some have called for large-scale insurance programs that pay out after a disaster, while others have proposed a special international fund.

"There really has to be some sort of mechanism for insurance so we can have quick restoration after events such as this," Diann Black-Layne, Antigua's ambassador for climate change, said in an interview. "If that doesn't happen, we will have no choice but then to look for a compensation system. That's not what we want, to spend years in court."

She and other diplomats said they would press for a funding mechanism at a United Nations session in Germany in November.

The State Department did not respond to questions about the Trump administration's position on loss and damage.

Michele J. Sison, the deputy United States ambassador to the United Nations, told leaders on Monday that the United States Agency for International Development had committed \$1.2 million to help Caribbean islands hit by Hurricane Irma. American assistance has gone toward purchasing hygiene kits, helping to deliver relief supplies, restoring water access and assessing damage.

"It is a core American value to help those in need," Ms. Sison said.

The Washington Post
ergsteve

11-14 minutes

PostPartisan

Opinion

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

By Stephen Stromberg

PostPartisan

Opinion

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

September 19 at 2:39 PM
(Photo: David McNew/Getty Images)

New research out Monday seems at first glance to give climate doubters new ammunition in their war against climate science. In fact, it undercuts one of their essential criticisms.

Stromberg : So much for the climate change 'hoax'

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

The peer-reviewed journal Nature Geoscience released a surprising new paper finding that the world may have a little more room than previously thought to cut greenhouse gas emissions. A group of European scientists — foreigners, no less! — recalculated the Earth's "carbon budget," which is the amount of carbon dioxide humans can add to the atmosphere before risking dangerous temperature thresholds. They found that humanity's remaining emissions allowance may be significantly larger than previous calculations. That means that the world may have a better chance of keeping warming to relatively benign levels if governments act with ambition now — or that they may have more time to dawdle before the problem gets bad.

The paper unsettled climate circles. Expert critics suggested to Post reporter Chris Mooney that the paper failed to account for atmospheric aerosols and other factors that can confound warming estimates. Scientists will not

suddenly adopt the rosier assessment. That will take much more scrutiny, debate and research.

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Moreover, even if the paper's conclusions are correct, it is no excuse for inaction. Human activity would still clearly be warming the planet. People would still have to stop burning fossil fuels, and quickly, to avoid very bad climate outcomes. The real argument to act on climate change never assumed that experts' most alarming predictions were guaranteed to happen. The experts were never definitive enough to justify that assumption. The real argument rests on the notion that humanity should minimize the risk, precisely because the future is uncertain.

Yet the fact that a major scientific journal, run by and for the very experts the denier crowd so often attacks, published this and other challenging papers shows that the

scientific establishment is not corrupt. The scientific process is working. This is what rigorous disagreement looks like.

President Trump is only one of the powerful Americans who have called climate change a "hoax." Depending on whom you hear, the notion that emitting massive amounts of heat-trapping gases has influenced the measured warming of the planet was cooked up by the Chinese to harm U.S. industry, liberal statisticians eager to eliminate air conditioning, credulous scientists seeking grant money or a mix of the above. More reasonable-sounding doubters are less outrageous but still argue that mainstream experts are failing to conduct their work with necessary modesty and care. That scientists' research always seemed, year after year, to indicate that the problem is more dire than previously thought served only to confirm suspicions.

So much for that. The organs of the expert climate consensus do not suppress findings that buck

previous conclusions. They merely ask that criticisms meet basic standards and survive the same review that all other serious papers must endure. That radical

dissenting literature is not published in reputable journals says more about the intellectual rigor of extreme climate doubters than it does about the honesty of those

who conduct and publish legitimate scientific research.

Stephen Stromberg is a Post editorial writer. He specializes in U.S. policy and politics, covering

elections, the White House, Congress, legal affairs, energy, the environment and health care.

ETATS-UNIS

THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL

Special Counsel's Office Interviewed Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein

Aruna Viswanatha and Del Quentin Wilber

5-7 minutes

Sept. 19, 2017 8:44 p.m. ET

Special Counsel Robert Mueller's office has interviewed Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein about President Donald Trump's firing of former FBI Director James Comey, according to people familiar with the investigation.

The interview, which occurred in June or July, presents the unusual situation of investigators questioning the person directly overseeing their probe. Mr. Mueller's office is investigating Russia's alleged meddling in the 2016 election, whether any associates of Mr. Trump coordinated with Moscow's efforts, and related matters.

Mr. Mueller as special counsel has a good deal of independence, but he ultimately answers to Mr. Rosenstein, because Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself from the investigation.

The special counsel's handling of the interview could be a sign that Mr. Mueller's team doesn't view Mr. Rosenstein as a central witness in its probe, as the deputy attorney general hasn't withdrawn himself from overseeing it since that interview. A key witness would likely have to take such a step.

"It is unusual," said Peter Zeidenberg, a former federal

prosecutor. "But my inference is that they are not viewing him as a potential critical witness, because either the testimony isn't that critical or there are other people that can say the same thing."

Ian Prior, a spokesman for the Justice Department, said in a statement, "As the deputy attorney general has said numerous times, if there comes a time when he needs to recuse, he will. However, nothing has changed."

Mr. Mueller's office declined to comment.

The federal probe was initially led by Mr. Comey. After the president fired him, Mr. Rosenstein named Mr. Mueller to serve as special counsel. Mr. Mueller is authorized to investigate any matters arising from his examination of the alleged Russian meddling.

Mr. Trump has denied any involvement with Russia and has decried the investigation as a "witch hunt." Russia has denied U.S. intelligence agencies' findings that it sought to influence the presidential election.

Messrs. Rosenstein and Sessions met with Mr. Trump on May 8 to discuss the president's displeasure with Mr. Comey's handling of his job. The Wall Street Journal has reported. Mr. Trump handed Mr. Rosenstein a memo at that meeting in which he laid out his arguments for wanting to fire Mr. Comey. Mr. Rosenstein has provided that memo to the special counsel's office.

The next day, Mr. Rosenstein wrote his own memo highly critical of Mr. Comey's job performance, particularly his handling of the investigation into former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's private email server. Mr. Rosenstein wrote that over the preceding year "the FBI's reputation and credibility have suffered substantial damage."

Mr. Trump then fired Mr. Comey, and the White House distributed to the media Mr. Rosenstein's memo as justification for the decision. Mr. Trump also publicly cited Mr. Rosenstein's advice as playing a role in his decision.

However, two days after the firing, Mr. Trump told NBC News that the Russia probe had been on his mind when he removed the FBI director.

"I said to myself, I said, 'You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story, it's an excuse by the Democrats for having lost an election that they should have won,'" Mr. Trump said.

In the interview with the special counsel's office, Mr. Rosenstein said that in the May 8 meeting with Mr. Trump, the president said that he knew that firing Mr. Comey wouldn't end the Russia investigation and that it could create additional problems for him, according to a person familiar with the interview.

Mr. Comey in June told the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is conducting its own investigation into alleged Russian meddling in the election, that Mr. Trump had urged

him to ease off an investigation into Michael Flynn. Mr. Trump has denied that. Mr. Flynn was forced to resign as Mr. Trump's national security adviser in February for giving misleading statements to administration officials about his contacts with Russian officials.

Mr. Rosenstein told investigators that the president shrugged off any potential consequences for firing Mr. Comey, telling Mr. Rosenstein that he didn't like the FBI director and wanted him out of government, the person said.

The special counsel has been investigating whether Mr. Trump sought to obstruct justice by firing Mr. Comey. Legal experts say proving Mr. Trump obstructed justice would be difficult for a variety of reasons, including his authority as president to fire the FBI director.

Lawyers representing Mr. Trump have provided memos to the special counsel laying out their arguments against a finding of obstruction, The Wall Street Journal has reported. The memos were also sharply critical of Mr. Comey's reliability as a witness.

—Erica Orden contributed to this article.

Write to Aruna Viswanatha at Aruna.Viswanatha@wsj.com and Del Quentin Wilber at del.wilber@wsj.com

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The
Washington
Post

Editorial : Who pays for the White House to lawyer up?

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

4-5 minutes

A worker vacuums a red carpet at the South Portico of the White House. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

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

September 19 at 7:30 PM

PRESIDENT TRUMP has hired a cadre of lawyers to grapple with special counsel Robert S. Mueller III's investigation into Russian

election interference. Now, White House staffers are beginning to do the same. But who will pay the legal bills of those without the president's deep pockets?

As the investigation apparently gathers steam, so does a debate over an Office of Government Ethics rule prohibiting anonymous donations to legal defense funds of government employees. While no such defense fund has yet been set

up for the president's aides, its creation would help staffers shoulder the costs of the high-quality legal representation needed to weather questioning by Mr. Mueller's team. And the recent confusion over OGE rules shows that it's time for the office to make clear its position on requiring donor disclosures.

In 1993, the OGE released an opinion blessing anonymous

contributions to legal defense funds. While the office swiftly backpedaled, the written guidance was never changed. So then-OGE Director Walter M. Shaub Jr. issued an advisory note to the opinion in May, warning that aspects of the guidance's reasoning "are not consistent with current OGE interpretation and practice." At some point since Mr. Shaub's departure from government in July, the notice changed to state that the 1993 guidance remains partially in force, though it also advises government officials to consult with the OGE before counseling employees.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary



Editorial : All Mr. Comey's Wiretaps

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

Sept. 19, 2017 7:13 p.m. ET

When Donald Trump claimed in March that he'd had his "wires tapped" prior to the election, the press and Obama officials dismissed the accusation as a fantasy. We were among the skeptics, but with former director James Comey's politicized FBI the story is getting more complicated.

CNN reported Monday that the FBI obtained a warrant last year to eavesdrop on Paul Manafort, Mr. Trump's campaign manager from May to August in 2016. The story claims the FBI first wiretapped Mr. Manafort in 2014 while investigating his work as a lobbyist for Ukraine's ruling party. That warrant lapsed, but the FBI convinced the court that administers the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to issue a second order as part of its probe into Russian meddling in the election.



Jenkins Jr. : Democrats Collude With Moscow Don

Holman W. Jenkins, Jr.

5-7 minutes

Sept. 19, 2017 7:00 p.m. ET

By the standards of a few weeks ago, Democrats Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer now are actively colluding with a guy who actively colluded with Russia to win the White House.

OK, Mr. Schumer in particular has known Donald Trump for decades.

shaping the day.

According to Mr. Shaub, the revised note opens the door for the use of anonymous contributions. The OGE, on the other hand, says that the office's policy hasn't changed and that it is still counseling against such contributions. While there's no reason to doubt the OGE, it's also true that the text of the new advisory is vague and could be read permissively.

Legal defense funds for federal employees pose a difficult problem. Corruption is a concern: Staffers could become beholden to the outside interests subsidizing their legal bills. Yet if aides forfeit their ability to raise money to defend themselves when they enter

government, then the risk of bankruptcy becomes a cost of public service. That seems overly harsh, especially when some — such as Mr. Trump — are better equipped than others to fund their legal representation.

The OGE's 1993 opinion reasoned that anonymous contributions could solve this problem: How could someone be held captive to the interests of a donor whose identity remained a mystery? Yet as the office soon realized, it's impossible to prevent donors seeking a favor from revealing themselves to their beneficiaries. The better solution is to allow legal defense funds but require a high degree of transparency so the public knows

who is bankrolling counsel for government officials.

It's heartening that the OGE has signaled support for this approach — and that the White House will also work to disclose donors, according to an unnamed staffer who spoke with Politico. Yet with more and more of the president's aides retaining counsel, the OGE's written guidelines leave unnecessary ambiguity at a time when clarity is paramount. The office should take the opportunity to publicly affirm its long-standing ban on anonymous contributions and revise its advisory note to clearly reflect that commitment.

Guess who has lived in a condo in Trump Tower since 2006? Paul Manafort.

The story suggests the monitoring started in the summer or fall, and extended into early this year. While Mr. Manafort resigned from the campaign in August, he continued to speak with Candidate Trump. It is thus highly likely that the FBI was listening to the political and election-related conversations of a leading contender for the White House. That's extraordinary—and worrisome.

Mr. Comey told Congress in late March that he "had no information that supports those [Trump] tweets." Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper was even more specific that "there was no such wiretap activity mounted against—the President-elect at the time, or as a candidate, or against his campaign." He denied that any such FISA order existed. Were they lying?

The warrant's timing may also shed light on the FBI's relationship to the infamous "Steele dossier." That widely discredited dossier claiming

ties between Russians and the Trump campaign was commissioned by left-leaning research firm Fusion GPS and developed by former British spy Christopher Steele—who relied on Russian sources. But the Washington Post and others have reported that Mr. Steele was familiar to the FBI, had reached out to the agency about his work, and had even arranged a deal in 2016 to get paid by the FBI to continue his research.

The FISA court sets a high bar for warrants on U.S. citizens, and presumably even higher for wiretapping a presidential campaign. Did Mr. Comey's FBI marshal the Steele dossier to persuade the court?

All of this is reason for House and Senate investigators to keep exploring how Mr. Comey's FBI was investigating both presidential campaigns. Russian meddling is a threat to democracy but so was the FBI if it relied on Russian disinformation to eavesdrop on a presidential campaign. The Justice Department and FBI have

stonewalled Congressional requests for documents and interviews, citing the "integrity" of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation.

But Mr. Mueller is not investigating the FBI, and in any event his ties to the bureau and Mr. Comey make him too conflicted for such a job. Congress is charged with providing oversight of law enforcement and the FISA courts, and it has an obligation to investigate their role in 2016. The intelligence committees have subpoena authority and the ability to hold those who don't cooperate in contempt.

Mr. Comey investigated both leading presidential campaigns in an election year, playing the role of supposedly impartial legal authority. But his maneuvering to get Mr. Mueller appointed, and his leaks to the press, have shown that Mr. Comey is as political and self-serving as anyone in Washington. No investigation into Russia's role in the 2016 campaign will be credible or complete without the facts about all Mr. Comey's wiretaps.

He knew there was little real substance to the Trump-Russia accusations. It was Mr. Schumer who publicly warned Mr. Trump of the folly of making a political enemy of the intelligence agencies.

Which brings us to Special Counsel Robert Mueller. If he hasn't been asking himself some big-boy questions, he should start now. The FBI handed over to Mr. Mueller a counterintelligence investigation—not a hunt for a Trump crime, but a hunt for the truth about Russia's role in the election.

The problem with the word "collusion" is that when Russia stirs up U.S. politics in its own interest, its actions can be convenient for different parties. That includes a U.S. intelligence community with its own ideas about what needs to happen. More than ever, the story line that Kremlin efforts were aimed with winsome simplicity at helping Mr. Trump seems largely a fabrication of the U.S. intelligence agencies.

If so, the moment of true political corruption may have come with Mr. Trump's improbable, unexpected

victory, when the agencies suddenly switched their diagnosis of Vladimir Putin's motives. On Oct. 31, voters hadn't yet gone to the polls. The New York Times summarized the Obama administration view that Russia's effort "was aimed at disrupting the presidential election rather than electing Mr. Trump."

Then came Mr. Trump's unanticipated triumph, and the administration quickly revised its judgment from "Putin meddled" to "Putin meddled to elect Trump." Stories in the Times and elsewhere, mostly citing Obama CIA chief John

Brennan or people close to him, went further, hammering vaguely at the idea that Mr. Trump directly conspired with Russia.

The Trump dossier, in government hands for months, suddenly leaked into public view. Secret intelligence about Mike Flynn's phone call with the Russian ambassador leaked into public view. Increasingly pathetic intelligence leaks tried to paint now-President Trump as betraying Israeli sources and "leaking" terrorism secrets to Moscow.

The media picked up and believed the fantastical claim that 17 intelligence agencies had agreed on the new explanation of Russia's role. It turns out that handpicked personnel from three agencies drafted the finding. Handpicking is what you do when you want agents to come to a preordained conclusion.

Now ask yourself: Were the

evolving claims about Russia's motives based on any more solid intelligence than were the Trump dossier or Russia's fake Loretta Lynch email? Or is the picture here of our intelligence officials seriously grabbing after whatever flotsam serves their immediate needs?

Mr. Mueller's recent apparent diversion into Trump business history and/or the tax practices of Paul Manafort isn't just a hallmark of a special-counsel fishing expedition. This is a diversion from glaring matters at hand. Did FBI Director James Comey, as he reportedly told a closed congressional hearing, intervene in the Hillary email matter in response to likely planted Russian intelligence, setting off the chain reaction that may have shifted votes at the last minute to Mr. Trump?

The story of Mr. Comey's reliance on possible Russian intelligence disinformation was widely reported by the Washington Post, CNN and

others and then promptly dropped. No, this doesn't mean Russia picked our president, if that's the knowledge Mr. Mueller and some in the media think the American people need to be protected from.

It means that Mr. Comey and our blundering intelligence agencies, via their machinations to keep Mr. Trump out of the White House, may inadvertently have helped him win it.

What's been going on ever since smells like a coverup. Remember, to Mr. Comey, Mr. Brennan and Obama Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, Mr. Trump was a buffoonish, irresponsible candidate. He also was certain to lose. To Team Obama, the threat that needed to be contained before Election Day wasn't Russian meddling. The threat that needed to be contained was the Hillary email investigation.

Then came Mrs. Clinton's shocking defeat, and Team Obama officials suddenly awoke to the realization that their actions might receive a scrutiny they never anticipated. That's when Trump-Russia suspicions started to be flogged beyond their natural merits—to distract.

It simply isn't true that everybody who puts on the uniform of his country is therefore the embodiment of Boy Scout values: trustworthy, loyal and brave. Mr. Mueller has a good reputation and we know nothing to gainsay it, but the coward's way out is to accept the convenient precept that the only thing to see here is the possibility of Trump collusion. The public needs the truth from Mr. Mueller, not a coverup.

Appeared in the September 20, 2017, print edition as 'Dems Collude With Moscow Don.'



New health-care plan stumbles under opposition from governors (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/kelsey.snell.3>

11-14 minutes

Senate Republicans and the White House pressed ahead Tuesday with their suddenly resurgent effort to undo former president Barack Obama's signature health-care law, even as their attempt was dealt a setback when a bipartisan group of governors and several influential interest groups came out against the proposal.

Powerful health-care groups continued to rail against the bill, including AARP and the American Hospital Association, both of which urged a no vote. But it was unclear whether the opposition would ultimately derail the attempt, as key Republican senators including Lisa Murkowski of Alaska said they had yet to make up their minds.

The measure marks the last gasp of Republican attempts to dramatically gut Obama's Affordable Care Act, which has added millions of people to the ranks of the insured through a combination of federally subsidized marketplaces and state-level expansions of Medicaid, leading to record lows in the number of those without health insurance. The Graham-Cassidy bill — named for Sens. Lindsey O. Graham (S.C.) and Bill Cassidy (La.) — would convert funding for the ACA into block grants for the states and would cut Medicaid dramatically over time.

The bill — coming two months after a previous failed repeal effort in the Senate — is the subject of a last-ditch lobbying push by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and the Trump administration, led by Vice President Pence, ahead of a Sept. 30 deadline for Senate action.

In a letter to Senate leaders, the group of 10 governors argued against the Graham-Cassidy bill and wrote that they prefer the bipartisan push to stabilize the insurance marketplaces that Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) had been negotiating before talks stalled Tuesday evening.

Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) attacked the latest GOP health-care plan, the Graham-Cassidy proposal, on Sept. 19 as 10 governors came out against it. "Millions will lose coverage," Schumer said. Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) attacked the latest GOP health-care plan, the Graham-Cassidy proposal, on Sept. 19 as 10 governors came out against it. (The Washington Post)

Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) attacked the latest GOP health-care plan, the Graham-Cassidy proposal, on Sept. 19 as 10 governors came out against it. "Millions will lose coverage," Schumer said. (The Washington Post)

The governors who signed the letter are particularly notable, since some are from states represented by Republican senators who are weighing whether to back the bill. Among the signers were Alaska

Gov. Bill Walker (I), who holds some sway over Murkowski, a potentially decisive vote who opposed a previous Republican effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.

Nevertheless, Murkowski said Tuesday afternoon that she was still weighing her options and explained how her position on the bill might ultimately differ from her opposition to the repeal effort that failed dramatically in July.

"If it can be shown that Alaska is not going to be disadvantaged, you gain additional flexibility. Then I can go back to Alaskans, and I can say, 'Okay, let's walk through this together.' That's where it could be different," she said.

But Murkowski, who has been in close contact with Walker, said she did not yet have the data to make such a determination. Alaska's other Republican senator, Dan Sullivan, said he was still mulling whether to support the bill.

[Reminder: It's very unusual to vote on a health-care bill before Congress knows what it will do]

On the other side, a group of 15 Republican governors announced their support for the Senate bill Tuesday evening. The list includes Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin (R), whose backing could help influence Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who has frequently criticized the legislation for failing to fully repeal the ACA.

On Tuesday, Pence traveled from New York, where he was attending the annual United Nations General

Assembly session, to Washington with Graham in a sign of the White House's support for the proposal.

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) said President Trump "is very excited about this state-centric health-care system" on Sept. 19. Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) said President Trump "is very excited about this state-centric health-care system" on Sept. 19. (The Washington Post)

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) said President Trump "is very excited about this state-centric health-care system" on Sept. 19. (The Washington Post)

"My message today is I want to make sure that members of the Senate know the president and our entire administration supports Graham-Cassidy," Pence told reporters on the flight. "We think the American people need this."

Graham added that President Trump called him at 10:30 p.m. Monday.

"He says, 'If we can pull this off, it'll be a real accomplishment for the country,'" he recalled.

Trump has played a limited role in building support among senators in recent days, but it is possible that his participation will increase as a potential vote nears. He has, however, been in touch with some governors, including a weekend call with Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey (R), according to aides.

Pence attended the weekly Senate Republican policy luncheon, where he said the current health-care

system is collapsing and the bill fulfills key GOP promises to return control to states and rein in federal entitlement programs, according to several GOP senators.

Afterward, McConnell declined to ensure a vote on the bill but said his team is working to secure sufficient support.

"We're in the process of discussing all of this. Everybody knows that the opportunity expires at the end of the month," said McConnell, referring to the limited window Republicans have to take advantage of a procedural tactic to pass a broad health-care bill without any Democratic support.

Democrats say the ACA needs modest improvements by Congress but is working well overall, and they have railed against a process in which Republicans are pressing ahead with few hearings on legislation that would affect an industry that accounts for about a sixth of the U.S. economy.

The current bill would give states control over billions in federal health-care spending and enact deep cuts to Medicaid. The Medicaid cuts in particular are a major source of concern to the governors, both in terms of imposing a per capita limit on what states would receive and putting restrictions on how they could spend any federal aid on their expanded Medicaid populations.

Medicaid was expanded under the ACA to provide states with generous funding if they opted to cover adults earning up to 138 percent of the poverty level. Many Republican-led states decided against an expansion following a Supreme Court decision allowing them to opt out.

The fact that the bill also would restrict states' abilities to tax health-

care providers to fund their Medicaid programs posed a problem for several governors, as well.

In a sign of how alarmed state officials are about the prospect of funding cuts, Louisiana's health secretary sent a letter to Cassidy on Monday saying that their state could see disproportionate cuts with significant impacts on people with preexisting or complex and costly conditions.

"This would be a detrimental step backwards for Louisiana," wrote Rebekah Gee, who posted her letter on Twitter on Monday.

And although Walker has not played a visible role in the national health-care debate until now, certain aspects of the new bill pose an even bigger challenge for Alaska than previous proposals did. Health-care premiums are particularly expensive in the state, given its many remote areas. Premiums on the ACA market average roughly \$1,000 a month for an individual, according to the most recent federal data.

Since federal tax credits over time would be equalized and based on the number of low-income people in a given state, that new calculation would eliminate the more generous subsidies Alaska enjoys.

Given the complex nature of the Graham-Cassidy proposal, it is difficult for state officials and health-care analysts to predict exactly how much money a given state would gain or lose if the legislation were enacted. But early estimates suggest that states with expanded Medicaid programs and active participation in the ACA markets could face major cuts.

An initial estimate for Colorado, according to state officials, suggests it could lose at least \$700 million in

annual federal funding by 2025. Since the state has roughly 450,000 people in its Medicaid expansion program and another 100,000 receiving premium tax credits on its health-care exchange, that could translate into hundreds of thousands of Coloradans losing coverage.

The governors who have been most outspoken in their criticism of the bill negotiated behind the scenes to bring as many state executives on board as possible, according to aides, tweaking the language of Tuesday's letter over the past couple of days to get maximum support.

Others who signed the letter in opposition to Graham-Cassidy included John Kasich (R-Ohio) and Brian Sandoval (R-Nev.). Sandoval's positioning puts him at odds with Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.), who has been touting the bill as another co-sponsor.

Pence said Trump told him to reach out to some Democrats, and he spoke to Sen. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) over the weekend. But after reviewing the bill, Manchin said, he told Pence's aides he could not support the legislation.

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) said he's confident no Democrat will vote for the legislation, because "it hurts people in every state."

Democrats had been working furiously since Monday to advance talks between Alexander and Murray on a deal to immediately stabilize ACA insurance marketplaces with federal subsidies. The negotiations rapidly escalated after weeks of slow but consistent talks once it became clear that Senate GOP leaders were serious about holding a health-care vote

before the end of the month, according to several Senate aides.

Alexander on Tuesday played down expectations of reaching an agreement this week, telling reporters the pair had reached an impasse.

"During the last month, we have worked hard and in good faith but have not found the necessary consensus among Republicans and Democrats to put a bill in the Senate leaders' hands that could be enacted," Alexander said in a statement.

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Democrats denied that the talks had fallen apart, accusing Republicans of walking away despite making progress on areas of disagreement. Schumer spokesman Matt House said Democrats offered to accept a number of GOP requests, including waivers to give states more latitude in how they spend federal dollars and the creation of new low-cost plans under the ACA.

"This is not about substance," House said in a statement. "The Republican leadership is so eager to pass Graham-Cassidy that they're scuttling a balanced, bipartisan negotiation."

Many Democrats, including Murray, said they hoped the talks could still be salvaged despite roadblocks from Republicans.

"I am disappointed that Republican leaders have decided to freeze this bipartisan approach," Murray said in a statement. "But I am confident that we can reach a deal if we keep working together."

Ed O'Keefe and Ashley Parker contributed to this report.



Editorial : Another execrable health-care bill proves bad ideas never die

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpost/opinions>

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). Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) speaks to the media. (Alex Brandon/AP)

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 19 at 7:31 PM

OVER THE next week and a half, Republican senators may try one last time to repeal and replace Obamacare. The latest bill, from Sens. Bill Cassidy (La.), Lindsey O. Graham (S.C.), Dean Heller (Nev.) and Ron Johnson (Wis.), is about as execrable as the others that GOP lawmakers previously failed to approve. The process by which Republicans would pass it would be

as sloppy and partisan as the one to which senators such as John McCain (R-Ariz.) objected earlier in the summer. The outcome would be no less destructive.

The big difference now is the clock; the procedural window for passing a health-care bill along straight party lines will disappear at the end of the month, spurring Republicans to try one last time. That is a sad excuse to rush through — without even an attempt at bipartisanship and without a complete Congressional Budget Office assessment — a half-baked bill that would harm millions. Senators who objected to repeal-and-replace efforts before have no

principled reason to change their votes.

The Graham-Cassidy proposal would cancel Obamacare's major programs in 2020 and offer the states block grants instead. This plan at least does not include a massive upper-income tax cut, as previous GOP bills did, and it would seem to allow blue states to create and maintain universal or near-universal health coverage systems within their borders, even as red states went in a more conservative direction.

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But the bill suffers from fatal flaws, even setting aside how red-state residents would suffer under the parsimonious health policies their governments would adopt. First, analysts project that it would scale back the money states would get over time, relative to what would have flowed their way under Obamacare. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a center-left think tank, estimates the shortfall would total \$41 billion by 2026. The bill's funding formula would, in

general, shift money from blue states to red states. These factors would make it difficult for states that like their Obamacare to keep their Obamacare.

Second, the bill would seriously cut Medicaid, which covers the poor and near-poor, putting yet more burden on states to cover needy people — if states even try.

Third, the state block grants that would underpin the Graham-Cassidy system would end in 2027; that would breed uncertainty in the

market, fear among patients and rancor on Capitol Hill.

Moreover, the bill would make it easier for states to erode important safeguards guaranteeing that sick people can obtain the care they need.

And that is the rosy scenario. There is a good chance that many states would fail to create brand-new health-care systems by 2020, in time to stave off the chaos that would occur after Obamacare's carefully regulated and subsidized health-care markets disappeared.

Establishing such a system is hard under any circumstances. Doing so under a tight deadline, without the administrative, technical and other help that federal officials currently provide, would be very hard, the Urban Institute's Linda Blumberg pointed out.

Some Republicans want to pass this policy disaster before the end of the month, in less than two weeks. A last-minute committee hearing would be nothing more than a fig leaf disguising a reprehensibly partisan process in service of an unworthy bill.



Santorum: Rand Paul is wrong on health care bill

Rick Santorum

5-6 minutes

Story highlights

- Rick Santorum: Senator Rand Paul's opposition to the Graham-Cassidy bill could potentially kill the bill
- If that happens, Senator Paul would go from Obamacare's most principled foe to its most beloved savior, writes Santorum

Rick Santorum is a former Republican Senator from Pennsylvania and a contributor to CNN. He has worked closely with the Senate sponsors on the drafting of the Graham-Cassidy legislation. The views expressed here are solely his.

(CNN)On Monday, Senator Rand Paul said the Graham-Cassidy bill will not repeal Obamacare. This is the same faulty argument I heard from a few self-proclaimed principled conservatives in 1996 when we successfully challenged President Bill Clinton to keep his promise to end welfare as we know it. They said we promised in the election to end welfare -- not, as Senator Paul now puts it, to "rearrange the furniture a bit."

But Welfare Reform of 1996, like Graham-Cassidy, eliminated an uncapped entitlement, Aid to Families with Dependent Children,

that was spiraling out of control and block-granted the money to the states with a cap on future spending. Also, like Graham-Cassidy, it gave states more -- but not complete -- flexibility in designing their programs.

That approach passed the Senate with 74 votes

. There was one Republican holdout, Senator Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina, who, along with a small contingent of libertarian organizations, complained that this was not ending welfare but simply rearranging the furniture. They complained there weren't enough tax and spending cuts and still too many federal strings attached.

According to a Heritage Foundation report, however, within three years of passage, welfare caseloads were reduced by over 50% nationwide. Poverty rates among some of the poorest demographics hit all-time lows, and employment among the chronically unemployed hit all-time highs. The program has worked so well the block grant for welfare has not been increased for 20 years, saving hundreds of billions of dollars.

In 1996, welfare, as we knew it, ended. In today's language, it was repealed and replaced.

Was every element of the old welfare system changed? No.

Was all welfare spending repealed? No. In fact, according to the Urban Institute, unlike Graham-Cassidy, in the first few years after welfare reform was passed, states received

more federal funds than they did prior to 1996.

Ending welfare as we know it was about ending a broken system and replacing it with a conservative approach that would save money and help low-income Americans enter the workforce. It was not about what the definition of "end" was.

Some offered amendments to completely end any federal income support for low-income Americans. Those amendments, like Rand Paul's repeal only amendment, failed miserably.

Does Graham-Cassidy end or repeal Obamacare? Let's look at what Obamacare is, and you can decide.

Obamacare is a federal law that requires every American to have and most businesses in America to provide health insurance. The penalty for noncompliance is a tax. The health insurance must be offered on a state or federally run exchange. Those insurance products must be approved by the federal government and must include coverage for abortions. In order to help lower-income people buy these government mandated plans, Obamacare provides tax credits and payments to insurance companies to offset these increasingly expensive plans.

Obamacare also expanded the federal health program for low-income Americans -- Medicaid. If a state agreed to all of the requirements under Obamacare, it received money to pay for initially

100% of the cost, now 90% of the cost of the program.

Thirty-one states and Washington DC have expanded their Medicaid programs.

Everything I have described is repealed under Graham-Cassidy. Everything.

No more health insurance mandates. No tax subsidies or payments to insurance companies. No Medicaid expansion. No abortion being paid for by public funds.

Now each state will have resources in a block grant, divided equally across all states, to design a health plan that fits the needs of its people.

Does it repeal all of the taxes? No, "just" \$250 billion, including the anti-innovation medical device tax.

Does it repeal all the spending to help Americans purchase insurance? No, "just" \$385 billion (\$250 billion in tax cuts and \$135 in direct spending cuts) over the next ten years.

Unlike welfare reform, Graham-Cassidy will likely pass or fail by one vote. The symbolic protest that the bill doesn't eliminate every aspect of the old system was harmless in 1996. That protest for "perfection" by Senator Paul could be fatal for the last chance to repeal and replace Obamacare.

If that happens, Senator Paul would go from Obamacare's most principled foe to its most beloved savior.



Senate Republicans Embrace Plan for \$1.5 Trillion Tax Cut

Alan Rappoport and Thomas

Kaplan

8-10 minutes

Senator Bob Corker, Republican of Tennessee, who considers himself a strict deficit hawk, said, "I'm going to want to believe in my heart that we're going to be lessening deficits, not increasing." Al Drago for The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans, abandoning a key fiscal doctrine, agreed on Tuesday to move forward on a budget that would add to the federal deficit in order to pave the way for a \$1.5

trillion tax cut over the next 10 years.

The Republican lawmakers, under mounting pressure to score a legislative win on taxes, say a tax cut of this magnitude will stimulate

economic growth enough to offset any deficit impact.

Yet critics say a deficit-financed tax cut is at odds with longstanding Republican calls for fiscal discipline, including that tax cuts not add to the ballooning federal deficit. The federal debt topped \$20 trillion earlier this month and is projected to grow by another \$10 trillion over the next decade.

Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee, who considers himself a strict deficit hawk, said he remains deeply concerned about enacting tax cuts that add to the deficit. But he suggested that Republicans may not solely rely on traditional estimates of a bill's costs. Republicans have recently voiced concern that some estimates, including those from the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Congressional Budget Office, undervalue the effect of economic growth.

In announcing the agreement, Mr. Corker insisted that he was not casting away his concern about the debt.

"My support will be contingent on a final package that generates significant economic growth and does not worsen, but hopefully improves our fiscal situation," Mr. Corker said of the tax plan.

An agreement on the size of the tax cuts between Mr. Corker and Senator Patrick J. Toomey, a Pennsylvania Republican who has pushed for deeper tax cuts, helped seal the deal.

Passing a budget resolution is a crucial step for unlocking an arcane procedural tool that would allow Republicans to push a tax overhaul through the Senate with a simple majority and without the support of Democrats. Republicans have said they want a bill passed by the end of the year.

Even with Tuesday's deal, there is still a tough road ahead. The full Senate would need to vote on the budget and it would then need to align with the House version, which was voted out of committee earlier this year.

That may prove a tricky task, since House lawmakers may be more reluctant to enact tax cuts that would add to the deficit.

Still, any tax cut may wind up being temporary. Under existing Senate rules, Republicans can pass legislation with a simple majority only if the bill is not found to add to the deficit after a period of 10 years. That means all — or part — of the tax legislation could expire after a decade if official estimates of the costs do not align with Republicans' optimistic economic growth projections.

Republicans on the Senate Budget Committee have been wrestling for weeks over how big a tax cut is feasible and have been under pressure to reach a budget deal this month so that the work on tax legislation can officially begin in October. Still, while the Republicans may coalesce around a \$1.5 trillion tax cut, the details of the actual plan remain fraught with lawmakers divided on some key issues such as the corporate tax rate and which, if any, deductions will be eliminated or scaled back.

Some details of the plan are expected to be released next week when the "Bix Six" working group of Republican congressional leaders and the White House economic team outline their policy framework.

President Trump said this month that the wealthiest Americans might end up paying a bit more in order to lower tax bills for the middle class. A White House official said on Tuesday that while the rich would not see a benefit from the tax plan no final decisions on top rates had been reached.

Republicans have been wary of sharing too many details given the intense lobbying crush that is expected once it becomes clear which industries stand to win or lose valuable provisions currently ingrained in the tax code. Those include things like the mortgage interest deduction and the deduction for charitable donations.

Financing tax cuts through deficit spending essentially means the government will borrow money to pay for tax reductions, rather than

finding spending cuts to make up for the lost revenue.

Such a move would add to an already-hefty debt load that is only expected to grow as an aging population drives additional spending on retirement and health programs. The C.B.O. estimates that within 10 years, the federal debt will rise to its highest percentage of gross domestic product since just after World War II.

Republican lawmakers, who for years have complained about the country's deteriorating fiscal situation, are now turning to arcane budget arguments and making the case that tax cuts will unleash enough economic growth to compensate for lost revenue.

"Just going from 2 to 3 percent growth adds about \$14 trillion of economic activity over a decade, \$2 to \$3 trillion of revenue to the federal government," said Senator Ron Johnson, Republican of Wisconsin and a member of the Budget Committee.

Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah, the Republican chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said he continues to worry about the deficit. But he supports a budget that provides maximum flexibility to produce a tax overhaul that will move America forward.

"We're definitely in need of something that will stimulate the economy," Mr. Hatch said.

Whether a big tax cut can stimulate an economy already saddled with debt is at best uncertain and many experts think it will actually stifle growth.

At a hearing of the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday, Donald Marron, director of economic policy initiatives at the Urban Institute, warned that deficit financed tax cuts could prove to be a drag on the economy.

"You should always think of these tax reform proposals as a race between the effects of the tax changes and the effect on the budget," Mr. Marron said. "There is a cost to deficit financing."

Anti-deficit groups say they plan to remind Republicans who railed against deficits during the Obama administration of their past criticisms.

"The president and members of Congress have spent years warning of our large and growing national debt and have said their goal was to pursue tax reform that doesn't make that debt worse," said Maya MacGuineas, president of the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. "It is extremely disheartening that the Senate budget may be abandoning that commitment."

The tax cuts, she added, "could result in debt as large as the economy in just over a decade and take us into uncharted waters after that."

Michael A. Peterson, president of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, said that the national debt topping \$20 trillion should not be an invitation for Republicans in Congress to exacerbate a problem that they were elected to fix.

"Irresponsible tax reform is counterproductive and anti-growth because increasing the national debt hurts the economy. Tax reform should grow the economy, not the debt," Mr. Peterson said. "This proposal fails the test of fiscally responsible tax reform."

Wary of any tax legislation that benefits the rich, Democrats have taken a firm stance against Republican policies that would add to the deficit and said they will not support a bill that does not pay for itself.

Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon, the ranking Democrat on the finance committee, warned against a proposal that would provide a "sugar hit" of economic growth and a painful hangover in the coming years.

"We've seen this movie before," Mr. Wyden said, referring to previous Republican tax cuts. "It is a prescription for more trouble in the American economy in the long term."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Reps. Jordan and Meadows: Give Us Real Tax Reform, Not a Pig In a Poke

Jim Jordan and Mark Meadows

3-4 minutes

Sept. 19, 2017 7:01 p.m. ET

Reconciliation is a parliamentary vehicle linked with the budget and

designed to achieve specific revenue and spending requirements. This is the preferred approach for certain policy objectives because only 51 votes are required for passage in the Senate. Republicans plan to use this process for tax reform. There's one concern: This was the same

approach attempted for ObamaCare repeal.

In January, Congress passed a budget with reconciliation instructions for fiscal 2017. The House Freedom Caucus and Republicans across the country believed the legislation to address

ObamaCare would be the same as the bill that passed both chambers in 2015 with only one Republican "no" vote. Everyone assumed we would send the same bill to President Trump that we put on President Obama's desk.

But that's not what happened. After the budget passed, first we got secrecy. Remember Sen. Rand Paul, searching the Capitol for the hidden bill? When it turned up, it wasn't clean repeal. It wasn't what Congress had passed in 2015. It wasn't what we promised the voters.

Members were told we couldn't change the legislation—no real amendment process, no witness testimony. Take it or leave it, we were told—"it's a binary choice!"

After intense debate, the Freedom Caucus did change the bill, and all but two of our members supported the much-improved version that passed the

House but still sits in the Senate.

Now comes tax reform, and the same play is being run again. The Freedom Caucus has been told: Don't introduce your tax reform. Wait for ours. But we won't show it to you until you vote for the 2018 budget.

If a car salesman shows you a picture of a car and demands a nonrefundable down payment, you'd probably say, "Wait a minute. I've got a few questions." You might even ask to see the car. That's the situation we face with tax reform—except we haven't even seen a picture.

The House Freedom Caucus will gladly start the process if we are

confident the tax plan will actually cut taxes for families, simplify the code and create jobs. We will gladly pass the budget when basic questions are answered: What are the personal rates? What's the corporate rate? What's the repatriation rate? How are small businesses treated?

The biggest question: Why the reluctance to show the American people the plan? Is the bill being written behind closed doors because it will only help the connected class and their high-paid consultants? Congress has been in session 8½ months. Is the plan being hidden away only to be rolled out at the last minute when

members will be told again to take it or leave it, it's a binary choice?

The House Freedom Caucus wants government to operate on a budget, preferably a balanced one. We want to cut taxes and reform our broken tax code. Show us a plan that allows families to keep more of their money and one that grows our economy, and we will gladly vote to pass a budget.

Reps. Jordan (R., Ohio) and Meadows (R., N.C.) are, respectively, former and current chairman of the House Freedom Caucus.

**The
Washington
Post**

potosky

11-14 minutes

The international-arrival area at Boston's Logan International Airport in June. (Brian Snyder/Reuters)

The Department of Homeland Security has submitted to the White House a classified report on screening foreign travelers wanting to enter the United States — a key document President Trump is likely to rely on as he decides the future of his controversial travel ban.

With a major portion of the ban set to expire Sunday, DHS officials in recent days sent a report to the White House that "meets the requests that the president laid out in the executive order in an effort to establish better screening and vetting of persons to the United States," department spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said.

Hoffman declined to say exactly what the report recommended, although he asserted it was not meant to form the basis of a

White House receives DHS report that will shape travel ban's future

<http://www.facebook.com/matt.zia>

permanent ban. Last week, citing an attack in London, Trump had written on Twitter that his ban should be "far larger, tougher and more specific."

[Citing London terrorist attack, Trump calls for expansion of his travel ban]

"The intention of it is not to create a ban of any sort," Hoffman said. "It is to ensure that we have the ability to screen and vet people traveling to the United States."

Trump's travel ban — which barred the issuance of new visas to residents of six Muslim-majority countries and blocked the entry of all refugees — was contemplated as a temporary measure, designed to give DHS officials time to assess the information the United States is able to get about those coming to the country.

The portion of the ban affecting citizens of the six countries was to expire in 90 days, and the portion affecting refugees was to expire in 120 days. The 90-day period expires Sunday, according to spokesmen for the Justice Department and DHS.

[Which of your family members could visit under the travel ban]

While the ban was in effect, DHS and other officials were to assess the information other countries provided to the United States to help with vetting. Those countries that could not produce the necessary information or come up with a plan to do so were to be included on a list sent to the president. Those on the list risked being named in "a Presidential proclamation that would prohibit the entry of appropriate categories of foreign nationals," according to Trump's executive order.

Hoffman declined to say whether the report to the president included such a list, although he said it was created in response to the executive order's demand for one. He also declined to say what officials will do after Sunday, referring questions on that subject to the White House.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

"Everybody is aware of the timeline, and we are focused on ensuring

that persons traveling to the United States are properly vetted and screened before coming here, regardless of where they're coming from," he said.

The White House declined to comment on the future of the ban, offering only that the administration would "ensure we only admit those who can be properly vetted and will not pose a threat to national security or public safety."

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments on Oct. 10 on whether the travel ban is legal. In the meantime, officials have been allowed to impose only a limited version of the measure, exempting those with a bona fide connection to the United States, such as a job or family member here.

The refugee portion of the ban is set to expire Oct. 24, U.S. officials have said, probably before the Supreme Court will have made a decision. It is possible the case could be moot, and it is also possible the Trump administration will impose new restrictions that could be met with fresh legal challenges, U.S. officials have said.

POLITICO Trump rebounds after polling slide

By STEVEN SHEPARD

6-8 minutes

President Donald Trump's summer swoon appears to be over.

After months of declining poll numbers, the president's approval ratings have stabilized — and even ticked up slightly — over the past month.

Story Continued Below

Following a low of 39 percent in the POLITICO/Morning Consult poll last month after his controversial reaction to the violent protests in Charlottesville, Virginia, Trump is back at 43 percent in this week's survey. Other surveys show similar results: Trump bottomed out at 35 percent in Gallup's weekly tracking poll in late August, but ticked up to 38 percent last week. Trump is at 40 percent in the RealClearPolitics average, up about 2.5 points from his low-water mark last month.

Trump's popularity still remains historically low for a first-year

president. But since his August polling nadir, Trump has earned positive reviews for his responses to two major hurricanes, Harvey and Irma. And while polls showed his decision to wind down the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program — which shielded some undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children from deportation — was unpopular, Trump's subsequent nod to bipartisanship by negotiating with Democratic leaders in Congress may have helped stanch the bleeding.

It's impossible to attribute Trump's small uptick in the polls to any or all of these events. His recovery is modest at best: His 40 percent approval rating still lags every other elected president in the era of modern polling at this point in their first terms. But the data suggest that Trump, now at the eight-month mark of his presidency, has at least arrested the gradual decline that plagued him for the first seven of those months.

The body of polling is fairly limited over the past few weeks, so it's not completely clear whether Trump

has won over some of the Republicans who defected after Trump's Charlottesville response or the GOP's failure to advance health care legislation in Congress — or if he is bringing in new converts.

Some polls suggest Trump's slight bump is the result of Republicans and some independents coming home. In this week's POLITICO/Morning Consult poll, Trump was at 80 percent approval among Republican voters — up from 73 percent at his low-water mark. Among independents, Trump has bounced five points, from 35 percent to 40 percent. Trump's approval rating was virtually unchanged among Democratic voters, however.

"Trump's post-Charlottesville plunge proved to be short-lived, and his approval has stabilized," said Morning Consult Co-founder and Chief Research Officer Kyle Dropp. "A key driver of this movement appears to be independents. Immediately after Charlottesville, 35 percent of independent voters approved of Trump, and 58 percent disapproved. In this latest poll, that has risen to 40 percent approval and 52 percent disapproval."

The new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll was conducted September 14-17, surveying 1,994 registered voters. The margin of

error is plus or minus 2 percentage points.

A Marist College poll last week found Trump's approval rating at 39 percent, up from 35 percent in August — a bounce that also came mostly from Republicans, according to Lee Miringoff, director of the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. The percentage of Republicans who approve of Trump jumped from 79 percent in August to 87 percent last week. Trump's scores among Democrats and independents were essentially unchanged

"There has been some rallying behind President Trump for his handling of hurricanes Harvey and Irma," said Miringoff. "But his improved standing is seen only among his core supporters. He is still unable to reach beyond his base."

But other polling data found more modest gains among Republicans. In SurveyMonkey's polling over the past four weeks, Trump has gained more among independents than among Democrats or Republicans. (Overall, Trump's approval rating over that time increased from 39 percent to 42 percent.)

Gallup's weekly data more closely resembles SurveyMonkey's findings. Trump has ticked up 2 points among both Democrats (from

7 percent to 9 percent) and Republicans (from 78 percent to 81 percent) since late August, but he jumped from 30 percent among independents in late August to 35 percent last week.

Neither of the four surveys shows a statistically significant gain among Democrats.

As for the cause of Trump's gains, pollsters have asked specific questions about Trump's responses to hurricanes Harvey and Irma — and the president has earned high marks. A 56 percent majority in the SurveyMonkey poll rated Trump's responses to the storms as "very good" or "good," compared to only 26 percent who said they were "very poor" or "poor."

The results were similar in the Marist poll: 55 percent approved of how Trump has handled the hurricanes, while just 25 percent disapproved.

Trump will soon face another natural disaster: Hurricane Maria is bearing down on Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands — though it is still too early to determine whether it will impact the continental United States. (National surveys exclude American citizens living outside the 50 states or the District of Columbia.)

Far less popular than Trump's handling of the hurricanes was the announcement earlier this month that his administration will wind down the DACA program. In the Marist poll, only a third, 33 percent, approved of that decision. A 57 percent majority disapproved.

The results were closer in last week's POLITICO/Morning Consult poll, but still net-negative: 35 percent said ending the DACA program was the right thing to do, while 45 percent said it was the wrong thing to do.

Trump has notably inched back from the ledge on DACA, saying he may "revisit" his decision if Congress fails to act to codify protections for these undocumented immigrants in the next six months.

Morning Consult is a nonpartisan media and technology company that provides data-driven research and insights on politics, policy and business strategy.

More details on the poll and its methodology can be found in these two documents — Toplines: <http://politi.co/2yo0ExH> | Crosstabs: <http://politi.co/2xg1koS>

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Milbank: No one listens to women when they speak around here

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

5-7 minutes

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) (J. Scott Applewhite/AP)

Over the weekend, the president of the United States retweeted to his 38 million Twitter followers a video clip doctored to show him driving a golf ball off the tee and between the shoulder blades of Hillary Clinton — "CrookedHillary" in the tweet — knocking the former secretary of state and Democratic presidential nominee to the ground.

Eighty-four thousand people "liked" this violent takedown of Trump's former opponent.

A woman has been speaker of the House (and proved substantially more effective than the two men who succeeded her), another came within a whisker of the presidency, and others (Republican Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine) wield the decisive votes on health-care and other legislation. But recent events make it feel as if we're in an earlier time, when a woman's job in politics was

simple: sit down and shut up. This no doubt is the work of a president who, by word and deed, made sexism safe again, giving license to shed "political correctness" and blame troubles on minorities, immigrants and women.

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Trump's golf tweet no doubt was inspired by the attention Clinton has gotten for her new book, which has been met with a predictable response: wishing the woman who won the popular vote would "shut up and go away" — as Fox News's Greg Gutfeld put it. Many reviewers and commentators said similar.

The public disagrees; the book is a No. 1 bestseller.

Clinton isn't the only woman being told lately to shut up. When Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.) rose on the House floor this month to oppose an amendment by Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska), Young twice called Jayapal, 51, a "young lady," and said she "doesn't know a damn thing." (Young later apologized.)

This brought to mind Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.), who at two different hearings in July shut down Sen. Kamala D. Harris (D-Calif.) when she aggressively questioned witnesses. Burr, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, ordered her to be silent and lectured her about "courtesy."

And this, in turn, echoed Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's infamous silencing of Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) on the Senate floor in February when she read a letter from Coretta Scott King criticizing Jeff Sessions: "She was warned. . . . Nevertheless, she persisted." Male senators reading the letter received no rebuke.

Another new book by another strong woman, NBC's Katy Tur, recalls the abuse she suffered during the campaign when Trump taunted "Little Katy" and ordered her to "be quiet" during a news conference. Tur describes him kissing her before a TV appearance: "Before I know what's happening, his hands are on my shoulders and his lips are on my cheek." Of course, Trump has done worse, boasting about grabbing women by the genitals, bragging

publicly about his penis size, and more.

Alas, it's not just words. The latest Senate attempt at Obamacare repeal, drafted by four men, would eliminate Obamacare's requirement that insurers cover maternity care and funding for Planned Parenthood, one of the largest providers of women's health care. Tweeted Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii): "A group of men wrote a devastating health care bill & are now trying to push it through w/o debate. It's almost like we've been here before."

In the White House last week, Trump was meeting with advisers and lawmakers when, as The Post's Ashley Parker and others recounted, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), the only woman in a room with 10 men, twice tried to answer a question. Both times, she was spoken over. Finally, the former speaker of the House broke through. "Does anybody listen to women when they speak around here?" she asked.

Apparently not.

Pelosi described that memorable encounter to me on Friday, when I

saw her in New Haven, Conn., at the wake for Luisa DeLauro, the longest serving alderman in the city's history and mother of Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.). To me, Luisa DeLauro, who died last week at 103, was "Grandma Louise," because I'm married to Rosa's stepdaughter, Democratic pollster Anna Greenberg.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

and Cameron McWhirter

13-17 minutes

Updated Sept. 19, 2017 8:59 p.m. ET

BERKELEY, Calif.—Thousands of protesters converged on Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park one Sunday late last month to confront far-right activists. Among them were dozens dressed in black with faces masked.

Organizers on bullhorns called for the crowd to be "defensive," but matters didn't stay nonviolent for long. Using clubs and wooden shields emblazoned with "no hate," groups of around half a dozen of the masked protesters beat and chased some of the small number of far-right activists who showed up at the "No to Marxism" rally, even though it had been canceled.

Broadly labeled antifa, for "antifascist," such protesters are part of a loose affiliation of far-left groups and individuals who unite around a willingness to confront, sometimes violently, anyone they perceive to be an agent of racism, anti-Semitism or fascism—whether white nationalists, far-right extremists, or in some cases members of the media or the police they claim protect those groups. At times, antifa activists have been credited with defending peaceful protesters; they have also been criticized as instigators.

Last month, demonstrators wearing black and promising violence in self-defense showed up at major rallies in Charlottesville, Va., Boston and Berkeley and at President Donald Trump's Phoenix campaign rally. Berkeley is bracing for more clashes starting this weekend, when conservative activists have said they are planning a series of "free speech week" events.

The antifa tactics are testing the liberal movement that has galvanized in opposition to Mr. Trump—creating a rift among its leaders, organizers and demonstrators about whether to denounce a radical fringe, some of

The funeral for Luisa, a pioneering woman in politics, juxtaposed with the outrageous treatment Pelosi endured in the White House days earlier, left me with an unwelcome realization about the persistence of sexism in this business. Grandma Louise was born on Christmas Eve in 1913, seven years before women won the right to vote. As a young

whose antidiscrimination objectives, if not tactics, they share.

James Hannon, a psychotherapist and seasoned liberal organizer in Massachusetts who marched at a recent Boston rally against racism, said elements of the antifa movement that use confrontational tactics allow others to blur the line between leftist groups and the hate groups against which they protest.

"The social justice, the peace movement, the left or just progressives really have to start calling out the antifa and say, 'Hey, hey, hey, you don't represent us,'" said Mr. Hannon, 67 years old. "We're surrendering a moral high ground."

Following the Berkeley outbursts, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, a California Democrat, condemned "the violent actions of people calling themselves antifa." Berkeley Mayor Jesse Arreguin, a Democrat, said "progressives need to disavow black bloc," a term used broadly for protesters wearing black who in recent years have used violent tactics like those espoused by some in the antifa movement.

Others on the left, however, are uncomfortable condemning such activists, particularly after last month's "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville. Seth Wispelwey, a United Church of Christ pastor, said he and a group of clergy who tried to block white supremacists from entering a city park were attacked and were saved only because protesters he identified as antifa stepped in and fought back.

"If antifa had not been there," said Mr. Wispelwey, who helped organize the Charlottesville clergy protest, "we could have been trampled."

Conservatives have blamed antifa for violence at a series of recent protests. Mr. Trump has consistently blamed "both sides" after confrontations, including in Charlottesville, where a driver with a history of Nazi sympathies allegedly rammed his car into a crowd, killing a woman.

"Especially in light of the advent of antifa," Mr. Trump said last week, "if you look at what's going on there,

woman of 19, serving as the secretary of the 10th Ward Democratic Club, Luisa was optimistic as she exhorted women to engage in politics in a 1933 article. Rosa read Luisa's words from long ago at the funeral: "We have gradually taken our place in every phase of human endeavor, and even in the heretofore

you know, you have some pretty bad dudes on the other side also."

Mr. Trump's remarks, in particular after Charlottesville, were criticized by many on the left and right for not more clearly condemning neo-Nazis and white supremacists. Today, some liberals worry the antifa movement is undermining their efforts by, in effect, lending support to the president's claims that both the far left and far right are to blame.

During the civil-rights movement, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X openly clashed over methods. Dr. King espoused nonviolence. Malcolm X pushed a more militant approach. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, groups such as the Black Panthers and Weather Underground condoned violence against authorities to further goals such as ending the Vietnam War.

Arthur Eckstein, a University of Maryland professor who was an activist at that time and wrote a recent book on the Weather Underground, said left-wing groups today are grappling with the same question: How much violence, if any, is acceptable?

Antifa protesters are even more loosely organized than the far-right-wing groups they clash with, but they are united in their willingness to use physical force. And while some groups identify themselves by that name, the term also is used more broadly to describe the tactics used by a range of groups—some of whom may reject the antifa label.

Most people associated with the movement appear to be young men, but women and older activists also take part. Many are involved in other causes, such as socialism or anarchism. The term also can denote opposition to capitalism.

Some come in groups. Others are lone protesters.

Their protests attract people such as Morgan Bennett, a 26-year-old from Tucson at the gathering outside Mr. Trump's Phoenix rally. Mr. Bennett, who said he "works with kids" for a living, joined a group of others dressed, like him, in all black, most with covered faces.

stronghold of the male sex: politics. ... Come on, girls, let's make ourselves heard."

The "girls" are speaking, loudly. But does anybody listen to women when they speak around here?

Asked if the group was antifa, he said: "Everyone should be antifascist."

Mr. Bennett called a commitment to nonviolence "a little naive," saying he came unarmed but prepared to use his hands. "We have to defend ourselves."

Tactics of people calling themselves antifa have ranged from shouting down those they deem bigots to more-aggressive measures. Police linked them to damaging property and throwing Molotov cocktails in February demonstrations that led University of California, Berkeley, to cancel an appearance of a speaker who was a Breitbart News Network writer at the time.

These tactics echo those that emerged more than a decade ago among radicals on the political far-left who committed violence at major demonstrations against world leaders, such as at the 1999 World Trade Organization's meetings in Seattle. Black-garbed protesters clashed there with police and hurled bricks through bank windows.

Brian Levin, a former New York City police officer and now director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, said multiple studies show that in the past 15 years, extremists with far-right ideologies, including white supremacists, neo-Nazis and antigovernment extremists, have committed more violence—including homicides—"by a long shot" than have extreme leftists.

An August analysis by the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, using data from multiple sources reached a similar conclusion, finding that since 1992, 219 people have been killed in attacks by "nationalist and right wing terrorists"; 23 were killed by "left wing terrorists," including 13 since the start of 2016.

Nonetheless, Mr. Levin added, the resurgence of these competing extremes is increasingly dangerous and is leading to an escalating number of violent confrontations between the two sides.

Protesters calling themselves antifa often say they are acting

defensively and are protecting demonstrators. Many point to antifa's efforts to keep people in Charlottesville safe.

Yet at more-recent protests, such as in Boston and Berkeley, they also initiated confrontations, leading to bipartisan complaints that antifa is imposing mob rule and denying others their rights to assemble—even though antifa protesters have made up only a small proportion of the crowds.

The Berkeley rally showed the dilemma the antifa movement presents the left. The "No to Marxism in America" event was planned for Sunday, Aug. 27. Groups planning to protest organized counter-rallies.

In the weeks leading to it, some organizers—including the National Lawyers Guild, a protest group called Showing Up for Racial Justice, or SURJ, and representatives of groups identifying themselves as antifa—gathered to discuss tactics, said Dan Siegel, a member of the National Lawyers Guild and longtime leftist organizer.

Jeff Conant, a spokesman for SURJ's Bay Area chapter, said organizers decided against condemning any actions, including "physical confrontations," by demonstrators on the left. "We feel it serves the interests of white supremacists to divide progressive movements," he said.

Organizers took to internet message boards to ask protesters not to initiate any violence.

The right-wing event's organizer called it off two nights before it was to happen. Some sympathizers showed up anyway, and protesters went ahead with their counter-rally.

John Cookenboo, a 28-year-old warehouse worker, and Vincent

Yochelson, a 23-year-old line cook, came to the Berkeley protest from neighboring Oakland with body armor, helmets and shields they had bought on eBay. They said they had hoped they wouldn't need the gear, but previous experience in Berkeley told them they might.

In April, the two were arrested for "conspiracy" after they donned their combat gear and rushed toward clashes between left-wing protesters and alt-right activists in Berkeley, according to the men and Berkeley police. Mr. Cookenboo was also booked for possessing a weapon and inciting a riot, police said. The two men said they were not near the violence at the time of their arrests, though Mr. Cookenboo admitted having a knife. As of Tuesday, no charges against the two had been filed, according to a spokeswoman for the Alameda County District Attorney's Office.

A few days of jail time in April didn't deter the two from coming out again, donning all black along with more than 100 other antifa activists.

"I'm not going to let my friends get beat over the head or pepper sprayed," said Mr. Yochelson. "I'm going to do what I can to protect them."

Though the young men both identified as antifa, they said they weren't part of any organized group. This loose structure makes protests such as the one in Berkeley hard to control. The protesters are all dressed alike, but no one is in charge. Much of the coordination, Mr. Cookenboo said, is done by word-of-mouth and on closed internet message boards using pseudonyms.

"I try not to openly incite violence," Mr. Cookenboo said. "I don't feel like, at the end of the day, that accomplishes too much."

Nonetheless, there was violence. One young man pepper sprayed a group of masked protesters who appeared to be antifa and was quickly set upon and beaten by at least five people dressed in black, one of them using a shield fashioned from a plastic trash can. When the young man was on the ground, another black-clad activist kicked him.

Protesters in dark get-ups set off smoke bombs, toppled police barricades and smashed the cameras of some journalists and bystanders. "You do it again, I'll break your phone," a man in a Spider-Man mask told a Wall Street Journal reporter who was taking photographs.

City officials said 13 people were arrested and two hospitalized. After the event, organizers and some demonstrators said that those who behaved aggressively didn't represent the majority and that things had gone well.

"It went wonderfully," said Tur-ha Ak, a leader of Community Ready Corps, an organization devoted to fighting white supremacy, though he acknowledged "some situations here and there." He said that he didn't identify as antifa but that "they were there to protect the crowd, just like in Charlottesville."

Mayor Arreguin of Berkeley disagreed: "We saw a large group of black-clad extremists who really turned a peaceful protest on its head."

Some activists on the left, leery of mayhem, said they would no longer march with groups they call antifa. Samantha Pree-Stinson, a Green Party candidate for the Minneapolis City Council, said she finds the movement too unpredictable.

At a March antiracism rally in Minneapolis, she said, activists

chanted "punch a Nazi in the face" and lighted on fire a scarecrow dressed as a white nationalist. "The people who end up taking the rap for it are black organizers," said Ms. Pree-Stinson, 36, who described herself as a black Latina.

In Boston, masked counterprotesters distributed fliers titled "WHY ANTIFA?" The leaflets criticized the "liberal" approach of believing that elections, courts, the Constitution, a free press and other institutions would "prevent things from going too far." They called for "uncompromising militancy" against fascists and said antifa "must force their hate out of public spaces by any means necessary."

The approach worries Democratic political consultant and activism trainer Stefanie Coxe, 35, who joined more than 30,000 in Boston to counter a "free speech" rally. The initial lineup of attendees overlapped with headliners at the deadly Charlottesville rally. Organizers said the event had no links to white supremacy.

Boston's police commissioner said the event was overwhelmingly peaceful. Ms. Coxe agreed but said she felt unsettled at times by aggressive, masked activists. Any time one of them spotted someone they considered a "fascist," she said, they rushed to "get in people's faces."

"I had never felt unsafe because of my own side before," said Ms. Coxe. "I really think we have to ask ourselves, 'Are we helping to put down white supremacy, or are we helping to give them talking points?'"

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