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## FRANCE – EUROPE



### A Marine Le Pen Aide Leaves Far-Right Party (online)

7-8 minutes

Florian Philippot and Marine Le Pen at the European Parliament in

Aurelien Breden and Elian Peltier

Strasbourg, France, last October. Vincent Kessler/Reuters

PARIS — A top aide to the French far-right leader Marine Le Pen announced on Thursday that he was leaving her National Front party, the latest sign of turmoil within the organization as it struggles to

recover from her defeat in presidential elections last year.

Florian Philippot, the National Front's vice president in charge of communications and strategy since 2012, told the France 2 television channel that he was leaving the post after weeks of simmering tensions

with other party officials over the reasons for her defeat and the strategy going ahead.

"I was told that I was vice president in charge of nothing," Mr. Philippot said, reacting to Ms. Le Pen's decision a day earlier to relieve him of his duties. "I do not have a taste

for ridicule and I have never had a taste for doing nothing, so of course I am leaving the National Front.”

Mr. Philippot, 35, was seen as one of the architects of the National Front’s so-called undemonization strategy that aimed to attract more voters and break into France’s political mainstream by shunning the party’s xenophobic and racist roots.

In 2015, Ms. Le Pen ousted her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the party’s co-founder, after he made anti-Semitic comments, as he had in the past. Over the years she honed a protectionist message focused on the economy, bashing the European Union and railing against globalization in an appeal to working-class voters.

Mr. Philippot, who went to some of France’s top schools and who rose quickly through the ranks after officially joining the party in 2011, played a big role in fine-tuning that message as Ms. Le Pen’s top adviser. He also helped push a proposal to leave the euro currency area.

But Ms. Le Pen’s lackluster debate performance and her subsequent loss to the centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron opened a rift in the National Front, between proponents of Mr. Philippot’s euro-skepticism and protectionism and an older guard that wanted to focus on immigration and Islam.

Many of Ms. Le Pen’s advisers say that her economic appeals ultimately fell flat and that she was too late in pushing identity issues. Mr. Philippot’s camp sees the election

as a setback but notes that more people supported the National Front than in any previous election.

“Marine Le Pen has been having a hard time accepting that the National Front is at the right of the political spectrum,” said Nicolas Lebourg, a historian who studies the far-right, noting that she courted supporters of the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the presidential runoff “mostly because right-wing voters don’t want to leave the euro.”

“But those same right-wing voters in France are closer to the identity politics of Marine Le Pen, so she might want the party to go this way,” he added.

In legislative elections in June, the National Front did not fare as well as Mr. Mélenchon’s France Unbowed party. He has emerged as the most vocal critic of Mr. Macron’s young presidency.

Ms. Le Pen and her allies have had a more muted presence on the French political scene — as have more mainstream parties, like the struggling Socialists, who recently announced that they were going to sell their headquarters in an upscale Parisian neighborhood.

Although tensions around Mr. Philippot had been brewing at the National Front for months, they erupted into plain sight in recent weeks over a small think tank called The Patriots that he created shortly after the elections.

Party officials accused Mr. Philippot of promoting his own political

movement instead of working from within to rebuild the National Front.

Tensions rose further last week when far-right militants criticized Mr. Philippot on social media for going to a couscous restaurant in Strasbourg, France, instead of eating choucroute, the region’s traditional dish of sauerkraut and sausages.

Ms. Le Pen’s demotion of Mr. Philippot on Wednesday came after she repeatedly asked him to step down as president of The Patriots, which he repeatedly declined to do.

Neither appeared eager to put a final nail in the coffin of a close relationship. In an interview with The New York Times in 2015, Mr. Philippot described his first meeting with Ms. Le Pen in 2009 as a kind of political love at first sight and said that they “connected both on a human and a political level.”

After his departure, National Front officials blamed Mr. Philippot for refusing to discuss a change in strategy ahead of a party congress set for March.

“You have to be able to accept criticism,” Ms. Le Pen told a French television news channel on Thursday, after Mr. Philippot’s announcement. “I get the impression that Florian did not want to take part in that debate.”

Louis Aliot, who represents the National Front in Parliament and who is also Ms. Le Pen’s partner, said on Twitter that the party “will finally experience a return to calm after facing a sectarian, arrogant and conceited extremist who was

trying to muzzle our freedom to debate.”

But Mr. Philippot said that the party’s “reconstruction” was “going badly.”

“In reality, it was hiding a terrible step backward,” he told France 2. “A return of a National Front caught up by its old demons.”

Sophie Montel, an ally of Mr. Philippot’s who also announced on Thursday that she was leaving the party, said the National Front “owed a lot” to him.

“The main architect, with Marine, of the party’s ‘neither right nor left’ line is being chased away,” she told Franceinfo radio. “This line that enabled the National Front to blow up, with the results that we’ve had since 2012.”

Several other members of the National Front said on Thursday that they were leaving the party in Mr. Philippot’s wake, but it was unclear whether he had had enough of a following to create a significant split.

Davy Rodriguez De Oliveira, a deputy leader of the National Front’s youth section, said that although the unit had grown to 25,000 members while Mr. Philippot was helping to reshape party strategy, young members would not quit the National Front.

“It’s Marine Le Pen who initiated the undemonization strategy, and since she is our leader, we will follow her,” Mr. Rodriguez said in a telephone interview. “Finally, we are going to debate in a serene way about the reconstruction of our party.”



## French Unions to Protest Macron, But Where Are the Crowds?

By Mark Deen @MarkJDeen

More stories by Mark Deen

3-4 minutes

September 21, 2017, 4:02 AM EDT

- Returning from New York, Macron vaunts democratic legitimacy
- Truck drivers ready fuel blockages, far-left plans own protest

French unions will try to show Thursday that opposition to President Emmanuel Macron’s policies is growing as the government prepares to implement

a new labor law and embark on other reforms.

The CGT union has called for a second day of protests Thursday after failing to draw big crowds on Sept. 12. Macron’s cabinet is set to approve the executive order changing the law Friday, effectively the final step required to add flexibility to the labor code.

CGT union members during a march against new labour policies in Marseille, on Sept. 21.

Photographer: Claude Paris/AP

From New York where he rejected nationalism in his address to the United Nations general assembly, the 39-year-old president said he respected the protesters but that his victory in the presidential and

parliamentary elections this year means he has the legitimacy to implement these reforms.

“The people made their choice, made their decisions, its normal that they’re applied,” Macron said after his UN address. Democracy doesn’t occur “in the street.”

Even so, the street is the venue now chosen by Macron’s opponents. The CGT’s main demonstration will kick off at 2 p.m. in Paris. On Saturday, far-left presidential candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon will hold his own set of demonstrations across the country and on Monday truck drivers will begin a rolling strike in which they try to choke traffic and limit access to gasoline supplies. Government employees have scheduled a strike for Oct. 10.

“When he speaks of the streets it has very strong connotations,” Melenchon said Thursday on RTL radio. “An election isn’t a blank check.”

The CGT said 60,000 people marched under rainy skies in Paris on Sept 12, while police estimated 24,000. On June 23, 2016, unions claimed 200,000 protesters and police estimated 70,000 in demonstrations against President Francois Hollande’s labor code revisions.

Read more about Macron’s moment of truth on his labor law: QuickTake Q&A

Before it’s here, it’s on the Bloomberg Terminal. LEARN MORE

## Chicago Tribune : Batavia World War II vet gets French Legion of Honor

Denise Crosby

5-6 minutes

Howard Keskitalo, a first lieutenant with the U.S. Army's 388th Bomb Group and 563rd Bomb Squadron, flew 35 missions aboard a B-17 bomber in World War II, including during the D-Day invasion of Normandy in France.

And still, the retired Caterpillar man, who will turn 97 next month, was not all that comfortable being honored for his service Wednesday morning at the VFW in his hometown of Batavia.

"I think they are making too big a deal of this," he told me before the ceremony began.

The nation of France, however, disagreed.

Prior to pinning the Legion of Honor medal, the country's highest award, on Keskitalo's lapel, Deputy Consul General Frederic Chole described the guest of honor as "a great man" whose "unfailing determination and bravery" not only "restored hope to millions of people," it "changed the course of history for the entire world."

Deputy Consul General of France Frederic Chole hugs Howard Keskitalo of Batavia after pinning the Legion of Honor medal, France's highest award, on the World War II veteran. (Joe Toma/Submitted)

"France has not forgotten," declared

Chole, who is with the consul general's Chicago office. "France will never forget."

Which is why, in 2004, in what could be described as a race against time, the French government began issuing Legion of Honor awards to Allied veterans for risking their lives fighting on French territory during the war.

According to Pascale Furlong-Thome, communication attache for the consul general's office, about 100 files a year come into the 13-state Midwest office, where officials go to great lengths to research the information before bestowing such a prestigious honor.

"It can take a lot of work" to find these old veterans, she noted, as the few who are still around often have memories compromised by age or the trauma of war.

"But the effort is well worth it," Furlong-Thome added, as France is "dedicated to keeping the memory alive," in cities and across the villages and countrysides that were so greatly impacted by both world wars.

"We feel it is important to find and honor them," she said.

Harry Sawyer, assistant director for the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, said it was while compiling

routine information for Keskitalo that a file clerk noticed he was eligible for, but had never received, this French award. According to Furlong-Thome, the consul general obtained the request in 2016. And this summer it was approved.

Joe Toma, chairman of the Aurora Veterans Advisory Council, shakes the hand of Legion of Honor recipient Howard Keskitalo Wednesday in Batavia. (Denise Crosby/The Beacon-News)

"He was surprised," said Howard's daughter Jean Keskitalo, of the phone call that came in August.

It is an honor, officials noted, that is long overdue.

"Many years have passed since June 6, 1944, when thousands of young soldiers reached the coast of Normandy....far from their homeland and their loved ones," Chole reminded the audience that included Keskitalo's family and friends, state and French officials, veterans and emergency responders.

"The journey was long and dangerous... with battle after battle across France and beyond. They endured the harshest conditions ... too many of them did not return home, but they will always remain in our hearts and memories."

Chole described the sacrifices of these Americans from the "Greatest Generation" as an example to future generations. But it is also a reminder, "especially during these challenging times, that the French and American friendship has deep and long lasting roots that crossed many centuries."

"Dear Mr. Keskitalo, thanks to your courage, to France's American friends and allies, France has been living peacefully for 70 years, the longest period of time in modern French history," Chole said. "I could not be more honored to present the Legion of Honor to you today."

Keskitalo, whose family says he still drives, works in the yard and does his own taxes on the computer, declined the invitation to speak at the ceremony. But the smile on his remarkably unlined face certainly reflected the gratitude he must have felt for this recognition so many years after risking his life on those many bombing missions.

And, while the applause that broke out after the French official pinned the medal on his chest made it difficult to hear the old veteran's response, it was not impossible.

"I am humbled," he said.

**Bloomberg**

## Editorial : May's Message Should Be to Britain, Not Europe

by The Editors  
More stories by

The Editors

4 minutes

It's her own people she needs to persuade.

Photographer: Carl Court/Getty Images

U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May travels to Florence this week to deliver a long-awaited speech on her Brexit strategy. The venue and timing are not ideal -- it's a speech she should have given months ago, to a British audience -- but if she gets the substance right, she can still help her country avoid the very worst effects of this unfolding Brexit disaster.

The U.K. voted to quit the European Union in June 2016. A year passed before talks even began. Since then, three months of negotiations have gotten nowhere. The exit procedure sets a deadline of March 2019, but the real deadline is actually six months sooner -- just one year from now -- because the EU's other members will have to review and approve any deal. If there's no agreement, the U.K. is ejected anyway, and chaos ensues.

Even now, May hasn't said what she wants for the exit, for a future partnership with the EU, or for a temporary deal that may or may not bridge the two. And she hasn't said, one suspects, because she still doesn't know. Even a well-executed Brexit would still be a bad idea; Brexit done badly will be a shambles of stunning proportions.

The venue for May's speech is discouraging, because the message she most needs to send is not to Italy or Europe but to her fellow U.K. citizens, and above all to her own party. Three main things need to come through loud and clear.

First: Britain will not quibble over exit payments. This is a trivial matter, she ought to say, not one of pride or principle. Liabilities will be paid in good part. The details should be sent for independent arbitration, allowing the talks to move on.

Second: A transitional deal will be needed, because the long-term partnership can't be negotiated in the time remaining. Moreover, this pact will essentially freeze the existing arrangements, except that the U.K. will no longer have a vote in EU affairs. This is the price, she should say, that Britain understands it must pay for an orderly departure.

Third: Britain wants the closest possible future partnership with the EU, subject only to remaining an independent sovereign nation, and is ready for the give-and-take that will require. It is not expecting to dictate or demand.

Resistance to all three of these essential elements is most intense in her own party. If it isn't already too late, she needs to confront that resistance -- right now, and head-on.

--Editors: Clive Crook, Michael Newman

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**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

## The Secret of Angela Merkel's Longevity: Strategic Flip-Flops (UNE)

Anton Troianovski  
13-16 minutes

BERLIN— Martin Schulz, who is running to unseat German Chancellor Angela Merkel, drew loud applause at his party's convention in June when he unveiled a core campaign promise:

"We will achieve marriage equality in the next government!"

One day later, Ms. Merkel dropped her yearslong opposition to a parliamentary vote on same-sex

marriage, stripping her opponent of campaign ammunition.

It was just the kind of calculated political shift that has kept Ms. Merkel in power for 12 years. She has repeatedly—and sometimes

Sept. 20, 2017 10:47 a.m. ET

abruptly—changed her position when the public mood diverged from the tenets of her conservative party. That strategy has broadened her political tent, while leaving opponents with less ammunition to use against her.

Polls suggest that on Sunday, Ms. Merkel's Christian Democratic Union party is likely to win enough votes to give her a fourth term. Her approval ratings are above 60%, near their peak. Her tenure has spanned three U.S. and four French presidents, and two Spanish, four British, six Italian, and seven Japanese prime ministers. She is the longest serving head of a major European government since her fellow German Helmut Kohl.

By strategically ignoring past divisions between the right and the left, she has extended her sway over a wide swath of political territory and pushed her rivals toward the margins. She has so far sold her changing positions, which her supporters characterize as a disdain for dogma, as being just what her country needs in an uncertain world.

At the same time, her tendency to pull her conservative party to the left has helped create a political vacuum now occupied by the upstart Alternative for Germany, which is poised to become the first far-right party to win seats in German parliament in more than half a century. That rise of the party, founded in 2013 to oppose eurozone bailouts, introduces a dynamic in which any missteps by Ms. Merkel could eat further into her conservative base.

This account of how Ms. Merkel has fended off a succession of crises, destabilized rivals and cemented her power is based on dozens of interviews with past and present aides, politicians and voters across the country. She declined a request for an interview.

Her strategy has incensed both allied conservatives who claim their principles are being abandoned and opponents on the left who see their popular proposals being co-opted. It is a counterpoint to the political polarization seen in other countries, and has made her a symbol of stability for Germans unsettled by the challenges that President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and European populist movements have posed to the postwar order.

Abroad, the chancellor is often portrayed as a liberal. At home, she draws support from voters of all kinds, although she rose in German politics as a conservative. Of the five main electoral competitors to Ms. Merkel's Christian Democrats, three

of them, including the business-friendly Free Democrats and the environmentalist Greens, are potential coalition partners of Ms. Merkel's party in a new government. She has only ruled out governing with radical left-wingers and fringe nationalists.

In Germany's consensus-oriented system of governance, the charge of "flip-flopper" doesn't carry much of a sting. Ms. Merkel has been able to sell her sometimes dramatic political shifts—on mandatory military service, atomic energy, refugees and, most recently, same-sex marriage—as the product of careful analysis and a reflection of societal change.

The tactic has allowed her to pick up support from voters to her left while retaining the backing of others on the right willing to overlook disagreements on some issues.

Nevertheless, her aides say she won't be swayed from such core commitments as the trans-Atlantic alliance and the need for Germany to be at the core of an integrated Europe. And pollsters say Germany's robust economy and low unemployment make her look like a safe choice.

Ms. Merkel's personality has resonated with Germans long suspicious of charisma. She doesn't tweet, make grand promises or give rousing speeches. She shops at the supermarket, cooks and retires to her country cottage for the weekend. Asked what makes her German, she once replied: "My love for potato soup."

Ms. Merkel, who is 63 years old, often alludes to her own biography to underscore the need for change. As East German communism was collapsing in the fall of 1989, Ms. Merkel, then a physicist working in Berlin, visited several political parties looking for one to engage with. She settled on the Democratic Awakening, which would merge with the center-right Christian Democratic party the following year.

The interim East German government named her deputy spokeswoman, and after reunification, then-Chancellor Kohl made her minister for women and youth. After Mr. Kohl's election defeat, Ms. Merkel jumped into a power vacuum and took the helm of the party in 2000.

When she became chancellor in 2005, she largely stood for the ideas of her conservative predecessors: She was a fiscal hawk, a skeptic of immigration and a believer in supply-side economics, the trans-Atlantic alliance and nuclear power.

The 2011 tsunami in Japan and the ensuing Fukushima nuclear-plant

meltdown brought about one of her first major policy reversals. She had earlier pledged to reverse the planned phaseout of Germany's nuclear plants. But in a country already skeptical of nuclear energy, the events in Japan had turned public opinion even harder against it, and an important state election loomed. Days after the disaster, she said she would accelerate the transition away from nuclear energy.

Although the move was popular among voters, it later was blamed for sending electricity prices higher and increasing greenhouse-gas emissions as utilities fell back on coal-powered plants.

Smaller policy reversals followed. Challenging her party's traditions, Ms. Merkel lowered the retirement age for certain categories of workers and extended considerable financial guarantees to the cash-strapped Greek government during the eurozone crisis.

Before the refugee crisis hit late in the summer of 2015, Ms. Merkel was taking fire in the media for telling a Palestinian teenager, who then broke down crying, that Germany couldn't take in all refugees. A popular magazine, Stern, had dubbed her "the Ice Queen" for her tough negotiating stance in the Greece crisis.

In Budapest, thousands of refugees fleeing fighting in the Middle East were crowding a railway station waiting for westbound trains. Three days later, Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann called Ms. Merkel. The Budapest refugees, many bound for Germany, had started marching toward his country's border.

Deciding quickly, with minimal consultation, Ms. Merkel agreed to send trains to help take them in. Her aides later justified the move by saying she was concerned that desperate migrants could die on the highway and that their sheer numbers could destabilize the Balkans.

The German media largely cast the decision in positive terms, as did a majority of Germans, according to opinion polls at the time. But it sparked a storm among conservatives in the chancellor's political camp.

As authorities struggled to contain the flow of hundreds of thousands that followed, and security fears mounted, Ms. Merkel's approval rating plummeted to 45%. The anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany party surged in the polls and into state legislatures across the country.

In 2016, two terrorist attacks by migrants in Bavaria fueled criticism that Ms. Merkel had put Germany's

security at risk by allowing so many migrants to enter.

Under pressure, Ms. Merkel made a second U-turn. While she stuck to her humanitarian discourse and defended her initial decision to open the borders, her government tightened eligibility for asylum, enacted tougher security laws to ferret out and expel radicals among the newcomers and struck a deal with Turkey to close the migrant route through the Balkans.

By the time the crisis dissipated, Ms. Merkel had earned the support of pro-refugee liberals who praised her initial decision to open the borders, and defused some criticism from her party's base, which was reassured by the return of order.

A year later, migrants continue to enter the country, albeit at a much slower pace, but the political climate has shifted. After harshly criticizing her initial handling of the crisis, the conservative Christian Social Union party in the key state of Bavaria now supports Ms. Merkel for a fourth term, in part because of her shift on immigration. The party is set to receive close to 50% of the vote in Bavaria, polls show, while left-of-center parties are garnering another 30%. The Alternative for Germany party is polling just 8% in the state.

"There is no fear that these refugees will take jobs, simply because everyone already has work," says Sebastian Zunhammer, whose Bavarian factory manufactures trucks that distribute animal waste as fertilizer to farms.

German pollster Forschungsgruppe Wahlen has been asking people for years to name the top problems facing Germany. When Ms. Merkel took office in November 2005, 84% said unemployment was one of them. When migrants were pouring in in the fall of 2015, as many as 88% cited migration. By this month, concern about migration had dropped to 49%, although it remains the top concern, and only 8% said unemployment, which has declined, was a major problem.

Ms. Merkel, who grew up behind the Iron Curtain, had come to see the alliance with the U.S. as core to modern Germany's well-being.

One senior German official says when Germans criticize U.S. policy in meetings with her, she sometimes responds by encouraging a thought experiment: *What would the world be like if the U.S. didn't exist?*

Through last summer and fall, Ms. Merkel kept tabs on the U.S. presidential campaign, watching excerpts of presidential debates on her iPad. She refused to hit back at Mr. Trump's criticisms of her, including that she was "ruining

Germany" by accepting refugees. After his victory, she and her closest aides drafted a statement that marked a new tone.

"Germany and America are connected by values of democracy, freedom, and respect for the law and the dignity of man, independent of origin, skin color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or political views," Ms. Merkel said. "I offer the next president of the United States close cooperation on the basis of these values."

Visiting the White House in March, Ms. Merkel resisted pressure back home to criticize Mr. Trump in public, noting that her task was to hear the American point of view and "to find solutions and compromises that are good for both sides." In May, however, she declared that the times in which Europe "could rely on others completely—they are partly past."

The widely quoted line served to put distance between Ms. Merkel and Mr. Trump. It also made it harder for her election opponent Mr. Schulz to be able to harness Germans' anti-Trump emotions for his own campaign.

A few weeks later, Ms. Merkel pulled another potential wedge issue from Mr. Schulz the day after he made his pledge at his party convention to introduce same-sex marriage.

During a public Q-and-A, one man asked the chancellor when he would be able to marry his boyfriend. During her lengthy response, Ms. Merkel said: "I would like to lead the discussion further toward a situation in which it moves in the direction of a decision of conscience."

In saying that, she effectively lifted her party's decadeslong opposition to same-sex marriage, signaling support for a vote in which

lawmakers would be exempt from following the party line.

German parliament voted on same-sex marriage legislation just four days later. Ms. Merkel voted no. The German constitution, she said, defined marriage as being between a man and a woman. The legislation passed.

Challenged about her no vote last month in an interview with a young YouTube star, Ms. Merkel noted: "I worked to make sure that this vote would take place."

"They trust her," one of Mr. Schulz's top strategists said of German voters, "without knowing what she stands for."

As Ms. Merkel has adopted center-left positions, some conservative politicians and voters have defected to the Alternative for Germany party, which has seen polling support climb above 10% in recent weeks.

Sascha Ott, an ally of Ms. Merkel in her home state in northeastern Germany, says the chancellor's sudden reversals contributed to a feeling of political alienation among conservative voters. Nevertheless, Mr. Ott continues to support Ms. Merkel, arguing she has deftly steered Germany through Europe's series of crises.

"We have to recognize that society is changing," said a member of parliament from Ms. Merkel's party, Gunther Krichbaum, who hails from the party's traditional conservative stronghold in the southwest. Otherwise, he said, "one can die of virtue in the end."

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Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition as 'Merkel's Code: Embrace Change.'



## Here's why you should pay attention to this weekend's German election

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

for Germany party will likely make significant gains.

### How will the election likely affect the United States?

Germany is the European Union's most populous nation and its economic powerhouse, and its two leading parties agree that Germany should stand against many of the policies pursued by President Trump, especially on trade and immigration.

Another Merkel victory could strengthen her position in any future negotiations with the Trump administration, while an unlikely win for the social democrats would probably widen the transatlantic rift further.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel looks to be ahead going into the Sept. 24 elections in Germany, though some suggest anti-immigration AfD could see notable support. German Chancellor Angela Merkel looks to be ahead going into the Sept. 24 elections in Germany, though some suggest AfD could see notable support (Reuters)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel looks to be ahead going into the Sept. 24 elections in Germany, though some suggest anti-immigration AfD could see notable support. (Reuters)

### Who are the main contenders?

There are six major-party candidates for the chancellor's office, but only two have a real chance to win. Chancellor Angela Merkel — often half-jokingly called "Mutti," or "mother," by many Germans — has led the country for

12 years and is virtually assured of another victory. Merkel, who grew up in communist East Germany, is a former scientist with a doctorate in physical chemistry. She is also the first female chancellor.

In contrast, Martin Schulz's background is rather unusual in German politics, in which academic titles and educational achievements often decide careers. Schulz is a high school dropout from a working-class family who has openly discussed his battle with alcoholism. Before running against Merkel, he was the head of the European Parliament.

### How does the voting work?

A German voter actually casts two votes. One is to choose his or her district's representative in Parliament; the second is simply a choice of which party that voter most prefers.

Half of the members of the Bundestag — the lower house of Parliament — are elected through the first, direct vote. The rest of the chamber is then filled in by giving the parties at-large seats in line with the results of the second vote. If a party earns 10 percent of the second vote, for example, it will get enough at-large seats to make up 10 percent of the Bundestag.

Parties need to gain at least 5 percent of the overall vote or at least three directly elected seats to be represented in Parliament.

### How will Merkel become chancellor if her party wins?

Polls say Merkel's party will win the most votes but not an outright

majority. If that result holds, Merkel, as party leader, will start talks with other parties to form a governing coalition.

Coalition talks could last anywhere from days to months. When an agreement has been reached, the new ruling parties vote the chancellor into office in the Bundestag.

### Which coalitions are most likely, based on recent polls?

#### A "grand coalition"

Many Germans say they would prefer a continuation of the current "grand coalition" between Merkel's center-right Christian Democrats (and their Bavarian sister party), or CDU, and the center-left Social Democratic Party, or SPD. It is the broadest-possible consensus between the two strongest mainstream blocs.

#### Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

*The CDU plus one or both of the libertarian Free Democrats and the Green Party*

Merkel could also enter a coalition with either the libertarian Free Democratic Party, or FDP, or the Green Party. There are some caveats, though: The FDP was Merkel's coalition partner from 2009 to 2013. Afterward, they were voted out of Parliament altogether. Many blamed the FDP's weakness as Merkel's junior partner for the party's subsequent historic losses. Meanwhile, the Green Party has lost significant voter support recently.

6-8 minutes

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Aug. 18. (Odd Andersen/Agence France-Presse/Getty Images)

**European elections countdown:** In this part of our occasional series, we take a look at what is at stake in the upcoming German election.

If you're searching for the opposite of last year's loud, long and controversial American election, look no further than Germany.

On Sunday, voters there will head to the polls in a crucial yet strangely quiet election.

The two main contenders, conservative incumbent Angela Merkel and social democrat Martin Schulz, held only one TV debate, in which many of the key issues went undiscussed. And with the vote still days away, German parties are preparing to collaborate after the election rather than emphasizing their differences to sway the undecided.

### Why should you care?

The campaign has been quiet, but the results will still probably be a watershed moment in German history. No far-right party has managed to send delegates to the German Parliament since the defeat of the Nazis in 1945. That will almost certainly change Sunday: the far-right, anti-immigrant Alternative

### A non-Merkel coalition

Depending on the strength of the Social Democratic Party and a possible failure by Merkel to convince other parties to govern



## Editorial : Afternoon in Germany

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

Sept. 20, 2017 6:54 p.m. ET

These days it's dangerous to call the results of an election before it happens, but in Germany's case a surprise might be welcome in Sunday's vote. The German mood isn't trending toward upset in what ought to have been a more competitive election.

Polls put Angela Merkel's center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the CSU, at roughly one-third support. The center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), currently locked in a grand coalition with Mrs. Merkel, is languishing just above 20%. The SPD has failed to articulate positions beyond the centrist policies it has already helped Mrs. Merkel implement, and its new leader, Martin Schulz, struggled to connect with voters.

The real race is for third place. The far-right Alternative for Germany

with her, there could also be a coalition without her. Theoretically, the Social Democrats could form a left-wing government with the Green Party, the Left Party and perhaps even the FDP. But giving power to

the Left Party, a descendant of the former East German Communist Party, has long been treated as a non-starter.

For more updates, follow [rick\\_n](#) on Twitter or on WhatsApp, Messenger and Telegram.

(AfD) is leading with about 11% support, followed by the formerly communist Linke (Left), the free-market Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens. Mrs. Merkel will emerge on Sunday night as leader of the largest party in the Bundestag, but without an outright majority. The excitement will be whether she cajoles the SPD into another grand coalition, or governs with the smaller FDP and perhaps the Greens (yes, really).

European politicians think it's good that Germany has avoided the anti-establishment rebellion sweeping many other democracies. And in one sense it is. Better than any other European politician, Mrs. Merkel slaloms between her voters' idealism and their frustration with that idealism's failures.

In 2015 Mrs. Merkel co-opted the left's humanitarian spirit by welcoming a million migrants from the Middle East, making the right wing of her party look ungenerous. She has since drifted rightward again on security, making her pro-immigration SPD challengers look out of touch with the unease created by her own policies.

Her primary economic project has been to save the eurozone from itself, which is popular among a heavily pro-Europe electorate, but without committing taxpayers to too many of the deeply unpopular costs of maintaining the currency bloc. On foreign policy, she plays to German instincts for moral preening against Donald Trump and, to a lesser extent, Russia without accepting any of the blood or treasure costs associated with genuine leadership.

The disappointment of Mrs. Merkel's long chancellorship is that she doesn't use her political gifts for worthier ends. Reflecting voters' emotions back to them led her to embrace renewable energy, and trapped her in a thicket of sky-high electricity costs and rising coal emissions. When voters lack enthusiasm for useful reforms, such as corporate-tax rate cuts, Mrs. Merkel doesn't try to persuade them.

She's coasting instead on the dividends from the labor-market overhaul enacted by her predecessor Gerhard Schröder. Now her new counterpart in France, Emmanuel Macron, promises another economic and political

assist as his labor reforms may reignite France as a second eurozone growth engine.

A new coalition with the FDP could usher in modest tax reforms and small regulatory tweaks. But without leadership from the chancellor, Germany can't launch the reforms it needs to meet manufacturing competition from China or the challenge of Brexit. Determination to stare down Vladimir Putin in Ukraine will come from Mrs. Merkel or nowhere at all in the next administration.

Ronald Reagan ran for re-election in 1984 declaring it was "morning in America," capturing a sense of optimism but with more work to do. Mrs. Merkel's re-election slogan could be "afternoon in Germany." Her pitch is that the hard work is done and now Germany can take a break. Her genius is in recognizing that Germans think that's true. Their risk is that it isn't.

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition.



## The Brief Life, and Looming Death, of Europe's 'SWAT Team for Truth'

Paul McLeary | 54 mins ago

12-15 minutes

PRAGUE — This past January, as the world was still reeling from the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president and the idea that disinformation may have played a role in his victory, the tiny Czech Republic unveiled, with great fanfare, its new Center Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats.

The initiative captured the world's attention. News organizations from the BBC to CNN to the *Guardian* to *Deutsche Welle* gushed about how the center's work would be a bold new weapon in the fight against fake news. A crack team of analysts based at the center would be tasked with scouring the web to debunk fake news stories for the Czech public and providing a shining example for other countries fighting similar foes on their own soil. The *Washington Post* described the team at the center as a "new government truth squad," and a

"SWAT team for truth ... armed with computers and smartphones" led by "commander" Benedikt Vangeli.

Just six months on from that dramatic debut, however, the center hasn't exactly met these outsized expectations. And, with Czech politics in the midst of an upheaval, there's no guarantee the center will even survive past this year.

While the center has been touted in media coverage as a bold new initiative, the reality has been more mundane. Its analysts, far from being foot soldiers in a new sort of "truth squad," generally spend their days monitoring various threats to Czech security, passing on their findings to Czech police, military, and intelligence services, and occasionally tweeting. Center director Vangeli has sought to downplay expectations, saying that, despite the rapt headlines upon the center's opening, that disinformation and "anti-fake news busting" is just a tiny part of what the center actually does.

The center has become a political football, facing accusations that it

simply duplicates work the Ministry of the Interior and others already do — like monitoring social media for extremist content — and that its output is paltry, having debunked only a handful of fake news stories via its Twitter account since January. Meanwhile, two of the center's biggest opponents have become increasingly dominant figures in Czech politics: the billionaire former finance minister Andrej Babis, whose populist ANO 2011 party looks poised to depose the Social Democrats as the largest party in Parliament after October elections, and the bombastic, aging pro-Kremlin president Milos Zeman, set to win re-election early next year.

Like many countries, the Czech government has worried for some time that it has a fake news problem.

Like many countries, the Czech government has worried for some time that it has a fake news problem. Last year, the country's counterintelligence agency publicly warned that foreign actors, most notably Russia, have been trying to

spread disinformation and fake news in Czech media, with the goal of destabilizing the country and making Czechs less sympathetic to the West. One of the main ways they are trying to do this, government officials have argued, is through a network of a few dozen shady websites that push skewed stories, conspiracy theories and flat-out fake news. These websites run the gamut from the popular Breitbart-esque *Parlamentní listy* (Parliamentary Journal) with its lurid headlines and stories that blur the line between fact and opinion, to more fringe sites like *Lajkit.cz* ("Like-It") and *Svět kolem nás* (The World Around Us), which peddle pure conspiracy about chemtrails and the illuminati but also run inflammatory screeds about migrants and Muslims and peddle the Kremlin line on the European Union and NATO. These stories, the argument goes, need debunking.

The push to establish the Centre against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats (abbreviated, in Czech, as CTHH) in fact began before Trump was elected. Czech Interior Minister

Milan Chovanec announced the formation of the center in May 2016 upon the release of the first stages of the country's National Security Audit, commissioned in response to the terror attacks across Europe in 2015. Chovanec said the threat from disinformation was so dire that the government couldn't wait for the audit to be complete (in December 2016) and needed to respond immediately.

At the time, Chovanec's descriptions of the center were a far cry from the specialist fake-news-busting outfit that would be presented in later press coverage. He talked about forming a "very small department" within the Ministry of the Interior, within which one of its "smaller cells" would focus on analyzing disinformation. The bulk of the center's work, as he described it then, would focus on monitoring terrorist threats and protection of "soft targets," like the Prague Metro.

In January 2017, the center finally got down to work inside the main Ministry of the Interior building in Prague. Created within an already-existing division within the Ministry of the Interior and funded from existing ministry budgets, the center slowly built a staff of more than two dozen analysts, whose jobs include monitoring online media for threats — including disinformation — and communicating with other Czech ministries and intelligence services, both domestic and foreign, about these findings. The center also started training staff from political parties on how to guard against attempts to hack their systems, as occurred in both the American and French presidential elections.

Around the same time, however, how to fight fake news and disinformation was shooting up the priority lists of countries around the globe. Czech officials and others within the country suddenly found themselves with an opportunity to present the Czech Republic as a world leader on an issue of global importance — and they took advantage. "[The center] has generated a lot of interest outside of the Czech Republic," Tomas Prouza, the former Czech state secretary for European affairs who helped establish the center, told reporters in January. "We are in the lead on this, so that is important," he said, adding that the Czech

government has been advising officials in countries like Germany and Sweden on how to set up similar centers. "The Czech Republic is taking a leading role in Europe's response to disinformation," Giles Portman, the British head of the EU's Brussels-based East Stratcom (Strategic Communications) Task Force, told a Czech think tank. (The task force is an EU unit set up in 2015 to push back against Russian disinformation campaigns.)

A few months later, however, the gap between expectations and reality has become apparent.

Despite the headlines in January proclaiming the center would focus on publicly debunking fake news stories, it's hardly done any of that.

Despite the headlines in January proclaiming the center would focus on publicly debunking fake news stories, it's hardly done any of that. Since the beginning of May, the center's dedicated Twitter account — it doesn't have an account on Facebook, by far the most popular social network in the country — has only debunked a few pieces of fake news, including stories about a ramming incident falsely described as a terror attack, safety standards at summer festivals, and lithium mining.

For his part, CTHH head Vangeli has argued that, despite the thrust of the press coverage earlier this year, disinformation and fake-news busting are not the center's primary concern. "We deal with all manner of hybrid threats, not just disinformation," Vangeli told Czech news site *aktualne.cz* in February. (The Ministry of the Interior denied Foreign Policy's request for an interview with Vangeli.) "Responding to disinformation is only between 5 to 9 percent of our work." The other 90 percent, Vangeli said at a public debate at Charles University in Prague in May, is devoted to assessing all manner of threats to the country's security, including terrorism and extremism, and passing on its findings to Czech police, military, and intelligence services. It also includes, Vangeli said, developing a network of similar centers across other Czech government ministries.

But if that's the case, some say the center falls short even by its own

standards. "There seems to be a disconnect between the center's grandiloquent title and its actual mission," said Mark Galeotti, a senior research fellow at the Institute of International Relations in Prague. The center, Galeotti argued, doesn't appear to tackle issues that could, in theory, fall under its remit like monitoring extremists, developing anti-terror measures, or combatting corruption, which Galeotti stresses is "a crucial force multiplier" of hybrid threats. To Galeotti, this disconnect suggests the center is indeed more an anti-fake news unit than an anti-terrorism or anti-"hybrid threats" center.

Part of the problem is that for all the widespread concern about the threat of disinformation, there is no unanimity on the exact scope of the fake news problem in the Czech Republic or how to fight it.

No one doubts that there are several dozen websites in the country that regularly push inflammatory, conspiracy-laden content, get much of their traffic from social media, and are almost always pro-Kremlin. But while some observers and government officials contend these websites have the power to slowly destabilize the country and pivot it away from the EU and NATO, others caution against exaggerating the threat and argue these websites are the preserve of a small, albeit significant, minority.

*Parlamentní listy*, the most popular site widely considered to be spreading "disinformation," receives around 8 million visitors a month as of August 2017, which places it among the top 100 most popular websites in the country. But it receives far fewer visitors than the most popular mainstream Czech news sites — iDNES, *novinky.cz* and *blesk.cz* — which received 95 million, 84 million and 27 million visitors a month, respectively, as of August 2017, and after *Parlamentní listy*, there's a sharp drop off: The next most popular disinformation website, *AC24.cz*, pulls in 1.5 million visitors a month to its site (where readers can learn about apparent discoveries of "ancient pyramids" on the moon or how much aluminum there is in Czech vaccines). Websites like *Lajkit.cz* or *Svět kolem nás*, which mostly operate under murky ownership structures, don't fare even that well: These two sites

pull in fewer than a million visitors a month each and aren't even among the top thousand most popular websites in the country, according to SimilarWeb, a web traffic analytics site.

According to Benjamin Tallis, a senior researcher at the Centre for European Security at Prague's Institute of International Relations, the Czech Republic has opted to take a reactive approach to online-driven disinformation and fake news, exaggerating the extent of external threats, while neglecting the weaknesses that leave the country vulnerable to fake news sites. The current debate in the Czech Republic, including over the center's work, "distracts from the real solutions to disinformation," Tallis said, which include education and combating widespread public cynicism. Findings from recent Europe-wide surveys suggest that Czechs, thanks to a series of political scandals and crises, have among the lowest levels of trust in their government in the continent. The Czech government also is negligent when it comes to investing in education, spending well below EU and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development averages, with teachers' salaries among the lowest in the OECD.

"There are expectations that some have from the CTHH, like it will solve the whole problem of disinformation," said Ivana Smolenova, a fellow at the Prague Security Studies Institute who studies pro-Kremlin disinformation campaigns and considers herself a supporter of the center's work. "But it can't."

Come October, the center could find itself with fewer friends in Parliament: In addition to Babis's ANO, which is expected to win the October elections, parties as diverse as the Pirate Party, which focuses on civil liberties and scored almost 9 percent in a recent poll, and the Communists, who are the third largest party in the country, aren't fans of the center and its work. The CTHH — once held up as a potential model — might not have much time left to win over skeptics.

Photo credit: MICHAL CIZEK/AFP/Getty Images

THE WALL  
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## Italy's Upstart 5 Star Movement Looks to Candidate With Mainstream Appeal

Giovanni Legorano

Sept. 20, 2017 7:58 a.m. ET

6-8 minutes

ROME—Italy's antiestablishment 5 Star Movement is picking a new standard-bearer with a key

qualification: He looks and talks like a mainstream politician.

The 5 Star Movement—one of Europe's largest upstart political parties—is set to choose Luigi Di

Maio, the 31-year-old deputy speaker of the lower house of parliament, as its candidate for prime minister in Italy's next general election, which must occur by May.



He is running in an online vote this week, with the winner to be anointed on Saturday as 5 Star kicks off its campaign.

In Mr. Di Maio, an observant Catholic who prefers a suit and tie to the jeans worn by many 5 Star proponents, the group is choosing a figure who could pick off voters angry with established parties but wary of the movement's firebrands and its more radical ideas.

"We absolutely don't want to create a populist, extremist and anti-European Italy," he told a group of Italian business leaders early this month. "Our objective is creating (and) building, not destroying....We have always repudiated populism."

Fueled by discontent over the country's slow growth, high unemployment and a political class many voters see as self-serving, the movement founded by comedian Beppe Grillo has rocketed to prominence. It took a quarter of votes in its first national election bid in 2013, then won mayoral races in Rome, Turin and elsewhere last year.

Even as anti-establishment movements fade elsewhere in Europe, the movement's popularity has remained robust despite a series of high-profile stumbles from its outsider politicians, who have included students and unemployed workers.

But the rise of a man whose first paid regular job was as a member of parliament has fed into criticism that the movement—which brandishes inexperience like a badge of honor—is unprepared to govern.

Nicola Biondo, a former 5 Star spokesman, said Mr. Di Maio "embodies the weaknesses of the movement....Giving large responsibilities to people who have never had any responsibility—they are just too young—will be a disaster."

Mr. Di Maio said that regardless of the party's experience, Italy needs change. The 5 Star Movement "wanted more time to learn, to grow, to demonstrate it can run this country," he said during an appearance at Harvard University in May. "But given that experts have reduced the country to these conditions, we had no time." Mr. Di Maio declined requests for an interview.

An Ipsos poll this month for the *Corriere della Sera* daily asking voter intentions put support for the 5 Star Movement at about 27%, matching the Democratic Party—whose Paolo Gentiloni is currently premier—as Italy's largest.

The movement has vowed tougher anticorruption laws and a minimum guaranteed income if it emerges from upcoming elections as head of a minority government.

Some of its most prominent figures, chiefly Mr. Grillo, have called for Italy's exit from the eurozone and a repudiation of the fiscal constraints imposed by the European Union. Mr. Di Maio, while promoting many of the same ideas, has taken a less incendiary tack.

In a step toward clarifying the movement's position on a signature issue, Mr. Di Maio told business leaders this month that a 5 Star

government would view a referendum on Italy's membership in the euro as "a last resort."

"We are not against the European Union," said Mr. Di Maio. "We want to stay at the table and renegotiate some rules that are suffocating our economy."

The remark cut through a cacophony of voices within the 5 Star Movement on its position as the group works to refine its program. It also comes after hardline anti-euro positions came up short in elections in the Netherlands and France.

A spokesman for the movement didn't return a request for comment.

Mr. Di Maio, a technology aficionado who made his first activist splash with a web-based documentary supporting a protest by shopkeepers in his hometown of Pomigliano d'Arco, helped found local 5 Star chapters there while studying law at university.

In 2010, while still a university student, Mr. Di Maio ran for city council in his hometown outside Naples as a candidate for the newly formed group. He lost, garnering just 70 votes.

In parliamentary elections three years later, Mr. Di Maio rode the populist wave that saw 5 Star win a quarter of all votes cast and 17% of seats in Italy's legislature.

He won 189 votes in an online vote among 5 Star activists held to choose parliamentary candidates, enough to put his name on the ballot. He went on to win a parliamentary seat and became

deputy speaker of Italy's lower house, at 26 years old.

He later admitted his shock at his rapid ascent. "I was dazed, tired, confused," he told Italian weekly *L'Espresso*.

"He decided to run for that role, but he didn't fully understand what it would involve," recalls Dario De Falco, a longtime friend who became involved in political organizing in high school with Mr. Di Maio.

Defenders say Mr. Di Maio has performed well as deputy speaker of the parliament. "From the very beginning he managed the works of the chamber with a steady hand," said Danilo Toninelli, a 5 Star deputy and close ally of Mr. Di Maio.

Even as Mr. Di Maio provides a moderate face for the party at the election, 5 Star still supports unorthodox ideas.

For instance, the 5 Star Movement opposed the government's decision this year to require children to be vaccinated to attend school. The group also supports a reduced workweek that it says will help create jobs—youth unemployment is at 36%.

With Mr. Di Maio, "they are trying to show they can be in charge," says Giovanni Orsina, professor at Rome's Luiss University. But "behind the facade, who knows what's there."

**Write to** Giovanni Legorano at [giovanni.legorano@wsj.com](mailto:giovanni.legorano@wsj.com)

## INTERNATIONAL



### Fred Hiatt : The president who could change Trump's mind

<https://www.facebook.com/fhiatt1>

6-7 minutes

French President Emmanuel Macron, left, and President Trump shake hands. (Brendan Smialowski/Agence France-Presse via Getty Images)

By Fred Hiatt Editorial Page Editor  
September 20 at 8:17 PM

Among the many listeners who believed he heard some telling inconsistencies in President Trump's first address to the U.N. General Assembly was one Western leader who hopes to help Trump resolve the contradictions.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who also met with Trump on the sidelines of the U.N. meeting, noted that Trump's speech contained both isolationist themes familiar from his 2016 campaign and elements that sounded more like a George W. Bush address. Macron believes the isolationist route would be a dead end for the United States, and he said he told the president as much.

And, on Iran, climate change and other matters, Macron offered suggestions for how he believes Trump might be drawn into a more internationalist approach.

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"We have to push very hard for him to act in the framework of the multilateral approach," Macron said Wednesday, speaking in English to a small group of American journalists in the French U.N. mission. "I think it's feasible. At least, I consider that's my mission.

"And why?" the French president continued. "Because I do need the United States. We are great partners with the U.S. — in the Sahel, in the Mideast. We work very closely against terrorism."

The Washington Post readers are some of the most critical out there. Editorial page editor Fred Hiatt

reads and responds to his hate mail from both sides of the aisle. WATCH: Editorial page editor Fred Hiatt reads and responds to his hate mail from both sides of the aisle. (Gillian Brockell/The Washington Post)

The Washington Post readers are some of the most critical out there. Editorial page editor Fred Hiatt reads and responds to his hate mail from both sides of the aisle. (Gillian Brockell/The Washington Post)

Macron, who also met this week with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, laid out a proposal that he thinks could meet U.S. concerns about Iranian behavior without blowing up the Iran nuclear agreement, which Trump lambasted

as an "embarrassment" in his speech.

Macron argued that for the United States to abrogate the agreement would simply strengthen Iran's global position while leaving the United States with no follow-up options. "What's the scenario?" Macron asked. "We will put ourselves in the North Korea situation ... and discover in X number of years that they have a nuclear weapon."

Instead, he asked, what if the West treats the nuclear agreement as only the first of four pillars in an evolving relationship with Iran — with the United States taking a "leadership position" in negotiating the broader agreement?

The second pillar would concern ballistic missiles. Macron said Iran has become more aggressive since 2015 and therefore France would support new sanctions if an

agreement could not be reached. But he said this issue should not be linked to the nuclear one.

The third pillar — negotiations on which also should begin "right now" — would concern Iran's nuclear status after 2025, when the nuclear agreement expires.

And the fourth would concern Iran's agenda in the region "in order to have a proper containment strategy," Macron said. He said he told Rouhani that Iran is making many people in the region nervous and making the United States nervous with its behavior.

Leading this broader approach, Macron said, would give the West the high ground. "The current tension doesn't put us in the best position," he said. "The risk is to be the one to disrespect the agreement, which is a mistake."

Macron said he tried to interest Trump in a similar approach on

climate change. As with the Iran agreement, the French president said he believes that Trump's first motivation for tearing up the deal was that it was negotiated by President Barack Obama. But he said he believes that Trump also thinks his voters don't like it and would be harmed by it, and that he could negotiate a better deal.

Macron said he made clear to Trump that France will support no renegotiation. But again he tried to suggest that Trump could find a winning political strategy without abandoning the deal. He said he pointed out that many of Trump's middle-class voters will be hurt by hurricanes and other effects of climate change — and that many of them could be helped if the United States embraced innovation and the new jobs that it could bring.

"What we need is for President Trump to find something belonging to him regarding climate change,"

Macron said. "I want to convince him the solution is not to break what we have," just as with the Iran deal.

Did he think the U.S. president was persuaded? Macron wouldn't go that far, but said he noted that Trump didn't mention climate change at all in his address. "It's very complicated to implement what he has announced, and part of his people are not in favor of leaving," Macron said.

Some observers have speculated that lectures from European leaders helped spur Trump to pull out of the Paris climate accord. But the French president rejected that theory.

His talks with Trump are always "very friendly," Macron said.

"I'm extremely direct, and he's extremely direct," he said.

No fact-checker needed for that one.



## Why Donald Trump and Emmanuel Macron Are So Powerful

Vivienne Walt / Paris

6-7 minutes

Late Tuesday night in New York, French President Emmanuel Macron texted a friend in Paris, giving his self-assessment of his debut speech at the United Nations. "I gave it everything I had, I tell you," Macron texted in response to the congratulations his friend had sent. That friend shared the text with TIME on Wednesday morning. Macron ended the message with a common French sign-off: "Kisses."

But "giving it everything" might not be enough as Macron makes a passionate plea for international negotiations on climate change, the Middle East, North Korea, and other urgent global matters. That is especially true when set against U.S. President Donald Trump's own U.N. speech, given just hours before Macron's address, in which the President threatened that the U.S. would isolate Iran and obliterate North Korea.

Among the scores of world leaders gathered in New York this week for the U.N. General Assembly, Trump and Macron are perhaps the most curious pair. Both are newcomers who shot to power this year as first-time politicians. And on Tuesday, they made almost back-to-back debuts on the world's biggest global stage.

On the surface, the two are a study in contrasts in politics, style and personality: The hardline America First champion versus the fervent

globalist, the lumbering 71-year-old billionaire versus the slender 39-year-old wonky intellectual.

But one crucial fact binds the pair—and that fact could be key to the decisions that world leaders make in the months and years ahead. Trump and Macron represent two of only five nations with permanent veto power on the U.N. Security Council, nicknamed the P-5. (China, Russia and the United Kingdom round out the group.) That is an immensely powerful clique, one that can potentially sway the rest of the world's leaders into declaring war, imposing sanctions, or block them from taking any action at all.

What's more, Trump and Macron are the only two P-5 leaders that truly count this week. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping both stayed away from this year's U.N. General Assembly, where their policies over North Korea, Syria and other issues are under scrutiny. And although British Prime Minister Theresa May addressed the world body on Tuesday, she is heavily focused on her country's fraught exit from the European Union.

That leaves the U.N.'s odd couple, Trump and Macron.

In his speech, Trump said he "would always put America first" and that he expected leaders from across the world to likewise "put your countries first." It's a message that runs counter to the consensual give and take that has dominated the U.N. for nearly 70 years.

"It is in everyone's interest," Trump said, "to seek a future where nations can be sovereign," a word he used 19 times in his speech. He railed against North Korean President Kim Jong Un as a "rocket man on a suicide mission." He called the Iran nuclear deal—painstakingly negotiated through the U.N. and signed in 2015—an "embarrassment to the United States."

Just two hours later, Macron stood at the same podium. Without mentioning the U.S. President, he told world leaders that Trump-like nationalism was nothing more than a message of "survival of the fittest." In contrast to Trump, Macron tried to carve for himself a role as the world's loudest voice for negotiations on a range of issues, as well as the foremost leader on one of the most critical global problems: climate change. "Our planet is wreaking revenge for the follies of mankind," Macron told world leaders, some of whose countries have been rocked by this summer's onslaught of hurricanes and other natural disasters.

Meanwhile, Trump announced in June that he would withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement on climate change, to which nearly every country in the world is a signatory. The agreement was the result of years of U.N.-led negotiations, and aims to maintain global warming at a maximum of two degrees Celsius above the Earth's pre-industrial levels. (Scientists say meeting this goal is essential to avoid spectacular environmental disaster.) Macron, in

the most passionate moment of his speech on Tuesday, vowed that the Paris Agreement would remain intact despite Trump's decision. "It was signed in this very room," he said in the U.N. chamber. "That agreement is not up for renegotiation."

In an interview with CNN's Christiana Amanpour broadcast after his speech, Macron said he wanted to "convince [Trump] to come back" to the climate agreement, and regards it as essential to keep an ongoing dialogue with the American President. There are other issues, too, on which Macron seems determined to try change Trump's mind, including the Iran nuclear deal, which he told Amanpour he believed was "better than nothing."

That crucial need to keep Trump on-side in international agreements—key to the U.N.—is one big reason Macron's relationship with him appears increasingly important. Trump was Macron's guest of honor at France's Bastille Day military parade in July. And when Macron landed in New York on Monday, his first stop was to meet Trump at the Palace Hotel in Manhattan. At a press conference on Tuesday, Macron told reporters that Trump is his "partner" in the fight against terrorism, which has rocked France in recent years. "He [Trump] respects a partner who states his positions and tries to convince him," he said. "But we have to recognize we have our disagreements."

That is putting it delicately. Still, those who have watched Macron

say he shares one important characteristic with Trump: His tendency to

speak bluntly. "They are very direct people," says Philippe Besson, a Paris novelist whose new book, "A

Character Out of a Novel," describes Macron's rise to power. "They say things as they are,"

Besson adds — even if their words are worlds apart.



## France's President Defies Trump at the UN

Uri Friedman

8-10 minutes

Since the Second World War, American presidents have repeatedly gone before the United Nations General Assembly and made a similar argument: The United States has national interests just like any other country, but in the modern era those interests are increasingly international in scope and shared by people around the world, requiring more of the multilateral cooperation that the UN was founded to foster.

John F. Kennedy argued that nuclear weapons necessitated "one world and one human race, with one common destiny" guarded by one "world security system," since "absolute sovereignty no longer assures us of absolute security." Richard Nixon spoke of a "world interest" in reducing economic inequality, protecting the environment, and upholding international law, declaring that the "profoundest national interest of our time" is the "preservation of peace" through international structures like the UN. In rejecting tribalism and the walling-off of nations, Barack Obama asserted that "giving up some freedom of action—not giving up our ability to protect ourselves or pursue our core interests, but binding ourselves to international rules over the long term—enhances our security." These presidents practiced what they preached to varying degrees, and there's long been a debate in the United States about the extent to which America's sovereign powers should be ceded to international organizations, but in broad strokes the case for global engagement was consistent.

On Tuesday, during this year's UN General Assembly, Emmanuel Macron, the French president, made this case. But the American president didn't. Instead, Donald Trump inverted the argument: Contemporary challenges, he told the world leaders assembled in New York, are best tackled by self-interested states that work together when and where their interests overlap. "If we are to embrace the opportunities of the future and overcome the present dangers together, there can be no substitute for strong, sovereign, and independent nations—nations that are rooted in their histories and

invested in their destinies," Trump said.

### Related Story

A Radical Rebuke of Barack Obama's Foreign Policy Legacy

Macron, by contrast, emphasized interdependence rather than independence. The lesson from humanity's collective history in recent decades is that, from Mali to Saint Martin, "we are inextricably linked to each other in a community of destiny" and "planetary responsibility," the French president noted in a speech soon after Trump's. "There is nothing more effective than multilateralism in our current world because all our challenges are multilateral: war, terrorism, climate change, the digital economy."

Trump and Macron even diverged in their interpretation of the postwar period. World War II was won because "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," Trump recounted, and the UN "was based on the vision that diverse nations could cooperate to protect their sovereignty, preserve their security, and promote their prosperity."

Macron, meanwhile, began his address by stating that he wouldn't be standing before the UN as the leader of the French Republic had people from America and Africa, to Asia and Oceania, not resisted "the barbaric regime that had seized my country," recognizing that "their freedom and their values depended upon the freedom of other women and of other men who lived thousands of kilometers away from them." He and his country also owed a "debt" to those who later created the "international order"—including the UN, the rule of law, and mechanisms to facilitate exchanges between peoples—to restore the "values of tolerance, of freedom, of humanity" that the Second World War "had flouted" and that held the worst instincts of humankind "at bay."

Trump vowed to put America's interests first, and suggested other leaders do the same. In condemning the authoritarian leaders of Cuba and Venezuela, he proclaimed that "nations of the

world must take a greater role in promoting secure and prosperous societies in their own regions." Macron rejected parochialism. Peace, freedom, and justice are not solely to "be enjoyed in our own corner," he contended. "If we don't stand up for those values, then all of us will be affected."

Macron preferred to describe the world's problems on an international scale. He expressed concern about the "dictatorial trends" on display in countries like Venezuela and the "jihadist terrorism" afflicting all continents, warned that North Korea threatened efforts to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and praised the Paris climate-change agreement as a pact between states and generations. Trump acknowledged that international problems such as terrorism and drug-trafficking demand international solutions. But he nevertheless dwelled on the level of the nation-state, which he characterized as "the best vehicle for elevating the human condition." He called out the suffering that the socialist dictator of Venezuela had inflicted on his own people and gave notice that the "rocket man" in North Korea, in brandishing nuclear weapons at the United States and allied nations, was embarking on "a suicide mission."

Trump again and again stressed America's power and capacity to prevail against its enemies, echoing the argument of two of his top advisers earlier this year that the world isn't a "global community" but "an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors and businesses engage and compete for advantage." He claimed that the U.S. economy and military were stronger than ever and—in the most stuntness moment of his speech—threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea, a fellow UN member state. Macron lamented that "we have allowed the idea to proliferate that multilateralism is ... the tool of the weak," that "we were stronger if we took unilateral action." If the world continues down this path, if the history that birthed the UN is forgotten, "it's the survival of the fittest that will prevail," Macron cautioned.

These stark differences in worldview help explain why Macron, and other like-minded Western European leaders, are currently at odds with the Trump administration

on the top global issues of the day, including the North Korean nuclear crisis (Macron favors a multilateral diplomatic solution, Trump prefers economic pressure and threats of force); the Iran nuclear deal (Macron wants to preserve it, Trump wants to tear it up); and the Paris climate deal (Macron is committed to it, Trump pulled out of it).

But they also testify to divisions that endanger the United Nations itself. If the world's major powers can't agree on what the UN is for, what does that mean for the future of the organization? Kevin Rudd, a former Australian prime minister who has studied ways to reform the UN, likes to point out that while we may take the United Nations for granted, order in international relations is the exception, not the rule. "Since the rise of the modern nation-state," he has observed, "disorder has been the dominant characteristic of interstate relations." As I wrote last year, after interviewing Rudd:

Over the last 500 years, Rudd notes, "there have been four major efforts in Europe to construct order after periods of sustained carnage": in 1648, after the Thirty Years' and Eighty Years' wars; in 1815, after the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars; in 1919, after World War I; and in 1945, after World War II. "The first three of these 'orders' have had, at best, patchy records of success. The jury is still out on the fourth."

This week, Trump alluded to the fragility of the United Nations: "The true question for the United Nations today, for people all over the world who hope for better lives for themselves and their children, is a basic one: Are we still patriots? Do we love our nations enough to protect their sovereignty and to take ownership of their futures? Do we reverse them enough to defend their interests, preserve their cultures, and ensure a peaceful world for their citizens?" What is urgently needed, Trump said, is "a great reawakening of nations."

Macron made the same point by posing the polar opposite question. "I cannot say whether my successor ... in 70 years' time will have the privilege of speaking before you," he reflected. "Will multilateralism survive this time of doubt and change?"



## Editorial : Don't walk away from Iran nuclear deal

Owen Ullmann,  
USA TODAY

3-4 minutes

Published 5:21 p.m. ET Sept. 20, 2017 | Updated 5:40 p.m. ET Sept. 20, 2017

NEW YORK — French President Emmanuel Macron urged President Trump Wednesday to stick with the Iran nuclear deal despite his strong misgivings because "what else do we have? We would be put in the North Korea situation."

Macron told a group of editors and reporters here, where he is attending the U.N. General Assembly, that without the current agreement curbing Iran's nuclear program, Tehran would be able to rush ahead with a nuclear weapons program the way North Korean

Leader Kim Jong Un is, creating a new international crisis.

Macron, who has met several times with Trump including at the United Nations, has developed a friendship with the American leader. "I'm extremely direct and he's extremely direct," Macron said.

"You want to kill it (Iran nuclear agreement) because it is an Obama agreement ... but what else do we have?" Macron said he told Trump during their conversation Tuesday. "I think he is sympathetic."

However, in his speech to the U.N. Tuesday and in earlier remarks Trump assailed the nuclear deal as an "embarrassment to the United States." Trump also hinted that he was preparing to walk away from the 2015 agreement, perhaps in the coming weeks.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who also met with Macron, said in his U.N. speech Wednesday that the U.S. would "destroy its own credibility" by quitting the nuclear deal forged under former President Barack Obama.

Trump faces an Oct. 15 deadline to tell Congress whether he intends to re-certify the Iran deal or get rid of it.

**More:** Trump says he's made a decision on Iran nuclear deal – but won't reveal what it is

**More:** Iran nuclear deal: What's at stake for U.S., allies?

**More:** Iran's Rouhani plays the moderate compared to brash Trump at UN

Macron said he tried to convince Trump not to try to modify or kill the nuclear agreement that Iran

reached with the U.S., France, and four other world powers. Rather, Macron said he urged Trump to consider a way to seek a broader strategy in dealing with Iran that includes ways to halt Iran's ballistic missile tests, not covered by the agreement, and contain Iranian influence in the Middle East.

He said that world powers should open negotiations with Iran now on extending the nuclear deal after it expires in 2025. Macron added that one way to limit Iran's power in the Middle East is to bring peace to Syria, where Iranian forces are helping President Bashar Assad win a six-year civil war.

"My strategy for Iran is to have a broader strategy," Macron said.

## CNBC : France's Macron says hasn't given up on convincing Trump on nuclear deal

Charles Platiau | Reuters

French President Emmanuel Macron and U.S. President Donald Trump attend the traditional Bastille Day military parade on the Champs-

Elysees in Paris, France, July 14, 2017.

French President Emmanuel Macron said he had not yet given up on convincing U.S. President Donald Trump to change his view of

the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

Macron acknowledged the deal by itself was not enough.

"Is this agreement enough? No. It is not, given the evolution of the

regional situation and increasing pressure that Iran is exerting on the region, and given ... increased activity by Iran on the ballistic level since the accord," Macron told reporters in New York.



## Trump's North Korea Threat Buoy Allies; China Urges Calm

Te-Ping Chen in Beijing and Megumi Fujikawa

in Tokyo

7-9 minutes

Updated Sept. 20, 2017 3:38 p.m. ET

Japan and South Korea offered cautious praise for President Donald Trump's tough talk against Pyongyang in his first address to the United Nations General Assembly, where he threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea should it attack America or its allies.

China, meanwhile, reiterated its calls for the standoff to be resolved through dialogue, while Chinese state media criticized the U.S. president's remarks.

"We hope relevant parties can exercise restraint," said foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang, who said that U.N. resolutions aimed at Pyongyang reflected the "common will and consensus" of the international community.

While angered by Pyongyang's provocations, Beijing is wary of

actions that could trigger the regime's collapse, send a flood of North Korean refugees into northeastern China and bring U.S. troops based in South Korea closer to its border.

Speaking at the General Assembly on Wednesday, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said North Korean nuclear weapons either already were, or were on the verge of becoming, hydrogen bombs, presenting an unprecedented threat.

"It is indisputably a matter of urgency," Mr. Abe said. "We must prevent the goods, funds, people, and technology necessary for nuclear and missile development from heading to North Korea."

Mr. Abe said Japan consistently supported the U.S. stance that "all options are on the table" in dealing with North Korea.

South Korea's Moon Jae-in is due to speak on Thursday. Both Asian leaders are expected to have individual discussions with Mr. Trump as well as a trilateral meeting this week.

In a combative speech to the U.N. on Tuesday, Mr. Trump blasted North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons and its missile program. He warned that Kim Jong Un's regime was "on a suicide mission," referring to the North Korean leader as "Rocket Man," and said denuclearization was its only acceptable option.

There was no response from North Korea on Wednesday specifically to Mr. Trump's remarks. But Pyongyang has said in recent weeks that it wouldn't give up its nuclear weapons under any conditions.

Japan's chief government spokesman, Yoshihide Suga, praised the speech, including Mr. Trump's reference to Megumi Yokota, a Japanese girl kidnapped by North Korean agents in 1977. Mr. Trump didn't mention Ms. Yokota's name but said Pyongyang "kidnapped a sweet 13-year-old Japanese girl from a beach in her own country to enslave her as a language tutor for North Korea's spies."

North Korea has said Ms. Yokota is dead but hasn't provided proof. Mr.

Abe, the Japanese leader, has long made the return of her and other Japanese abductees one of his priorities in dealing with North Korea.

Asked specifically about the U.S. president's "totally destroy" comment, Mr. Suga said: "It goes without saying that the strong deterrent force of the Japan-U.S. alliance is necessary to secure peace and stability in the region. From that perspective, we view favorably President Trump's stance that all options are on the table."

A spokesman for South Korea's presidential office said on Wednesday that the speech demonstrated the seriousness with which Washington regards the North Korean nuclear crisis. He reaffirmed Seoul's commitment to using "maximum sanctions and pressure" to steer Pyongyang toward giving up its nuclear arsenal.

"The two countries will continue to cooperate closely with each other," the spokesman said.

Mr. Moon walks a delicate line in his relationship with Mr. Trump. The left-leaning South Korean president, who took office this year calling for

more engagement with North Korea, has been forced to tack to the center on security issues, disappointing many members of his political base.

Amid criticism from Mr. Trump that Mr. Moon was pursuing a policy of "appeasement," toward North Korea, Mr. Moon has emphasized his shared goal with the U.S. of using sanctions and pressure in response to the North's weapons tests. Mr. Moon, however, has stressed that pressure is only a means to bring Pyongyang to the negotiating table.

Mr. Moon's attempts to make common cause with Mr. Trump, in turn, have opened him up to criticism from North Korea that South Korean officials are engaged in "collusion with outside forces." and are servants of U.S. interests, as Pyongyang's state media said on Wednesday.

"They should behave with

discretion, clearly understanding our warning that they may lose an opportunity to deal with the DPRK once and for all," Pyongyang said through its state media, using an abbreviation for the country's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

In China, state media criticized what it described as Washington's "all-for-itself approach."

"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 said in an editorial. "His threat to 'totally destroy' the DPRK if need be will, therefore, likely worsen the already volatile situation."

China has consistently urged the U.S. to negotiate with North Korea and has more recently pushed for a "dual freeze," under which

Pyongyang would agree to freeze its missile and nuclear programs in exchange for Washington and Seoul halting major military exercises.

In a commentary published in the Global Times, Zhang Guihong, a professor at Shanghai's Fudan University who studies the U.N., also slammed Mr. Trump's plans to reduce U.N. peacekeeping funds and support for international organizations. "This is actually a kind of short-sighted pragmatism lacking strategic vision," Mr. Zhang wrote, adding that Beijing had by contrast upped its financial support for the U.N. and its initiatives.

Chinese social media users on Wednesday largely panned Mr. Trump's speech. "President Trump at the U.N. threatening to 'completely annihilate North Korea' is not the behavior the world expects from the U.S. president," the editor in chief of the influential tabloid the Global Times, Hu Xijin,

said on his verified Weibo account, calling it an "irrational" oath that spelled ecological disaster for northeast Asia.

As North Korea has accelerated its missile program, Tokyo and Seoul have sought tougher sanctions against the regime. Both nations' militaries have joined the U.S. in conducting bomber flyovers of the Korean Peninsula in response to North Korean provocations.

In the past three months, North Korea has twice fired missiles over Japan, launched its first intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the U.S. and conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test.

—Jonathan Cheng  
contributed to this article.

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition as 'Trump's North Korea Threat Buys Allies.'



## China to Trump: That speech on North Korea was really unhelpful

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

8-10 minutes

President Trump harshly criticized North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the United Nations on Sept. 19, calling him "Rocket Man" and threatening to "totally destroy North Korea" if need be. President Trump harshly criticized North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un on Sept. 19, calling him "Rocket Man" and threatening to "totally destroy North Korea." (The Washington Post)

President Trump harshly criticized North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the United Nations on Sept. 19, calling him "Rocket Man" and threatening to "totally destroy North Korea" if need be. (The Washington Post)

BEIJING — China rebuked President Trump on Wednesday after he threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea if necessary, a warning that may have undermined the chances of peace but also gave Beijing an easy opportunity to seize the moral high ground.

Beijing has consistently blamed not just Pyongyang but also Washington for what it sees as its hostile policies toward the regime. It argues that U.S. hostility has helped to push North Korea's rulers into a corner and talk of total destruction only reinforces that narrative.

"Trump threatens DPRK with 'total destruction,' while China calls for peaceful settlement," the online

English-language edition of the People's Daily newspaper headlined an op-ed, referring to the county's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"Trump's political chest-thumping is unhelpful, and it will only push the DPRK to pursue even riskier policies, because the survival of the regime is at stake," the op-ed said.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Lu Kang, was more restrained, but nevertheless conveyed a similar message. Chinese artist Zeng Anting displays portraits of President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at a market in Beijing on Sept. 19. (Greg Baker/AFP/Getty Images)

In imposing economic sanctions on Pyongyang, the U.N. Security Council has agreed that the North Korea issue should be solved through "political and diplomatic means," he said.

*[Why haven't sanctions on North Korea worked?]*

"The Peninsula situation is still in a complex and sensitive state," he said. "We hope that relevant parties could maintain restraint while completing United Nations Security Council resolutions, and take more correct actions which are helpful in easing the situation."

More than 80 percent of North Korea's foreign trade is with China, while both Beijing and Moscow have been blamed for helping North Korea develop its missile program.

Although Trump thanked China and Russia for agreeing to sanctions at the United Nations, he also appeared to rebuke one or both of them.

"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.

But China is uncomfortable with the idea that it should shoulder most of the blame for North Korea's nuclear and missile program, and for Pyongyang's refusal to back down, experts say.

"They don't like the idea that the international community sees this as a China problem," said Paul Haenle, director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center in Beijing. "To a certain extent, this kind of talk at the U.N. plays right into their hands."

Yanmei Xie, a China policy analyst at Gavekal Dragonomics in Beijing, made a similar point.

"Trump's bellicose rhetoric does add urgency to how China views this issue," she said. "But it also reinforces China's view that both sides are to blame for the tension."

China has become extremely frustrated with Pyongyang but does not believe that sanctions will ever force it to abandon its nuclear program, which the regime sees as central to its survival.

China has resisted pressure to cut off North Korea's oil imports, which it believes would only serve to alienate the regime from Beijing and

leave China facing a nuclear-armed enemy state on its border.

"They believe that there is nothing we can do at this point to prevent Kim Jong Un from reaching his goal" of developing an intercontinental nuclear missile capability, Haenle said. "And they don't want to cross the threshold where they become North Korea's enemy."

So while Trump has persuaded China to turn the screw on North Korea, he will struggle to convince it to act more forcefully.

*[Twenty-five million reasons the U.S. hasn't struck North Korea]*

François Godement, director of the Asia/China Program at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said Trump may suffer a "credibility" problem in Chinese eyes by also threatening the governments of Iran, Venezuela and Cuba, rather than showing a resolute focus on a single issue.

But do Trump's words presage armed conflict?

The nationalist Global Times newspaper took a pessimistic view, arguing in an editorial that Trump's speech had "reduced hope of peace" on the Korean Peninsula.

"Facts prove Pyongyang won't yield to pressure. Pushing North Korea to its limit may eventually trigger a bloody war," it warned. "If a nuclear war broke out, that would be a crime against Chinese and South Koreans by Pyongyang and Washington."

However, several other experts said they were not worried.

"China and Russia have a common stance on this — they want to prevent war even if there is only a 1 percent chance of it," said Wang Sheng, a North Korea expert at Jilin University in Changshun. As a result of their joint resolve, he said, "the United States could not easily start a war."

Military expert Song Xiaojun agreed.

"What he said is a tactic, it doesn't mean he will really start a war," he said. "The U.S. Army is concerned about other things, such as China's rise and Iran. Since the atomic bomb was developed, the United States has never started a war with

a nuclear-armed country."

Last month, the Global Times newspaper warned North Korea that China would not come to the country's aid if it launches missiles threatening U.S. soil, although it would intervene if Washington strikes first.

That statement was meant to deter Pyongyang from crossing any red lines, experts say.

In the event of war, it is unlikely Chinese troops would fight alongside or on behalf of North Korean soldiers to defend the regime, as they did in the 1950-1953 Korean War, but they could enter the country to secure nuclear weapons sites and prevent U.S. troops from crossing into the North

and installing a U.S.-friendly puppet government, some experts say.

In Pyongyang, the government will also have taken very clear note of Trump's angry disavowal of the nuclear deal with Iran, where that country agreed to abandon its nuclear weapons program under international supervision in return for a lifting of sanctions.

Today's WorldView

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Trump called that deal "an embarrassment to the United States" and threatened to pull out of it. Saying "oppressive regimes cannot endure forever," he also called for the Iranian people to change their own government.

North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, has already seen Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and Iraq's Saddam Hussein agree to surrender their efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction only to end up ousted from power and killed. Trump's talk will only reinforce that lesson.

"How can Kim not conclude from this that Americans will not rest until his regime is toppled and that giving up nuclear weapons is suicidal?" asked Xie at Dragonomics.

Liu Yang, Luna Lin and Shirley Feng contributed to this report.



## North Korea Minister Dismisses Trump Threat as 'Dog Barking'

Hyung-Jin Kim /

AP

2 minutes

North Korea's foreign minister has described as "the sound of a dog barking" President Donald Trump's threat to destroy his country.

The comments are the North's first response to Trump's debut speech at the U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday, during which he vowed to "totally destroy North Korea" if

provoked. Trump also called North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "Rocket man."

The North's Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho told reporters in New York late Wednesday that "It would be a dog's dream if he intended to scare us with the sound of a dog barking."

South Korean TV footage also showed Ri saying he feels "sorry for his aides" when he was asked about Trump's "Rocket man" comments. Ri was to give a speech at the U.N. General Assembly on

Friday, according to Yonhap news agency.

Trump has unleashed many strong statements on North Korea including his August warning the North will be met with "fire and fury." The North has responded by a slew of weapons tests and warlike and often-mocking rhetoric against Trump. A top North Korean general called Trump's "fire and fury" threats "a load of nonsense" let out by "a guy bereft of reason."

The rhetorical battle came as outside experts say North Korea is

getting closer to achieve its long-stated goal of building nuclear-armed missiles capable hitting anywhere in the U.S. mainland.

Earlier this month, North Korea conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test to date and it was subsequently slapped with fresh, tough U.N. sanctions. North Korea later fired a ballistic missile over Japan and the U.S. military flew powerful bombers and stealth fighter jets over the Korean Peninsula and near Japan in a show of force against the North.



## Heninger : Trump Goes Nuclear

Daniel Heninger

5-7 minutes

Sept. 20, 2017 7:02 p.m. ET

On July 28 this year, North Korea's Kim Jong Un tested an intercontinental ballistic missile. Analysts said its potential flight path on an optimum trajectory could travel some 6,400 miles. We can't help but notice that most of the commentators who are dumping condescension on President Trump for threatening to "totally destroy North Korea" live in New York or Washington rather than Seattle or San Francisco. Or Seoul or Tokyo or anywhere people live who no longer see Kim's 250-kiloton bomb—about 17 times as big as what hit Hiroshima in 1945—as an intellectual or journalistic abstraction.

Mr. Trump violated foreign-policy sensibilities on the Eastern Seaboard by saying out loud what has been an implicit reality of U.S. strategic policy since the dawn of the nuclear age: We reserve the

right to use nuclear weapons to preempt a first strike from an adversary, and that includes an enemy's nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. The reason resided in one simple Cold-War word: deterrence.

Toward the end of the Obama presidency, concerns emerged that Mr. Obama would adopt the "no first use" doctrine on nuclear weapons long favored by progressive arms-control activists. He did not. Also worth keeping in mind amid the outcry that Mr. Trump's speech violated some sort of international gentlemen's agreement is that NATO has refused for 70 years to adopt no first use.

Until recently, no American president needed to make such threats in public. An assumption of the Cold War was that the Soviet Union's leadership ultimately was rational, and so we negotiated nuclear agreements with them. Some similar baseline of assumed rationality attached to dealing with each subsequent nuclear power, such as China, India and even Pakistan.

Pakistan and India—estimated to have more than 100 nuclear warheads each—rattled the world's nerves as recently as 2002, when the two countries massed armies along their 2,000-mile border after a terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament.

Whether Iran's revolutionary and messianic religious leadership is "rational" in the Cold War meaning lies at the heart of the disagreement over the Obama nuclear deal with Tehran. The Iranians understood this requirement, and so they put forth as their negotiator Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, a "rational man" from Hollywood central casting, unlike the evil-eye mullahs who actually decide Iranian nuclear strategy, which looks a lot like North Korea's nuclear strategy. Yet another of Mr. Trump's violations of Eastern Seaboard sensibilities is to suggest the Iranians are less trustworthy on nukes than, say, Mikhail Gorbachev.

Since 1993, the U.S. has pursued the standard model of rational-man arms control negotiations with North Korea. This false, 25-year-long

presumption now has brought us to within perhaps one year of Kim being able to attach a miniaturized nuclear bomb to the cone of an ICBM.

The day that happens, the world will have crossed a Rubicon into a nuclear reality incomparably more dangerous than anything in the previous seven decades. On Tuesday, a U.S. president spoke truth to nuclear power. Eastern punditry will never recover from the way Mr. Trump said it, but the rest of the rational world will adapt.

Adaptation of some sort is needed as well to Mr. Trump's thoughts on sovereignty, mentioned more than 20 times in the speech. I haven't anything enlightening to add on this subject because I have no fully graspable idea what he is talking about, and I'm not sure Mr. Trump does either.

The idea of protecting a country's national security and economic interests is easy enough to understand, for instance when renegotiating a trade agreement between the U.S. and Mexico. Mr. Trump, however, seems to be

talking about something more transcendent.

Sovereignty as a mystical force in the lives of nations is an idea brought into the Trump presidency by Steve Bannon and articulated in the U.N. speech and elsewhere by Mr. Trump's chief speechwriter and Bannon ally, Stephen Miller.

Nationalism and what it means for increasingly volatile populations is a good subject just

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

4 minutes

Sept. 20, 2017 7:02 p.m. ET

Calls by the United Nations Security Council to isolate North Korea haven't stopped Kim Jong Un from launching missiles over Japan or threatening America and its allies. This week President Trump told the General Assembly that the United States is prepared "to totally destroy North Korea" in the event of an attack. If the international community is serious about isolating the Kim regime, there's a less drastic option not yet tried: expel North Korea from the U.N.

Since the U.N.'s founding in 1945, no member state has ever been expelled. The U.N. charter does, however, provide for eviction: "A Member of the United Nations which has persistently violated the Principles in the

## The New York Times

5-7 minutes

At the United Nations, President Trump threatened on Tuesday to destroy North Korea. Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

Donald Trump's visit to the United Nations has resurrected the question of whether we'd be better off with Mike Pence.

We haven't mulled that one for a while. Lately, Trump's stupendous instability has actually been looking like a plus. There he was, telling Democrats that he didn't want to cut taxes on the rich. Trying to find a way to save the Dreamers, having apparently forgotten that he was the one who put them all in jeopardy of deportation.

If Pence were president we wouldn't be able to live in hopes of the next flip-flop. The Republican Congress would be marching through its agenda behind a committed

now, but I don't think Messrs. Bannon and Miller, for all the time they've spent talking about sovereignty, have put across the idea in any feasible operational sense for U.S. policy makers. In practice, that makes it largely irrelevant.

My own tastes in Trumpian philosophizing run more toward statements like this at the U.N.: "Major portions of the world are in

## Rosette: Kick North Korea Out of the U.N.

Claudia Rosett

present Charter may be expelled from the Organization by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council."

North Korea never met the U.N. membership requirements to begin with. The charter says membership is open only to "peace-loving states" that promote "respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms." North Korea was admitted in tandem with South Korea on Sept. 17, 1991. At the time, with the Soviet Union in the process of collapse, the rationalization was that finally bringing North Korea into the U.N. fold might induce it to give up its brutal and predatory ways.

Instead, the legitimacy and perquisites conferred by U.N. membership might have helped the regime survive. Expelling North Korea now could undermine Mr. Kim domestically. His regime would lose the international respect that

## Collins : Are We Down to President Pence?

Gail Collins

conservative who, you may remember, forced so many Planned Parenthood clinics to close when he was governor of Indiana that it triggered an H.I.V. epidemic. Better insane than sorry.

Then came the U.N. speech, and the reminder that the one big plus on Pence's scorecard is that he seems less likely to get the planet blown up.

You've heard about the big moment, when the president threatened to "totally destroy North Korea," adding, "Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime."

Trump, who has a history of giving opponents insulting nicknames, loves calling Kim Jong-un, the North Korean dictator, "Rocket Man." Nikki Haley, our U.N. ambassador, argued that the president's speech was a diplomatic win because "every other international community" has now started calling Kim "Rocket Man," too.

conflict, and some, in fact, are going to hell."

Again, the pundits gagged, presumably nostalgic for the prudent, considered cadences of Barack Obama, whose foreign policies left much of the world, um, going to hell. Aleppo's bombardment into rubble comes to mind.

Hearing Mr. Obama describe more of the same will cost you \$400,000

accompanies a U.N. seat. North Korean diplomats would be forced to give up access to lavishly appointed U.N. offices and soirees in New York, Rome and Vienna. The U.S. and its allies pay most of the tab for these amenities, while Pyongyang avails itself of opportunities for spying, money laundering and illicit procurement.

From the start North Korea was intent on causing trouble for the U.N. As early as 1993 the Security Council was expressing "concern" that Pyongyang was out of compliance with U.N. nuclear safeguards. North Korea is now in violation of nine Security Council resolutions, after developing intercontinental ballistic missiles and carrying out six nuclear tests.

As for human rights, a special U.N. Commission of Inquiry concluded in 2014 that "the gravity, scale and nature of the violations committed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reveal a state

now. President Trump gets to talk for free about Kim Jong Un's march toward a nuclear Armageddon. Between these two, I'll take the free version.

*Write henninger@wsj.com.*

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition as 'Trump Goes Nuclear.'

that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world."

A bid to toss North Korea out of the U.N. would need strong U.S. leadership, and it could fail. China and Russia could block it with their Security Council vetoes. The despot-packed General Assembly, wary of setting a precedent, could balk.

It's still worth a try. Even failure would better illuminate the perils of relying on a U.N. that values North Korea's company above its own charter. Success could help undercut the Kim regime, and confer a measure of badly needed redemption on the U.N. itself.

*Ms. Rosett is a foreign policy fellow with the Independent Women's Forum, and author of "What to Do About the U.N." (Encounter).*

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition.

Does this sound like a triumph to you, people? It's perfectly possible Kim takes it for a compliment since he does like rockets. And I'll bet he likes Elton John songs, too.

But about the "totally destroy North Korea" part: I believe I am not alone in feeling that the best plan for dealing with a deranged dictator holding nuclear weapons is not threatening to blow him up.

We tell ourselves that the president is surrounded by men who are too stable to let him plunge us into a war that will annihilate the planet. But Trump's U.N. speech was a read-from-the-teleprompter performance, not a case of his just blurting out something awful. People in the White House read it and talked about it in advance.

It would have been so easy to avoid the crisis with a rewrite. "As the president said yesterday, the United States has great strength and patience, but all options are on the table," Pence told the Security Council later. No, that's not what the

president said. But it is how you expect the head of the most powerful country in the world to deliver a message without scaring the pants off the public.

Maybe that's what this country needs — a president who can make diplomacy boring again. We're back to the dream of impeachment, or the sudden news that Trump is retiring to spend more quality time with his defense attorneys.

The most positive interpretation of the U.N. performance is that it was just a show for the base back home and had nothing whatsoever to do with anything in the real world. That seems possible, since the bulk of it was just sort of ... undiplomatic. Urging his audience to do something about North Korea, Trump said: "That's what the United Nations is for. Let's see how they do." Truly, when you're addressing an international organization of which your country is a founding member, it's a little weird to refer to it as "they."

The president also kept saying he was always going to “put America first,” which is of course true. But at a U.N. venue, it was a little like going to the first meeting of the PTA and repeatedly pointing out that you only care about your own kid.

While Trump spent a lot of time denigrating the U.N. during his campaign, the White House clearly put a big premium on his debut. The whole Trump team was making the

rounds. Poor Melania gave a speech about protecting children from cyberbullying while the audience silently contemplated the fact that her husband recently retweeted a meme of him slamming Hillary Clinton in the back with a golf ball.

The president was much more affable in smaller venues, but he still sounded ... wrong. He tried to be super-nice at a luncheon with

African leaders, assuring them, “I have so many friends going to your countries trying to get rich.” At a gathering for the secretary general, he offered a toast to “the potential, the great, great potential, of the United Nations.” He kept talking about “potential,” like a relative attempting to say something positive about a teenager who had just gotten kicked out of junior high.

The big takeaway, however, was that the president of the United States had threatened to destroy a country with 25 million people.

Maybe we would be better off with Pence in the White House. Even though he won't drink in mixed company unless his wife is present, or dine alone with a woman he's not married to.

Really, there are some choices we just shouldn't be required to make.



## E. J. Dionne Jr. : Trump shows ‘America First’ is utterly incoherent

<http://www.facebook.com/ejdionne>

5-6 minutes

President Trump addresses the United Nations General Assembly. (Lucas Jackson/Reuters)

NEW YORK

The worst aspect of President Trump's speech at the United Nations on Tuesday was not his immature taunting of a dangerous foreign leader when the stakes far outweigh those of a schoolyard fight.

Calling North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un “Rocket Man” may make Trump happy by reminding him of the glory days of “Little Marco,” “Lyn” Ted” and “Crooked Hillary.” But it does nothing to win over the allies we need.

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And his threat “to totally destroy North Korea” is what you'd expect to hear in a bar conversation from a well-lubricated armchair general, not from the leader of the world's most powerful military.

But the most alarming part of an address that was supposed to be a serious formulation of the president's grand strategy in the world was the utter incoherence of Trump's “America first” doctrine.

The speech tried to rationalize “America first” as a great principle. But every effort Trump made to build an intellectual structure to support it only underscored that his favored phrase was either a trivial applause line or an argument that, if followed logically, was inimical to the United States' interests and values.

The notion that “sovereignty” is in such danger that it demanded 21 mentions is absurd. No member state at the United Nations rejects national sovereignty, and many use it as a cover for dismissing the values of democracy and human rights, casting both as the impositions of outsiders.

No wonder Trump won applause when he said that “you, as the leaders of your countries, will always and should always put your countries first.” Selfishness is popular. Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping no doubt nodded approvingly when they were briefed about Trump's words.

But Trump was so selective and inconsistent in his application of sovereignty that the concept itself had collapsed before he finished. If sovereignty is the highest principle, what justification does he have for threatening to destroy North Korea (which asserts its sovereign right to nuclear weapons)?

How can he suggest intervention against Venezuela simply because we disapprove of its governing system? Trump's criticism of Venezuela was clearly based on the

idea that some things actually are more important than sovereignty.

Trump proudly invoked Harry S. Truman, a fine role model. But Truman was the antithesis of Trump's us-above-everybody-always talk. The 33rd president understood that American power was more effective when exercised in cooperation with other nations, and he pioneered the creation of multilateral organizations that have endured for decades.

The Marshall Plan was very much in our country's interests. But its passage required facing down the America-firsters of Truman's day. Its opponents could not understand why we would spend so much of our own money to rebuild the economies of Western Europe.

Trump said that Polish, French and British resistance to Nazism was motivated by “patriotism,” and indeed it was. But patriotism is a richer and more complicated commitment than Trump's offhand comment suggests.

Gen. Charles de Gaulle was condemned as a traitor for opposing France's Vichy collaborationist government — its nationalist slogan was “Work, Family, Country” — and joining with the British. De Gaulle was fighting for a genuinely free and democratic France and defending a view very different from Vichy's as to what patriotism meant.

The favorable reaction to Trump's speech from his habitual defenders is not surprising. But he also won praise from a group who are not

really Trump-friendly but whom I have come to see as inspired by a hope: They calculate that if enough people say enough encouraging things whenever Trump seems to offer relatively normal ideas or take normal actions, he will respond to positive reinforcement and do more normal things over time.

Perhaps this would prove to be true, but it sounds like a coping technique that parents of teenagers might employ, and that is disturbing.

Even worse, pulling punches about the many outlandish elements of Trump's approach means throwing out every standard we have upheld to this point about how presidents of the United States should behave. It requires giving up on the idea that presidents should be eloquent, persuasive, responsible and thoughtful.

Any other president, Republican or Democrat, who gave a speech of the sort Trump delivered would have faced an avalanche of criticism. It just won't do to smile indulgently and say, “Oh, that's Trump being Trump,” or, “He's just appealing to his base.”

Trump's invocations of “America first” will ultimately leave our country behind in the world. His rhetoric sounds tough but will only make us weaker.

*Read more from E.J. Dionne's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.*



## Kristof : Meet the World's Leaders, in Hypocrisy

Nicholas Kristof  
6-7 minutes

President Trump at the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

Leaders from around the world have descended on New York for United Nations meetings, fancy parties,

ringing speeches about helping the poor — and a big dose of hypocrisy.

And — finally! — this is one area where President Trump has shown global leadership.

If there were an award for United Nations chutzpah, the competition would be tough, but the medal might go to Trump for warning that if necessary, “we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.”

There were gasps in the hall: A forum for peace was used to threaten to annihilate a nation of 25 million people.

There also was Trump's praise for American humanitarian aid to Yemen. Patting oneself on the back is often oafish, but in this case it was also offensive. Yemen needs aid because the U.S. is helping Saudi Arabia starve and bomb Yemeni civilians, creating what the

U.N. says is the world's largest humanitarian crisis. In other words, we are helping to create the very disaster that we're boasting about alleviating.

It was also sad to see Trump repeatedly plug “sovereignty,” which tends to be the favored word of governments like Russia (even as it invades Ukraine and interferes in the U.S. election) and China (as it



supports corrupt autocrats from Zimbabwe to Myanmar).

Speaking of Myanmar, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi skipped the U.N. meeting, after being feted last year, because it's awkward to be a Nobel Peace Prize winner who defends a brutal campaign of murder, rape and pillage. Many Muslim leaders in attendance, like Recep Tayyip Erdogan, did highlight the plight of the Rohingya suffering an ethnic cleansing in Myanmar. If only they were as interested in their own political prisoners!

Meanwhile, world leaders usually ignore places that don't fit their narratives. Everybody pretty much shrugged at South Sudan and Burundi, both teetering on the edge of genocide; at Congo, where we're headed for civil strife as the president attempts to cling to power; and at the "four famines": in Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen and South Sudan. To Trump's credit, he expressed concern Wednesday about South Sudan and Congo and said he would dispatch U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley to the region to see what can be done; let's hope his administration provides desperately needed leadership.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## The Contradiction Buried in Trump's Iran and North Korea Policies

David E. Sanger  
9-11 minutes

President Trump threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea and called Iran a "rogue nation" during his speech at the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

President Trump is now fully engaged in two nuclear confrontations, one with Iran over a nuclear accord he finds an "embarrassment" and the other with North Korea that is forcing the Pentagon to contemplate for the first time in decades what a resumption of the Korean War might look like.

The dynamics of those cases are entirely different, but they are also oddly interdependent. If Mr. Trump makes good on his threat to pull out of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, how will he then convince the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, that America will honor the commitment to integrate North Korea into the world community if only it disarms — the demand Mr. Trump made from the podium of the United Nations.

The fiercest defenders of the Iran deal argue that Mr. Trump's team has not thought about how his threats to Tehran resonate 4,000

In fairness, there are broader reasons for hope, including astonishing progress against global poverty — more than 100 million children's lives saved since 1990. Every day, another 300,000 people worldwide get their first access to electricity, and 285,000 to clean water. Global poverty is a huge opportunity, for we now have a much better understanding of how to defeat it: resolve conflicts, invest in girls' education, empower women, fight malnutrition, support family planning, and so on.

For the first time in human history, less than 10 percent of the world's population is living in extreme poverty, and we probably could virtually eliminate it over the next 15 years if it were a top global priority. Trump rightly hailed Pefpar, the AIDS program President George W. Bush devised, but he also has proposed sharp cuts in its funding).

The progress on stopping human trafficking is also inspiring. I moderated a U.N. session on the topic, and it was heartening to see an overflow crowd engaging in a historically obscure subject, even as a new report calculated that there are 40 million people who may be

miles away in Pyongyang, especially since Iran has held up its end of the agreement.

"If the president pulls back on the Iran deal, given Iranian compliance" with its terms, said Wendy R. Sherman, the chief negotiator of the accord, "it will make diplomacy on North Korea almost impossible because U.S. credibility will be shot."

Presumably, the United States would have to make some concessions to North Korea in return for limits on its nuclear program. But why negotiate with the United States if this president or the next one can just throw out any agreement?

Mr. Trump's aides see the problem and in an entirely different way.

The lesson that the North Koreans would take away from the Iran deal, they say, is that the United States can be rolled. The Iran deal is not a permanent solution to the Iranian nuclear problem, they argue, but just a temporary fix. After 15 years, many of the limits on the production of nuclear material will be lifted, even if inspection requirements remain.

"If we're going to stick with the Iran deal there has to be changes made to it," Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson said on Fox News on

called modern slaves. Prime Minister Theresa May convened perhaps the largest meeting of foreign ministers ever on human trafficking.

We now have the tools to achieve enormous progress against these common enemies of humanity — poverty, disease, slavery — but it's not clear we have the will. What's striking about this moment is that we have perhaps the worst refugee crisis in 70 years, overlapping with the worst food crisis in 70 years, overlapping with risks of genocide in several countries — and anemic global leadership.

"There is a vacuum of leadership — moral and political — when it comes to the world's trouble spots, from Syria to Yemen to Myanmar and beyond," notes David Miliband, the president of the International Rescue Committee. Margot Wallstrom, Sweden's foreign minister, agrees: "I think there's a leadership vacuum."

There are exceptions: Wallstrom, U.N. Secretary General António Guterres, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and more.

Tuesday. "The sunset provisions simply is not a sensible way forward," he added, arguing that they amount to "kicking the can down the road."

Mr. Trump's argument goes further. In interviews with The New York Times last year, he criticized the deal as failing to address Iran's missile capability, the detention of American citizens and Tehran's support of terrorist groups around the Middle East. He seeks something more akin to a "grand bargain" with Iran, something the nuclear deal was never intended to be.

North Korea's state news agency said this was the launch of a Hwasong-12 missile. Korean Central News Agency, via Reuters

Mr. Tillerson will have an opportunity to make these arguments on Wednesday at a meeting of all the signatories of the Iran deal, including his Iranian counterpart, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. Mr. Zarif used to talk or email every few days with John Kerry, the American secretary of state who negotiated the deal.

In an interview this summer, Mr. Zarif said he and Mr. Tillerson had never spoken, and the American-educated Iranian diplomat left little doubt on Tuesday what he thought

But many countries are divided at home, distracted by political combat and looking increasingly inward, and in any case, the U.S. remains the indispensable superpower, and it is AWOL. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has achieved a degree of irrelevance that no one thought possible, and Trump is slashing the number of refugees accepted, cutting funds for the U.N. Population Fund and proposing huge cuts for diplomacy, peacekeeping and foreign aid (fortunately, Congress is resisting).

The number that I always find most daunting is this: About one child in four on this planet is physically stunted from malnutrition. And while it is the physical stunting that we can measure, a side effect is a stunting of brain development, holding these children back, holding nations back, holding humanity back.

So it's maddening to see world leaders posturing in the spotlight and patting themselves on the back while doing so little to tackle humanitarian crises that they themselves have helped create.

of Mr. Trump's address to the United Nations General Assembly, in which the president called the Iranian leadership a "corrupt dictatorship" that masks itself as a democracy.

"Trump's ignorant hate speech belongs in medieval times — not the 21st Century UN — unworthy of a reply," Mr. Zarif tweeted. (While they will be in the same room, it is not clear if Mr. Zarif and Mr. Tillerson will talk directly.)

In the end, this entire argument may be moot. China and Russia have said they have no interest in renegotiating the deal. Britain and France have said they would be willing to engage Iran in a negotiation over an addendum to the accord, but the Iranians have rejected that out of hand. And the White House has never said what, if anything, it was willing to give up in return for renegotiating the terms.

What is missing from this debate is obvious: If Mr. Tillerson extracted anything resembling the Iran agreement from North Korea, it would mark a historic breakthrough, one any of the four previous American presidents would rightly have celebrated.

The accord that Mr. Trump finds so lacking would prevent Iran from assembling the makings of a bomb for a year or so, by the best

estimates of American national nuclear laboratories, which advised the negotiators. By comparison, North Korea already has an arsenal of 20 to 60 fully formed weapons, depending on whose intelligence estimates one believes.

In the best case scenario, some administration officials say, the Trump administration would be lucky to win a nuclear “freeze” that keeps North Korea from conducting more nuclear and missile tests.

But that would enshrine the North Korean nuclear arsenal at something around its current level, an outcome Mr. Trump and his national security adviser, H.R. McMaster, have already rejected as intolerable. And it is possible that the North is even more capable than we know, some experts say.

Michael J. Morell, a former deputy director of the C.I.A., recently argued that the North most likely already had everything it needed to mount an attack on the mainland United States — and that the only solution is classic containment.

President Hassan Rouhani of Iran, right, with United Nations Secretary General António Guterres on Monday. Don Emmert/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**  
and Emre Peker

7-8 minutes

Updated Sept. 20, 2017 7:34 p.m. ET

UNITED NATIONS—U.S. officials and their European allies exchanged sharply differing views on the benefits of the Iran nuclear accord Wednesday, capping a day of debate inflamed by President Donald Trump’s assertion that he had decided on whether to stick with the deal—while not revealing his decision.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met Wednesday night with European officials, but he said that Mr. Trump hadn’t shared his conclusion with “anybody externally” and that the U.S. didn’t tell the Europeans whether they would continue adhering to the deal. Mr. Tillerson wouldn’t tell reporters what Mr. Trump would do.

But it was clear Mr. Trump’s puzzling declaration—“I have decided,” he said three times when asked about the nuclear deal—upended the day’s discussions, prompting criticism from Iranian leaders and a scramble by

“I believe that North Korea may have the capability today to successfully conduct a nuclear attack on the United States,” he wrote recently, saying that Washington was relying on flawed logic in its assumption that Pyongyang did not possess the technology needed to deliver a warhead to Los Angeles or Chicago simply because it had yet to demonstrate the mastery of those technologies.

If Mr. Morell is right — and no one will know until the North Korean regime collapses and inspectors can assess the extent of its technology — Mr. Trump faces a problem far more urgent than the one that confronted President Barack Obama in Iran.

Over the next few months, Mr. Trump must decide whether it is truly worth the many risks of war to force the North to disarm, as he has seemed to suggest several times, including in his United Nations speech, or whether he can acquiesce to Cold War-style containment.

So while Mr. Tillerson presses the Europeans to add restrictions on Iran, Mr. Trump and the Treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, will be

European officials to try to calm the debate and address the U.S.’s concerns.

The Trump administration wants an agreement that addresses Iran’s support for the Assad regime, its allegedly malicious cyber activities and its testing of ballistic missiles.

Mr. Trump is leaning toward refusing to certify, officials and people familiar with the talks said. Mr. Trump faces an Oct. 15 deadline to certify Iran’s compliance with the deal to Congress. If he doesn’t do so, that would start a 60-day clock for Congress to consider reinstating the nuclear sanctions waived as part of the 2015 accord.

Following an evening meeting of the joint commission responsible for reviewing the nuclear accord, European officials said all parties agreed it was working and that Iran was in compliance with its terms.

“The agreement is concerning the nuclear program,” said Frederica Mogherini, the European Union’s foreign-policy chief. “As such, it’s delivering. We all agreed that all parties are fulfilling their commitments, the agreement is being implemented. If there are other issues, we can discuss other issues in different fora.”

focusing on pressuring China to cut off Pyongyang’s supplies of oil and gas.

Mr. Mnuchin says he has already drawn up a list of potential sanctions on Chinese banks, barring those that deal with North Korea from also dealing with the United States. (It is less likely that Mr. Trump will make good on his tweeted threat to cut off all trade with any country that does business with North Korea, which would exact a huge cost on the American economy.)

But few expect that pressure campaign to work, and there is already discussion of Plan B. Most of those scenarios are in the category of what Daniel Russel, the former assistant secretary of state for Asia, described to the news site Axios as “a sharp, short ‘warning shot’” that could change Mr. Kim’s calculus about the American willingness to use force.

It is not clear what a warning shot might look like. Inside the Pentagon, military officials say they are looking at several options, including cyber attacks that could turn off Pyongyang’s lights and shooting down North Korean test launches — though Defense Secretary Jim

Mattis noted on Monday that the United States had avoided doing so as long as the missiles looked as though they would fall harmlessly into the sea.

Mr. Mattis, who previously said a war with North Korea would be “tragic on an unbelievable scale,” now says he is confident that there are military approaches that do not risk retaliation against Seoul. The South Korean capital is 35 miles from the Demilitarized Zone that separates the two countries, well within range of thousands of pieces of North Korean artillery.

Reporters asked how that might be possible. New technology? A way of finding and silencing North Korea’s mortars?

“I won’t go into detail,” Mr. Mattis said.

**Correction: September 20, 2017**

In an earlier version of this article, a picture caption referred incorrectly to the North Korean ambassador shown during a session of the General Assembly. The ambassador, Ja Song-nam, was pictured before — not during — President Trump’s speech.

reopening the agreement to talks or keeping the U.S. commitment contingent on broader pending talks.

“There’s absolutely no returning to negotiations. This deal is not something anyone can touch. It’s like a building, if you pull one brick the entire structure will collapse,” Mr. Rouhani said.

Mr. Rouhani emphasized the role of the EU as a force in both safeguarding the deal and determining the outcome if one of the parties pulls out.

He said Iran was examining its options, excluding pursuit of a nuclear weapon, and would shape its final decision based on EU reaction.

European leaders have been outspoken in their support of the deal and the necessity for the U.S. to remain committed during speeches and comments to media and in private bilateral meetings with Messrs. Trump and Rouhani.

French President Emmanuel Macron said he is trying to persuade Mr. Trump to not walk away from the agreement, and proposed a new initiative he hopes will persuade the U.S. to continue honoring the agreement. U.K. Prime

Minister Theresa May also pressed Mr. Trump on Wednesday to remain in the accord.

Meeting with a small group of journalists in New York, Mr. Macron said he proposed that world powers keep the nuclear deal in place, but seek broad negotiations with Iran that address other issues that trouble the U.S., including Iran's development of ballistic missiles, how it uses its influence in the Middle East and the situation that will prevail on the nuclear front after the current agreement expires in 2025.

"My strategy vis-à-vis President Trump on Iran is to keep a very close eye out with him, and to

convince him that we should once again try to redefine a new package," Mr. Macron said. "And I'm trying to have the U.S. take the leadership of this package."

Mr. Trump was "sensitive" to his argument, Mr. Macron said. "I think his strategy...is to create pressure."

Mr. Trump's comment about the nuclear deal came during a photo session with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, when a reporter asked if he had decided whether to stick with the nuclear pact. Mr. Trump three times said: "I have decided." Asked for clarification, Mr. Trump smiled and said, "I'll let you know what the decision is."

A congressional aide said the Trump administration hadn't yet briefed lawmakers on the decision.

The outcome of the rekindled debate and Mr. Trump's rhetoric—he denounced the agreement as an "embarrassment to the United States" in his U.N. speech—is difficult to predict, especially given Iran's internal politics, with conservative factions opposing the deal and favoring a return to uranium enrichment.

That could upend European calculations that Iran would stick with its commitments despite a U.S. exit.

"There are good reasons to be critical of Iran. But by attacking the

nuclear deal, Trump makes Tehran look moderate and mature, and the U.S. dishonest and unreasonable," said Karim Sadjadpour, an Iran expert at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

—Eli Stokols, Emre Peker and Gerald F. Seib contributed to this article.

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## The New York Times (UNE) Trump Pushes to Revisit Iran Nuclear Deal, and Asks Allies to Help

Peter Baker and Rick Gladstone  
9-11 minutes

President Trump met with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority on Wednesday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

President Trump is seeking to revisit the nuclear agreement with Iran to toughen its provisions rather than scrap it right away as he has threatened, enlisting allies to pressure Tehran to return to the negotiating table, administration officials said Wednesday.

Mr. Trump, who denounced the agreement in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly this week as an "embarrassment to the United States," wants to expand on it by extending its time frame and imposing new limits on Iran's development of ballistic missiles. Although European officials strongly back the current deal, some signaled openness to negotiating a separate follow-up agreement.

The maneuvering suggested a possible path forward for Mr. Trump short of abandoning the accord, but it remains uncertain whether he can reach consensus with the European allies, much less with Russia and China, the deal's other patrons. Iran on Wednesday ruled out revisiting the agreement as President Hassan Rouhani declared it a "closed issue" and warned that if the United States pulled out, Iran might resume uranium enrichment.

"We see today the Americans are seeking an excuse to break this agreement," Mr. Rouhani said at a news conference after his own speech to the General Assembly. For that reason, he said, negotiating with "an American government that

tramples on a legal agreement would be a waste of time."

The accord, reached in 2015, required Iran to curb its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions. Under United States law, Mr. Trump has until Oct. 15 to certify whether Iran is complying and the deal remains vital to America's national security. While he has done so twice since taking office, he has signaled that he will refuse to do so again.

That by itself would not abrogate the deal, but would give Congress 60 days to reimpose sanctions on Iran, an action that would mean an end to the agreement, at least for the United States. Mr. Trump may see decertification, or the threat of it, as leverage to press Iran and the other powers to restart talks. He could offer to certify for another 90 days if other parties agreed to explore new negotiations.

On Wednesday, the president teased reporters who asked him whether he had decided what to do. "I have decided," he said, repeating the phrase three times. Pressed by reporters, he added: "I'll let you know. I'll let you know."

Mr. Trump remained coy later when he met with Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain and declined to tell her his decision either. "Prime Minister May asked him if he would share it with her and he said no," Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson said.

Mr. Tillerson met in the evening with counterparts from the other countries that brokered the deal — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — as well as Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif. It was the first time Mr. Tillerson had been in the same

room with Mr. Zarif since taking office and he described the session as businesslike.

"It was a good opportunity to meet, shake hands," he told reporters. "The tone was very matter of fact. There was no yelling. We didn't throw shoes at one another."

Mr. Tillerson acknowledged that international inspectors have found that Iran "is in technical compliance with the agreement, and no one around the table took exception to that." But he argued that Iran was violating the larger aspirations of the deal by engaging in destabilizing activities not directly covered by it, like supporting terrorist groups.

He also conceded that prospects of persuading the other powers, much less Iran, to revisit the deal were daunting, even as he said he remained optimistic. When negotiating as chief executive of Exxon Mobil, Mr. Tillerson said he had learned that "it always gets the darkest before you might have a breakthrough."

No breakthrough was apparent on Wednesday evening. Federica Mogherini, the foreign minister for the European Union who led the 90-minute meeting, rejected scrapping or renegotiating the agreement. "The international community cannot afford dismantling an agreement that is working and delivering," she told reporters outside the Security Council chamber.

"This is an agreement that prevented a nuclear program and potentially prevented military intervention. Let's not forget that," she added. "There is no need to renegotiate parts of the agreement, because the agreement is working."

Mr. Tillerson outlined the Trump administration approach in a television interview on Tuesday. "The president really wants to redo that deal," he told Fox News. "We do need the support, I think, of our allies, the European allies and others, to make the case as well to Iran that this deal really has to be revisited."

Two provisions he focused on involve the expiration of the agreement and its failure to stop Iran from developing ballistic missiles. Under the deal, some provisions expire, or "sunset," after as few as 10 years while others are in force longer and some are permanent. And although United Nations provisions seek to limit ballistic missile technology, the nuclear agreement does not prohibit Iran from developing such weapons.

"If we're going to stick with the Iran deal, there has to be changes made to it," Mr. Tillerson said. "The sunset provision simply is not a sensible way forward. It's just simply, as I say, kicking the can down the road again for someone in the future to have to deal with."

President Emmanuel Macron of France opened the door to rethinking its terms on Wednesday, two days after meeting with Mr. Trump. Speaking to reporters at the United Nations, Mr. Macron said France favored keeping the agreement "because it's a good one," but would support adding "two to three other pillars," or provisions. He cited ballistic missiles and the deal's expiration dates.

Mr. Macron also said he favored "an open discussion with Iran about the current situation in the region." But he added, "I think it would be a mistake just to abandon the nuclear agreement without that."

The French position would be to leave the current agreement in place but negotiate a supplemental deal to address concerns, according to a European official. Such an approach could potentially satisfy Israel, whose prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, also met with Mr. Trump this week and later told the United Nations that the deal should be amended or rescinded. "Change it or cancel it," he said. "Fix it or nix it."

Speaking to the General Assembly, Mr. Rouhani on Wednesday praised the deal as a "model," arguing that the Middle East was safer for it. "It will be a great pity if this agreement were to be destroyed by rogue newcomers to the world of politics," he said. "The world will have lost a great opportunity."

The Iranian president sought to flip the script on the Trump

administration's contention that Iran destabilizes the Middle East. He said American taxpayers should ask why billions of dollars spent in the region had not advanced peace, and "only brought war, misery, poverty" and the "rise of extremism to the region."

"The ignorant, absurd and hateful rhetoric, filled with ridiculously baseless allegations, that was uttered before this august body yesterday," Mr. Rouhani said, referring to Mr. Trump's speech was "unfit to be heard at the United Nations, which was established to promote peace and respect between nations."

At a later news conference, Mr. Rouhani demanded an apology from Mr. Trump and said the nuclear agreement could not be amended, reopened or renegotiated. Given the Trump

administration's open hostility, he said he saw no reason for dialogue. "It is not realistic," he said. Should the agreement unravel, he said one option "may be to start enrichment" of uranium.

If negotiations were to reopen in some form, the challenge for Mr. Trump would be how to persuade Iran to make further concessions. The sanctions that forced Iran to the table under Mr. Obama have been lifted, so Mr. Trump would have less leverage. And it is not clear what, if anything, he would be willing to offer to strike a deal.

"If there are concerns that the administration has, they certainly can suggest an additional negotiation leaving the deal intact and implemented," Wendy R. Sherman, who negotiated the accord for Mr. Obama, said in an interview. "But that would also

require the United States government to be ready to put something on the table. If the administration is looking for more, they will also have to give more."

Representative Ed Royce, the California Republican who is chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, made a similar point. Once sanctions were lifted, he noted, Iran recovered funds that had been frozen in the West, eliminating that leverage. "They now have this money," Mr. Royce said on CNN on Tuesday. "And so in a way, the toothpaste is out of the tube."

He suggested it would be better to make the agreement work rather than pull out altogether. "I think we should enforce the hell out of the agreement," he said, "and thereby force compliance on the part of Iran."



## Trump Efforts to Reopen Negotiations on Iran Nuclear Pact Fail

Paul McLeary |  
58 mins ago

7-8 minutes

A Trump administration effort to reopen negotiations on the landmark Iran nuclear agreement collapsed on Wednesday as key European powers persevered in their effort to rescue the deal from an American walkout, and Iran's president made clear his government wouldn't revisit the terms of the pact.

During a closed door meeting Wednesday night foreign ministers from Iran, the European Union and five other big powers, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who was joined by Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, conceded that Iran was in full compliance with its obligations under the 2015 nuclear pact.

"There is no need to renegotiate parts of the agreement because it is concerning the nuclear program and as such is delivering," Federica Mogherini, the foreign policy chief for the European Union, told reporters after the meeting. "We all agreed on the fact that there is no violation, that the nuclear program-related aspects, which is all agreement, is being fulfilled."

"The international community cannot afford dismantling an agreement that is working and delivering," she added. "We already have one nuclear potential nuclear crisis that means we do not need to go into a second one."

Mogherini said that there was no reason why the United States

couldn't open talks with the Iranians over differences they have with other countries. She also indicated that European powers would seek to uphold the nuclear pact even in the event of a U.S. withdrawal.

Speaking to reporters at the Millennium Hotel Wednesday afternoon, President Hassan Rouhani warned that the Trump administration's breach of the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, would give Tehran a "free hand" to resume its uranium enrichment program.

"This agreement is not something that someone can touch," Rouhani said in a press conference. "Either the JCPOA will remain as is in its entirety, or it will no longer exist. There will be absolutely no changes, no alteration, nothing done to the current framework of the current JCPOA."

Rouhani insisted that Iran would not pursue a nuclear weapons program even if the United States decided to withdraw from the agreement. But he warned that Trump's withdrawal from the pact, which enjoys widespread international support, would only hurt the United States, while "the position of Iran throughout the world will be stronger and better than before."

The remarks followed a day in which country after country reaffirmed its support for the nuclear deal before the U.N. General Assembly.

"I think it would be a mistake just to abandon the nuclear agreement without anything" to replace it, French President Emmanuel

Macron told reporters outside the U.N. Security Council. He said the 2015 pact, which curbs Iran's nuclear program in exchange for billions of dollars in sanctions relief, was "a good one."

Macron acknowledged that the United States had legitimate concerns about shortcomings in the Iran deal, including the fact that it doesn't expressly prohibit Tehran from developing ballistic missiles.

The French leader, who discussed the fate of Iran's nuclear program with Trump on Tuesday, proposed that the key powers might open separate negotiations with the Iranian government on its ballistic missile program, and discuss what happens after the key provisions of the nuclear deal expire in 2025. He also proposed that "we have an open discussion with Iran about the current situation in the region."

Mogherini, The European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, also came out strongly against revisiting the pact.

"I have said many times that the agreement is working fine," and the International Atomic Energy Agency "confirmed several times that Iran is fulfilling its obligations," Mogherini said Monday.

"This deal belongs to the international community," EU's top diplomat said, commenting on the possible U.S. withdrawal from the agreement.

The standoff comes just weeks before Trump faces a 90-day deadline to certify to Congress whether Iran is in compliance with the nuclear pact, which was

negotiated under President Barack Obama.

While Washington's European allies, and the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is charged under the deal with monitoring compliance, say Iran has strictly abided by the terms of the deal, Trump has reportedly concluded that Iran is not in compliance.

Trump frequently disparaged the agreement during his 2016 presidential campaign on the grounds that it allowed Iran to continue its ballistic missile program, and provide too few guarantees that Iran not pursue a nuclear weapons program years down the road when key provision that limit Iran's capacity to enrich uranium would be lifted.

In his inaugural address before the 193-nation U.N. General Assembly, Trump delivered a harsh attack on the Iranian government, calling it "an economically depleted rogue state whose chief exports are violence, bloodshed, and chaos."

He blasted the nuclear pact as "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into," and he hinted that he might renounce it.

Trump has received support for his hardline take on the Iranian nuclear deal from Israel and key Persian Gulf oil sheikdoms, who feel that it rewarded Tehran with billions in sanctioned money to fund a number of armed groups and militias in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria that help it expand influence throughout the region.

Following a meeting Wednesday with Palestinian Authority President

Mahmoud Abbas, Trump told reporters "I have decided" how to proceed. "I'll let you know what the decision is."

Tillerson, who has clashed with Trump in the past over the nuclear pact, told Fox News Channel's Bret Baier late Tuesday that Trump believe this is "not a stiff enough agreement."

**The  
Washington  
Post**

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

8-10 minutes

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said if the United States violates "its international commitments," it will undermine its own credibility Sept. 20, the same day President Trump said he had made a decision about the Iran nuclear deal. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani spoke about the nuclear deal at the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 20 (Reuters)

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said if the United States violates "its international commitments," it will undermine its own credibility Sept. 20, the same day President Trump said he had made a decision about the Iran nuclear deal. (Reuters)

NEW YORK — The international nuclear agreement with Iran is a "closed issue" and cannot be extended or changed in any way, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani declared Wednesday, flatly rejecting President Trump's criticism that the deal is weak and "an embarrassment."

"This is a building the frame of which, if you take out a single brick, the entire building will collapse," Rouhani said.

"This issue must be understood by the American officials," he added. "Either the JCPOA will remain as it is in its entirety or it will cease to exist."

The 2015 deal known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was a signature achievement for President Barack Obama. The agreement, negotiated over more than two years of difficult diplomacy, also involves European allies, as well as Russia and China, and is backed by the United Nations. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson held his first meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif later Wednesday, alongside the other parties to the accord.

France, Germany and Britain have not signed on to the criticism lodged

Trump expressed concern that there would be insufficient restrictions in place when many of the provision of the deal expire in 25 years.

"The president really wants to redo that deal," Tillerson said. "He said, 'renegotiate it.' We do need the support, I think, of our allies and others — the European allies and

by the new U.S. administration, and French President Emmanuel Macron used his meeting here with Trump on Monday to urge the U.S. leader to stick with it. The agreement meant an infusion of cash and investment in Iran, much of it from European businesses liberated from international economic sanctions on Iran.

It has been an open question whether the agreement could survive without the United States, whose participation was the key to Iranian willingness to strike a bargain, limiting what it asserts is a peaceful nuclear program.

Rouhani's remarks are a declaration that the deal cannot be renegotiated to address U.S. concerns and cannot be reconstituted without the United States.

Rouhani also suggested that if the United States abrogates the terms of the deal, Iran could resume larger-scale uranium-enrichment activities — a move likely to rekindle international fears that Tehran would be able to accelerate the development of nuclear weapons.

"If anyone exits the agreement and breaks their commitment, it means our hand is completely open to take any action that we see as beneficial to our country," Rouhani said at a news conference after his address to the U.N. General Assembly.

"The JCPOA has no other conditions," Rouhani said. "It is the JCPOA in its current form."

Tillerson later told reporters he was not discouraged by Rouhani's refusal to consider any kind of modification of the deal.

"As a longtime negotiator, I learned to never say never," he said. "And second, it always gets the darkest before you might have a breakthrough. As I've said to people many times, as the nation's chief diplomat, I better be the most optimistic person standing in the room."

Tillerson said the meeting between diplomats whose countries signed the nuclear deal was civil and

others to make the case as well to Iran that this deal really has to be revisited."

Iran's leader dismissed this option, saying "in my opinion, it is not realistic," because it took years of complex and grueling negotiations with key international powers and has been formally endorsed by the U.N. Security Council.

matter of fact, even though he and Zarif clearly differed in their assessment of the agreement.

"There was no yelling," he said. "We did not throw shoes at each other."

Trump said Wednesday that he has decided what to do about the Iran deal, which he has strongly and repeatedly criticized, but he did not say what that decision was.

Speaking in New York after a meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Trump responded to a reporter's question about whether a decision has been made about the future of the accord.

"I have decided," Trump said, three times.

Pressed by reporters to reveal his decision, Trump smiled and said, "I'll let you know what the decision is."

Under U.S. law, Trump must decide by Oct. 15 whether to recertify Iran's compliance with the agreement. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which has inspectors in Iran to monitor its nuclear facilities, has said eight times that it is complying. If Trump does not recertify it, Congress will have 60 days to decide whether to reimpose U.S. sanctions that were lifted when the deal took effect. That would in effect be a withdrawal.

Trump, in his speech to the General Assembly on Tuesday, called the agreement with Iran an embarrassment and "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into."

In that fiery speech, he also said that Iran is a "murderous regime" that he put in the same category with rogue nations such as North Korea.

That led Rouhani to demand an apology Wednesday.

"Mr. Trump was offensive to Iran, and we are waiting for Mr. Trump to apologize to the people of Iran," Rouhani said through an interpreter.

"If anything," Rouhani said, "we are waiting for Mr. Trump to issue an apology to the people of Iran."

Photo credit: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

Rouhani, during a 23-minute address at the U.N. General Assembly on Wednesday, never mentioned Trump by name. Instead he referred to him obliquely, saying it would be a pity if the nuclear deal were undone by "rogue newcomers to the world of politics" and condemning "ignorant, absurd and hateful" remarks.

Rouhani denied that Iran had ever sought to obtain nuclear weapons and said the ballistic missiles it has been testing would be used only for defensive purposes.

Trump and other U.S. officials have criticized the nuclear deal for failing to address Iranian ballistic-missile programs and Iran's alleged support for terrorism. The criticism echoes long-standing conservative doubts about the value of the deal if it addressed only the potential threat of nuclear weapons. The Trump administration and Israel have also complained that even the nuclear protections are weak, since some of them expire in 10 to 15 years.

In his speech, Rouhani took umbrage at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's criticism of Iran the day before, when he called Iran the greatest threat to world peace.

"It is reprehensible that the rogue Zionist regime that threatens regional and global security with its nuclear arsenal and is not committed to any international instrument or safeguard has the audacity to preach [to] peaceful nations," he said.

Rouhani said that the time frame and deadlines contained in the deal were all carefully worked out and will not be revisited.

He also said the end of the nuclear deal would be more detrimental to the United States than to Iran.

"By violating its international commitments, the new U.S. administration only destroys its own credibility and undermines international confidence in negotiating with it, or accepting its word or promise," he said.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

This is the third General Assembly since the deal was made, and Rouhani's appearances have reflected the arc of Iranian sentiment about it.

In 2015, as Iran was dismantling and downsizing parts of its nuclear program in the first part of the deal, Rouhani was optimistic it would lead to growth as Iran was reintegrated into the world economy. Last year, the Iranian president was dour, complaining that the United States had not done enough to convince international business and banks

that it was safe to invest in Iran. This year, he was defiant.

And Tillerson was philosophical as he bemoaned the fact that the U.S.-Iranian relationship has been rocky for four decades now, since the 1979 revolution and the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

"It's a relationship that's never had a stable, happy moment in it," he said. "And I think if we ever get the chance to talk, perhaps that's where we ought to start talking. Is this going to be the way it is for the rest of our lives and our children's lives and our grandchildren's lives? We've never had that conversation."

**The  
New York  
Times**

Sullivan

5-7 minutes

## Burns and Sullivan : The Smart Way to Get Tough With Iran

William J. Burns  
and Jake

compliance by our intelligence community and the International Atomic Energy Agency, American policy is at a fork in the road.

The smart way to proceed would be to keep the world's powers united and the burden of proof on Iran. That means working with partners on relentless enforcement; enhancing sanctions that punish Iran's non-nuclear misbehavior, including its missile program and sponsorship of terrorism; working closely with Arab partners to deter Iran's meddling in their internal affairs; and making plain our concerns with Iran's domestic human rights abuses. It means using the diplomatic channel we opened with Iran, after 35 years without such contact, to avoid inadvertent escalation. And it means making it clear that after some restrictions in the deal expire, the United States and the world will still not allow Iran to advance its nuclear program in threatening ways.

Then there's the foolish way — which the Trump administration seems perpetually tempted to pursue. President Trump has already declared his hostility to the agreement. On Wednesday, he said he had reached a decision about the future of the deal, without saying what it was.

But speaking to the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, Mr. Trump called it an "embarrassment" and "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States

has ever entered into." This kind of posturing is turning Washington, rather than Tehran, into the diplomatic outlier, and sapping our partners' will to keep Iran's feet to the fire.

The costs are already apparent. When the administration telegraphs plans to use its doubts about inspections as an excuse to leave the deal, it's not surprising that the I.A.E.A. and our negotiating partners resist American requests to activate the deal's provisions for access to suspicious military sites.

And when Mr. Trump suggests abandoning this "bad" deal because the only "good" deal is one that magically covers all of Iran's regional activities, it only becomes harder to mobilize international pressure against Iran's Revolutionary Guard and its proxies like Hezbollah.

By failing to operate in good faith, the administration has weakened — not strengthened — our hand.

Now the administration is flirting with a strategy that risks bringing about the ultimate demise of the deal. The concept is not to abrogate the agreement outright, but to put it on a path to failure through too-clever-by-half contrivances. This would involve refusing to certify Iranian compliance with the deal on principle rather than evidence, and asking Congress to reimpose sanctions that the agreement lifted. Meanwhile, our continued adherence would be tied to a

commitment by Iran and our partners to accept new terms.

International partners would see that behavior for what it is — America failing to live up to its end of a bargain. If the deal collapses, we would find ourselves as isolated as we were after the 2003 Iraq war. Iran could resume its nuclear advance without united international opposition. The rift in trans-Atlantic relations would widen — a gift beyond Vladimir Putin's wildest dreams.

And we would lose all of our credibility in seeking a diplomatic resolution to the North Korea nuclear crisis.

If he really wants to back out of the deal, Mr. Trump should say so. But then he owes it to the American people to explain how he would block Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, curb its destabilizing behavior in the region, and prevent all the other calamitous consequences of his unilateralism. And fantasy scenarios where we get everything — and Iran gives up everything — will not suffice.

We already have one nuclear crisis with North Korea. We don't need a second one. The administration should back off from its dangerous folly, commit to the deal, enforce it to the hilt, and work with our partners on a long-term strategy to deal with Iran's challenge.

A Senate Armed Services committee hearing about the Iran nuclear accord in 2015. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

WASHINGTON — As the two negotiators who initiated the secret talks that led to the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, we are intimately familiar with the deal's strengths, its inevitable imperfections and the wider challenge posed by Iran.

In an ideal world, we would have erased Iran's knowledge of the nuclear fuel cycle, eliminated its missile arsenal, stopped its dangerous use of proxies across the region, and transformed it into a less disruptive regional power.

But we don't live in an ideal world. Diplomacy requires difficult compromises. And the nuclear deal achieved the best of the available alternatives. It cuts off Iran's pathways to a bomb, sharply constrains its nuclear program for a long time, and provides for unprecedentedly strict monitoring and verification. Diplomacy avoided another war in the Middle East and averted the kind of crisis we now face with North Korea.

But today, after two years of repeated affirmations of Iran's

**The  
New York  
Times**

3-4 minutes

## Editorial : Moscow's Monument to Murder

The Editorial  
Board

Medinsky, a nationalist who spends much of his time glorifying Russian military history and who described the familiar assault weapon General Kalashnikov invented, which is widely known by his name, as "a true cultural brand of Russia."

It is certainly a universally known brand, whether as a Kalashnikov or as an AK-47. But that is not something General Kalashnikov was necessarily proud of. A self-taught mechanic born to Siberian peasants, he conceived of the weapon while a soldier in World War II as a simple, compact and

reliable automatic rifle desperately needed by outgunned Soviet soldiers. What became of his invention deeply troubled him in his later years.

Since its introduction in 1947, the AK-47 evolved, as The Times's C. J. Chivers recounts in his book of its history, "The Gun," into the weapon of choice for guerrilla warfare, crime, terrorism and jihad. About 100 million AK-47s have been built worldwide, many of them knockoffs produced in countries around the world. It has been used to kill untold millions of people; so powerful is its

symbolism that it figures on the flags of Mozambique and the Islamist movement Hezbollah, as well as the coats of arms of Zimbabwe and East Timor.

At the unveiling ceremony in Moscow, the official focus was in line with President Vladimir Putin's efforts to appropriate symbols of Russian patriotism and religion. A priest who blessed the statue with holy water declared that General Kalashnikov had "created this weapon to defend his motherland." That he did, and of that he was

Leonardo Santamaria

Like many a statue in the United States that we have struggled over of late, the towering monument to Mikhail Kalashnikov, unveiled in a highly visible spot in Moscow on Tuesday, seems to have been put up for mostly the wrong reasons. The statue was promoted by the Russian culture minister, Vladimir

proud, but the AK-47's use by terrorists came to haunt him.

Shortly before his death in 2013 at the age of 94, he laid out his doubts in a letter to the Russian Orthodox patriarch, Kirill. "My spiritual pain is unbearable," he wrote; if his

automatic weapon deprived people of life, he asked, was he not "guilty of people's deaths, even enemies?" The patriarch responded that weapons used for the defense of the country were approved by the church.

Hopefully, that soothed the old man's troubled soul, and there is no evidence that his motive for conceiving of the AK-47 was anything other than to provide a better basic weapon to soldiers with whom he had endured the brutality of World War II. Hopefully, too, the

statue of General Kalashnikov will lead some viewers past Mr. Putin's nationalistic intentions and to the painful questions that the inventor of the world's most abundant weapon wrestled with. That should be his legacy.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## How Can U.S. States Fight Climate Change if Trump Quits the Paris Accord?

Brad Plumer

9-11 minutes

Wind turbines near Block Island, R.I. Historically, the federal government has led the way in researching and developing technologies like wind and solar power. Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

WASHINGTON — In the months since President Trump declared that the United States would withdraw from the Paris climate deal, 14 state governors have vowed to continue upholding the agreement and press ahead with policies to fight global warming.

But a key question has always lingered: How much can these states really do on climate by themselves, without help from the federal government?

Now some numbers are emerging. On Wednesday, three governors in the United States Climate Alliance — Jerry Brown of California, Andrew M. Cuomo of New York, and Jay Inslee of Washington — unveiled a new study by the research firm Rhodium Group that said the 14 alliance states were on pace to meet their share of the Obama administration's pledge under the Paris accord, thanks in part to local mandates on renewable energy and electric vehicles.

"Together, we are a political and economic force, and we will drive the change that needs to happen nationwide," Mr. Brown said at a news conference in New York, held as world leaders were gathering for the United Nations General Assembly.

President Barack Obama had pledged that United States greenhouse gas emissions would fall 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. While President Trump has disavowed this goal, the new analysis found that collective emissions in the 14 alliance states are on pace to drop 24 to 29 percent, based on policies already on the books.

The alliance includes California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and Washington; plus Puerto Rico. All but two states are led by Democratic governors.

Yet there's a caveat to this announcement: Because the states in the alliance only represent 36 percent of the nation's population, the United States as a whole is still expected to fall short of Mr. Obama's pledge. A previous Rhodium Group analysis estimated that total United States emissions would likely drop just 15 to 19 percent by 2025 as Mr. Trump dismantled federal climate policies.

For the country to meet its commitments under the Paris agreement, further action by states would be needed. The alliance could try to persuade other governors to ratchet up their ambitions, though those prospects are uncertain, since barriers to climate policy in Republican-leaning states are often as much political as technical. Or the alliance states could pursue even deeper cuts themselves. But here, experts say, they may face practical limits on how far they can go to tackle global warming on their own.

### What States Can, and Can't, Do

In theory, state governments have plenty of ways to cut emissions without federal help. They can require electric utilities to use more renewable power, modify building codes and impose tougher efficiency standards on appliances. They can shape transportation infrastructure. California is allowed to require automakers to sell more electric vehicles, and any state can join its program, as several in the Northeast have done.

Within the climate alliance, most of the efforts to date have focused on cleaning up electric grids. Collectively, emissions from electricity in the alliance states are expected to drop by half between 2005 and 2025, the Rhodium Group analysis found.

But many experts consider these changes in the power sector the

low-hanging fruit of climate policy, aided by a boom in natural gas production that has forced many coal plants into early retirement. The real test, analysts say, will come as states try to juggle ever-greater shares of intermittent renewable power and tackle other, harder-to-decarbonize sectors like transportation and industry.

Here, the outlook is murkier. According to the Rhodium Group, emissions from cars and trucks in the alliance states are expected to fall just 18 percent by 2025. By contrast, emissions from sectors like buildings, heavy industry and agriculture are hardly expected to decline at all. These sectors are expected to make up more than 60 percent of alliance states' emissions by 2025.

Gov. Jerry Brown of California in New York on Wednesday. John Moore/Getty Images

That hints at one limit states may face in pursuing further climate action. New technologies — like better batteries to help integrate wind and solar, or carbon capture for cement plants — could make the task of deeper decarbonization easier. But historically, the federal government has led the way in researching and developing these technologies. And with the Trump administration proposing deep cuts in federal energy research, it is unlikely that process will speed up anytime soon.

"I see state action as important, but ultimately, if we're serious about deep decarbonization, the federal government needs to get back involved," said David M. Hart, who studies energy policy at the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation.

There are other risks to a states-only approach. According to Christopher Clack, chief executive of the grid-modeling firm Vibrant Clean Energy, the best way to fully decarbonize the United States electricity system with renewable energy would be through a national grid that allows optimally placed wind and solar resources from far-flung regions to balance each other out in the face of weather fluctuations. But such a system

would most likely require federal planning.

"Right now, solar and wind are still a relatively small slice of electricity, so this isn't a big problem yet," Mr. Clack said. But as these sources grow, he said, individual state efforts to build out their own renewable bases without broader coordination could lead to a system that is less well-suited to handling large quantities of wind and solar.

### 'A Virtue of Necessity'

For their part, the alliance states are trying to overcome these hurdles. New York, for instance, is trying to nurture energy innovation on a small scale through a state "green bank" that helps companies bring riskier new technologies to market. While this is no substitute for basic energy research at the national labs, state officials say it can help advance incremental innovation around technologies that are closer to market.

"We're trying to make a virtue of necessity," said Richard Kauffman, Governor Cuomo's chairman of energy and finance. "In an ideal world, it would be fantastic if we had the federal government providing leadership and investing in R&D and energy infrastructure. But that's not only not the world we're in — with this administration, it's not even close to the world that we're in."

States also face the risk that the Trump administration could try to thwart their efforts. Officials in California, for instance, are preparing to challenge any effort by the federal government to pre-empt their electric vehicle mandate on automakers.

And it remains to be seen if the climate alliance can keep adding members. "There was already heavy political pressure in these states to move forward on clean energy," said David G. Victor, a climate policy expert at the University of California, San Diego. "But just because these states demonstrate that it can be done doesn't mean the politics suddenly shift in places like Kentucky or Kansas."

The ultimate significance of these state efforts, Dr. Victor said, may be to help prevent international climate efforts from collapsing, by reassuring other countries that the

United States has not totally abandoned the issue.

"Now that the rest of the world is over the initial reaction to Trump, they're trying to figure out what's

still real and what's not in U.S. policy," he said. "And these states can offer a starting point for other countries to gauge U.S. climate action, even when what's

happening in Washington is chaotic."

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

# Palestinian Leader Welcomes Deal to Have Hamas Cede Control of Gaza Strip

Paul Sonne at the United Nations and Rory Jones in Tel Aviv

6-7 minutes

Sept. 20, 2017 6:33 p.m. ET

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Wednesday heralded an agreement brokered by Egypt that will see militant group Hamas cede control of the Gaza Strip to his government, a significant development for the Palestinian national movement but one that faces obstacles to implementation.

Hamas took control of the impoverished Gaza Strip after parliamentary elections in 2006 and an armed conflict in 2007, leading to a stalemate within the Palestinian movement. There have been no presidential or parliamentary elections since then, with the militant group presiding over Gaza and the Palestinian Authority, led by Mr. Abbas's Fatah party, ruling in the West Bank.

The two sides in recent days announced an agreement aimed at reconciliation, the culmination of efforts by Mr. Abbas to pressure Hamas into ceding control of the territory, in part by curtailing budgetary funds. The two sides in recent weeks held negotiations in Cairo on the terms of a deal.

Mr. Abbas, addressing the United Nations General Assembly in New York as the head of a nonmember observer state, said the Hamas-controlled government in the Gaza Strip had been "canceled" and described the idea of a state there as a "false dream." He cheered the commitment to national Palestinian unity.

"This agreement has been reached, and we are satisfied with this agreement," Mr. Abbas said. "Next week our government is going to the Gaza Strip to assume its responsibilities. We wish the government all success."

Mr. Abbas said the agreement would enable the Palestinian Authority to exercise its control in the Gaza Strip and allow for general elections to be held.

A major obstacle to reconciliation between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority will be whether the militant group allows Mr. Abbas's police into Gaza to manage security.

Jason Greenblatt, President Donald Trump's special representative for international negotiations, praised the transfer of authority in the Gaza Strip in a speech earlier in the week in New York. He said Hamas, which is considered a terrorist organization by both the U.S. and Israel, had exploited the people of Gaza as hostages and shields for too long.

"It's time for the Palestinian Authority to take control of Gaza—and for the international community to take steps to help this happen," Mr. Greenblatt said earlier this week. "Relief from the suffering in Gaza can only be found when all interested parties gather together to help the Palestinian people and isolate Hamas."

Mr. Abbas spent the bulk of his address at the United Nations on Wednesday assailing Israel, in contrast to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who devoted very little of his speech the previous day to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and instead focused on threats from by Iran.

In his address, Mr. Abbas asked the nations gathered to uphold a vision for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which he said was under threat.

Mr. Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, is leading an effort aimed at reviving peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians alongside Mr. Greenblatt.

Mr. Trump met with Mr. Abbas on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York this week and said there was a "good chance" of achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace.

"While a great deal more work remains to be done, discussions remain serious and constructive," Mr. Greenblatt said of the effort during his speech.

Still, the White House hasn't committed publicly to the establishment of a Palestinian state, saying such a move would bias negotiations—a position that has frustrated Palestinian officials, as it reverses a decades long U.S. policy.

Mr. Trump declined to endorse a two-state solution during a press conference with Mr. Netanyahu in February, saying he was happy to agree to whatever solution both sides endorsed.

Mr. Netanyahu previously expressed support for a two-state solution but has since backed away from that position.

During his U.N. address, the leader of the Palestinian Authority called on those gathered to uphold the international community's commitment to the two-state solution.

"We have heard that they are seeking a historical deal. We would like to thank them. We hope that this will take place," Mr. Abbas said. "So we stress the two state solution, enabling the state of Palestine to live side by side with the state of Israel in security and peace."

He also indirectly criticized U.S. ambassador to Israel David Friedman, who in an interview published earlier this month in the Jerusalem Post newspaper referred to Israel's "alleged occupation" of the Palestinian territories.

Much of the international community considers Israel's control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to be an illegal occupation. A United Nations Security Council resolution in December reaffirmed that Israeli settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem was illegal. The U.S. abstained from voting on that resolution.

It is "very strange to hear some of those who hold the responsibility to end this occupation referring to it as an 'alleged occupation,'" Mr. Abbas said at the U.N. "Such perceptions are totally disconnected from reality."

The U.S. administration hasn't described Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza as an occupation and hasn't labeled settlements illegal, though it has described them as an impediment to peace.

**Write to** Paul Sonne at paul.sonne@wsj.com and Rory Jones at rory.jones@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition as 'Abbas Welcomes Gaza Deal, Pushes Two-State Solution.'

## The Washington Post

gtonpostopinions

11-13 minutes

The Post's View

Opinion

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is

## Editorial : The 'new' Saudi Arabia is still a dungeon

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

known as the Editorial Pages). Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. (Saudi Press Agency/Handout via Reuters)

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 20 at 6:55 PM

ONCE AGAIN, news from Saudi Arabia points toward the old thinking and not the modern society promised by the new crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. Despite the lofty rhetoric of the crown prince's "Vision 2030" declaration, he increasingly resembles an earlier generation of leaders with authoritarian methods. Saudi Arabia has been, and seems determined to

remain, a dungeon for those who want to practice free speech.

The latest evidence is a wide-ranging crackdown on influential clerics, activists, journalists and writers who have been jailed with hardly any public explanation. A Sept. 12 statement by the government's new security agency, set up in July by King Salman bin Abdul Aziz, hinted darkly that the arrests were caused by "foreign



parties" that were trying to hurt "the security of the kingdom and its interests, methodology, capabilities and social peace in order to stir up sedition and prejudice national unity. They were neutralized."

This vague language masks the fact that many of those arrested were relatively outspoken online, not secret agents plotting against the kingdom. The exact number of arrests is unknown, but some reports say in the dozens. According to Reuters, the roundups included three clerics who are outside the official religious establishment but have large online followings: Salman al-Awdah, Awad al-Qarni and Ali al-Omary. They have previously criticized the

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

## Dempsey : After Islamic State, Is There Still an Iraq?

Michael  
Dempsey

6-7 minutes

Sept. 20, 2017 7:04 p.m. ET

As the U.S.-led coalition effort to destroy Islamic State's physical caliphate nears its endgame in Iraq, a major question hangs over the country: Is there still an Iraq?

ISIS has suffered a series of crippling blows, including its loss of the strategically important town of Tal Afar in Nineveh province. The U.S.-led coalition will next focus on driving ISIS out of Hawijah, some 200 miles north of Baghdad. Hawijah has an outsize military importance because ISIS has used it as a staging area from which to attack Baghdad with hundreds of improvised explosive devices, including car bombs. When the Hawijah operation is complete, the coalition will focus on attacking ISIS in its remaining enclaves along the border with Syria.

Once ISIS has been deprived of the territory it holds, can Iraq's major communities come together to share power and build a common future? That question is sparking increasingly heated debate in Iraq and the international community. In my opinion (which does not reflect the view of the intelligence community or the U.S. government), the answer will be determined by how the Iraqis respond to five key unresolved issues:

First, the Kurdish independence referendum, originally scheduled for Sept. 25, is threatening to spark a full-blown crisis even before ISIS is

government but have recently stayed quiet or failed to publicly back Saudi policies, including the blockade against Qatar. Human Rights Watch says that Saudi authorities imprisoned Mr. Awdah from 1994 to 1999; since 2011, he "has advocated greater democracy and social tolerance." Mr. Qarni, who has more than 2 million Twitter followers, was banned from tweeting by a court in March that convicted him of jeopardizing public order. He announced the ban on Twitter.

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defeated on the battlefield. At issue is whether a large chunk of Iraq will eventually break away entirely or redefine its relationship with the central government. Complicating the issue is the inclusion in the vote of disputed territories, including the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, which is held by Kurdish forces but claimed by Baghdad.

On Monday Iraq's Supreme Court ordered the referendum suspended until it can assess the vote's legality. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres is also calling for a delay, as are Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the Turkish and Iranian governments. Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani has previously hinted that he might delay the referendum until after national elections next April, but only at the price of concessions and assurances about the Kurds' future status. Whether or not the referendum is held next week, it's likely to be only the opening act in lengthy negotiations between the parties, and resolving the question in a way that doesn't undermine Baghdad's legitimacy and threaten Iraq's neighbors is critically important.

Second, to ensure that ISIS remains marginalized, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi must accelerate long-delayed political reconciliation efforts, specifically by easing de-Baathification efforts and providing more local power and job opportunities to Sunni communities. This is a difficult task given the deep divisions over this issue within the Iraqi parliament, but Sunni isolation fueled ISIS' rise, and progress must be made on this issue soon.

The best conversations on The Washington Post

The latest crackdown may reflect Saudi nervousness over any internal dissatisfaction with the kingdom's blockade of Qatar. Some reports say those arrested may have simply failed to speak up loudly enough in support of official Saudi policies. What better way to make the point than to throw them in jail? Writers and activists are also being hauled into prison.

The leaders of Saudi Arabia and its conservative religious establishment are wandering in some earlier century. How to explain the punishment of a severe lashing to blogger Raif Badawi, who has been jailed since 2012 following his

online appeal for a more liberal and secular society? His sentence was 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes, of which he has been given 50, simply for speaking out. How to explain the recent call by the Saudi authorities on the population to use a phone app to inform on anyone who may be considered subversive? This is how Stalin would have used Twitter.

It is easy to issue fancy blueprints for reform, as the crown prince has done. Building a modern, healthy society is a lot harder. It requires, among other things, actions to guarantee basic rights, including the speech of people you don't agree with.

potential for a catastrophic dam breach.

Fifth, Mr. Abadi has to begin preparing for local and national elections. Despite a surge in his popularity following the Iraqi military's victories against ISIS, he will likely face a significant re-election challenge from, among others, Hadi al-Amiri, a longstanding ally of Iran. Mr. Abadi has been a strong partner for the U.S. in the counter-ISIS campaign, and his re-election offers the best hope for continuing a positive working relationship between Washington and Baghdad, and for balancing Tehran's growing influence in Iraq.

Other challenges will eventually have to be addressed—among them closing the government's budget deficit, modernizing the oil infrastructure, and strengthening the banking sector. But the five challenges I've identified are urgent.

After nearly three years of a grueling fight against ISIS and a huge commitment of U.S. blood and treasure, there is finally reason to be optimistic about Iraq's future. But the country is nearing an inflection point, and only with mature and inclusive leadership in Baghdad, sustained U.S. engagement, and support from key allies in the West and the Gulf Cooperation Council will it be possible for Iraq to achieve a future with less violence and suffering and more reconciliation.

*Mr. Dempsey is national intelligence fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, a fellowship sponsored by the U.S. government.*

## At Mexican School Hit by Quake, Heartbreak and Dwindling Hope (UNE)

Paulina Villegas

8-10 minutes

### 'These Were Our Children': School Collapses in Mexico Earthquake

At least 30 children were killed when the Enrique Rebsamen school collapsed in Tuesday's earthquake.

By CHRIS CIRILLO on September 20, 2017. Photo by Carlos Jasso/Reuters. Watch in Times Video »

MEXICO CITY — Gustavo López recognized the boy's clothes first.

His tiny frame, pulled from the wreckage, lay over the jagged pieces of what remained of the school. It was his 7-year-old son.

He sat in shock for hours, quietly trying to maintain strength for his 9-year-old daughter, who had escaped the school unharmed. He wondered how to tell her that her younger brother, also named Gustavo, was dead — one of at least 30 children who perished at the Enrique Rebsamen school after it collapsed in the earthquake that devastated Mexico on Tuesday, killing more than 200 people.

Mr. López waited there for his cousin, Mauricio, who loved the boy and often took him on bike rides and to the movies. By the time Mauricio arrived a few hours later, hundreds of medical personnel, rescuers, volunteers and families were racing around, trying to unearth students still buried in the rubble.

"He was my son, too," Mauricio screamed when he heard the news, collapsing onto the upturned earth as Mr. López tried to console him. "I can't bear this; I can't!"

Such screams of anguish rose above the clamor at the school overnight, markers of loss in the chaotic crowd. Parents climbed trees and playground equipment to get a better vantage of the rescue effort, clinging to the hope that their children would emerge unscathed.

Many did, having rushed out before tumbling walls could trap them. Passers-by had also raced to the school immediately after the quake to pluck students from the cavities and openings of the buckled structure.

But as the day and night wore on, mostly lifeless bodies were pulled from the wreckage, their names recorded by an army of volunteers keeping lists of the dead. By Wednesday night, five people were known to be still missing, including one student who officials said was alive but trapped as rescuers tried frantically to reach her. Hope was dwindling that any more children would be found alive.

"To see a parent carry their own dead baby is something I will never forget," said Elena Villaseñor, a volunteer whose own home was badly damaged. She held a sheaf of papers with the names of children on them, written large enough for parents to see them from a distance.

Her own daughter was safe, she said, having been at a different school that did not collapse. But she could not sit idle while others suffered, and so she raced to this school to help however she could.

A wing of the three-story building collapsed into a massive pancake of concrete slabs. Miguel Tovar/Associated Press

The death toll across the country — in Morelos, Mexico State, Puebla and Mexico City — climbed to 217 people less than 24 hours after the earthquake struck. The number is expected to rise even higher, as the rescue efforts slowly transition into recovery efforts, and more of the missing are marked as dead.

Watching that number climb, hour by hour across the city and the broader earthquake zone, is a nation already in mourning. Two weeks earlier, the largest earthquake in a century hit Mexico, killing at least 90 people in the south of the country and offering a grim foreshadowing of the hardship still to come from this one.

Perhaps nowhere was the suffering more concentrated than at the collapsed school. The smell of gas, sweat and earth filled the air overnight as people yelled their messages into megaphones. At first, the lights from police cars and emergency vehicles lit the rescue. Later, a generator was brought to the scene to power floodlights.

Of the 400 students who attend the school, it was unclear exactly how many were there when the earthquake struck on Tuesday afternoon and made it out of the

building. The injured, more than 60 of them, were sent to area hospitals, while traumatized parents whisked others to safety.

At least three parents at the site of Enrique Rebsamen, a Mexico City private school, had been communicating with their children trapped inside. They managed to reach them through the messaging service WhatsApp, begging their children to give them details, like how far from the main door they were when the building collapsed, to help the search efforts.

One of the many volunteers, seated at a makeshift desk on Tuesday night, helped keep a list of the injured and the dead; it included at least five adults. Residents donned red vests and formed human chains to remove the chunks of concrete from the school's broken edifice. Giant piles of water, medicine, blankets and even baby formula hugged the periphery, brought by neighbors who carted it in by the armful.

The solidarity in the aftermath of the quake has been repeated at collapsed buildings across Mexico, a quiet but resolute determination to help. Strangers spending hours clearing debris, medics and construction workers plunging into the bowels of broken buildings, students and even children bringing water and food.

At the school, the blitz of activity continued all night and into morning. Someone yelled for medicine: "We need clonazepam, insulin, anesthetics, antihistamines and oxygen tanks." Workers wore helmets and face masks. Bulldozers and excavation machines went in and out of the disaster site.

Everyone found something to do, passing water, coffee or medicine to those who needed it. Volunteers called for baby bottles to feed the children still trapped in the wreckage.

Every so often, amid the piercing noise of raised voices, grumbling machinery and the whine of ambulances, a volunteer's arm would rise and others would follow. An odd silence would settle over the gathered.

Rescue workers late Tuesday night. In the confusion of the rescue operation, the crosscurrents of hundreds of well-meaning personnel sometimes led to

miscommunication about which children had survived. Carlos Jasso/Reuters

A name would be called.

"Sara Ledesma! Where are her parents?" a paramedic screamed. No one appeared, and the masses voiced her name in somber chorus.

Her parents were nowhere to be found.

In the frantic confusion of the rescue operation, the crosscurrents of hundreds of well-meaning personnel sometimes led to frightening miscommunication.

After toiling for hours sifting through the rubble, Florentino Rodríguez García was given a sudden ray of hope: His 9-year-old grandson, José Eduardo Huerta Rodríguez, was supposedly fine.

A medic told him that the boy had been taken to a hospital for injuries. But after hours of hunting, Mr. Rodríguez could find no trace of the boy.

He headed back to the school and was approached by a nurse this time. She took him by the hand. She told him the medic had been mistaken. José, she said, was still trapped inside.

"Please don't tell me that," Mr. Rodríguez screamed, collapsing into hysterics. "They told me he was out! This can't be true!"

"We just celebrated his birthday this past Sunday," he told the woman, who listened quietly. "He is such a smart little boy!"

He melted back into the crowd of anguished parents congregated outside of the school — and waited.

And then, an hour later, an arm was raised, followed by others. Silence.

"José Eduardo Huerta Rodríguez," the crowd began to chant.

The boy had been pulled out. He was still alive, a rescue worker said.

But several hours later, a family member emailed to say that in the chaos, the rescuer had been mistaken. José Eduardo, the relative said, had died before his body was recovered.

Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura

7-9 minutes

Demonstrators outside the Supreme Court in Nairobi, Kenya, on Wednesday as the justices explained why they had annulled the result of the presidential election. Simon Maina/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

KIGALI, Rwanda — Kenya's Supreme Court said on Wednesday that it had nullified last month's presidential election because the voting may have been hacked, and accused the electoral commission of failing to verify results before announcing them.

It stopped short, however, of calling the vote rigged, and rejected the opposition's assertion that President Uhuru Kenyatta had used state resources and undue influence to sway the outcome.

The commission had declared Mr. Kenyatta the winner of the Aug. 8 vote, with 54 percent of the ballots, to 44 percent for the opposition leader, Raila Odinga — a margin of about 1.4 million votes. Mr. Odinga challenged the result, and said that the last two elections had also been stolen from him.

The court's rationale was narrowly tailored: It said the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission had announced the results prematurely, before it had received all the required forms tallying the results from polling stations.

The electoral body "cannot therefore be said to have verified the results," said Philomena Mwilu, the deputy chief justice. She singled out the electoral commission chairman, Wafula Chebukati, for failing to explain why the results were not transmitted according to electoral rules.

"Elections are not only about numbers," Justice Mwilu said. "Elections should be like a math test where you only get points for the answer if you show your workings."

She also criticized the electoral commission for refusing to comply with court orders to open its computer servers, saying its refusal gave credence to opposition claims that the vote had been manipulated.

"This contemptuous disobedience with the court order leaves us with no option but to accept the petitioner's claims that the I.T. system was infiltrated and the data therein interfered with," she said. "Or officials themselves interfered with the data or simply refused to accept that it had bungled the transmission system and were unable to verify the data."

Uhuru Kenyatta, whose re-election as president on Aug. 8 was nullified. Ben Curtis/Associated Press

The election controversy hinged on two paper forms used to legally validate the ballots — one from 40,883 polling stations and the other from 290 constituencies.

Representatives from rival parties were required to approve the forms before they were scanned and electronically transmitted to a national tallying center in Nairobi, where they were to be put online immediately so that they could be crosschecked.

But the electronic system, which had been overseen by an election official, who was killed on the eve of the vote, broke down. Therefore, only the results, and not the forms, were sent to the tallying center, often by text message.

The official results were based on the electronic tally, which was vulnerable to error, before the paper results were fully collated, the judges found.

In its findings earlier this month, the court also ruled that hundreds of polling stations had failed to send any presidential results; that some forms lacked security features like water marks, signatures or serial numbers; and that some unauthorized users had tried to access the voting system.

International election observers — including John Kerry, the former

United States secretary of state — were quick to praise the electoral body immediately after the vote, saying there was no evidence of vote tampering at polling stations and that the paper forms would show clearly who had won. The observers had assumed that the forms would be easily verifiable and would be matched with figures textured to the tallying center by party officials.

Kenya has been mired in political uncertainty since the election, and there are renewed fears of violence, even though the vote took place peacefully and there were far fewer deaths in its aftermath compared with previous polls.

The opposition leader Mr. Odinga has said he will refuse to participate in a new election unless electoral commission members are prosecuted and "legal and constitutional guarantees" are put in place to ensure a free and transparent vote.

This week, American and European observers cautioned political leaders and Kenyans against inciting violence as the country heads for a new election.

The opposition leader Raila Odinga had challenged the election result. Baz Ratner/Reuters

"Now is the time to focus on preparing for the new poll, which, in line with the court's order and the Constitution, must be run by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission and be held by the end of October," the observers said.

Whether the new vote can be carried out by Oct. 17, as the court requested, is unclear. The French digital security company that supplied the voting technology says it has been treated unfairly and that the machinery probably will not be ready by that date.

The Sept. 1 ruling to nullify the election results came as a surprise, and has been seen as a milestone for the rule of law and for judicial independence on a continent where democratic norms are still in flux. A

disputed presidential election a decade ago led to deadly violence, but this year's voting was mostly peaceful.

Even so, the Kenyan judiciary said that judges and staff members had faced attacks and threats since the ruling and that the police had failed to adequately protect them.

"These attacks are denigrating, demeaning and degrading and are meant to intimidate, threaten and cow the institution and individual judges," Chief Justice David K. Maraga said in a statement.

On Wednesday, security forces tear-gassed protesters who had gathered to demonstrate in front of the Supreme Court, and nearby roads had been blocked ahead of the much anticipated but contentious hearing.

Mai Hassan, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Michigan, called the developments "truly exciting."

"The Supreme Court criticized the electoral commission's handling of the election, and the lack of faith that it instilled in the citizenry, as opposed to flat-out arguing that the overall outcome — whether Uhuru 'won' — was in doubt," she said. "In that way, this is a great step for Kenya. The judiciary is showing its might against the once all-powerful executive."

She added that she expected Mr. Kenyatta, one of the richest men in Africa, to win a revote, but cautioned that she worried about the possibility of election-related violence.

"Now that there is another vote, I'm worried that Raila will rile up his supporters and Uhuru will respond with force," she said. "Raila used a lot of war rhetoric in the run-up to the August vote, and Uhuru retaliated by being very clear that his government would not tolerate unrest."

## ETATS-UNIS



### Editorial : The White House's preposterous policy analysis on refugees

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

Opinion

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages). President Trump addresses the United Nations General Assembly. (Richard Drew/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 20 at 6:55 PM

A QUIRKY THING about government programs is that, in addition to costs, there are benefits, the latter of which may also include revenue. Yet in the case of U.S. refugee programs, xenophobes seeking an upper hand in the Trump

11-14 minutes

The Post's View

administration have covered up half the ledger.

A report ordered up by President Trump in March, and produced by officials in July, concluded that refugees had delivered \$63 billion more in federal, state and local tax revenue than they had cost in federal benefits through the decade ending in 2014. According to the New York Times, however, the administration sent the report back for a redo, insisting that any mention of revenue be dropped. The Department of Health and Human Services obliged in a final, three-page report this month, which concluded that per-person departmental program costs for refugees were \$3,300, compared with a per-person cost of \$2,500 for the U.S. population as a whole.

That's not exactly a shocker. Refugees, by definition legal immigrants, tend

to be poor or penniless. As the report from Health and Human Services says, they naturally draw more heavily on the department's programs, particularly in their first four years of residency. The fact that they pay more in taxes than they draw in benefits cuts against the administration's spin and, according to the Times, was suppressed by Stephen Miller, Mr. Trump's nativist senior policy adviser.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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

Mr. Miller is leading the charge to slash the number of refugees admitted in the fiscal year starting in October, below even the cap of 50,000 that Mr. Trump imposed this year — itself the lowest number in more than 30 years. (Before leaving office, President Barack Obama had

set this year's target at 110,000.) In addition to his general dislike of immigration, Mr. Miller sees refugees in particular as a terrorist threat and a fiscal burden. The fact that there's extremely little historical evidence of the former, and that the latter is demonstrably false, doesn't interest him — or Mr. Trump, who on Tuesday told the U.N. General Assembly that it would be much cheaper for Washington to send money for refugees rather than resettle them in the United States.

Refugee policy is not like a choice between leasing a car and buying one, and Mr. Trump's policy analysis is preposterous. This country was settled by refugees; it has been a beacon for refugees for its entire history. Even now, despite the Trump administration's inhospitable demeanor, it remains the aspirational destination for millions of people worldwide,

especially in the most violent, repressive and hopeless places. The list of refugees who have ennobled and inspired the United States is too long to recount here, but consider just a few names: Madeleine Albright. Albert Einstein. Gloria Estefan. Henry Kissinger. Vladimir Nabokov. Billy Wilder.

At a moment when the world is awash in refugees — the United Nations has asked countries to resettle 1.2 million of them — it would be not just callous for Washington to turn its back on them. It would be an act of national redefinition and an abdication of leadership. Rather than making America great again, it would do the very opposite by making the country small, peevish, inward-looking and heedless of its role on the global stage.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### States Need \$645 Billion to Pay Full Health-Care Costs (UNE)

Heather Gillers  
6-8 minutes

public workers could lower municipal-bond prices and force new decisions to reduce or scrap retiree health benefits as a way of coping with ballooning future costs, some analysts and researchers said. "I think the market has understated the concern," said Richard Ciccarone, president and chief executive of Merritt Research Services LLC, a research firm that tracks municipal bonds.

Rising retiree health-care costs are compounding government pressures when many state and local officials are struggling to manage their ballooning pension liabilities and balance their budgets. Waves of baby boomers are already wrapping up their working lives, and expenses are expected to rise in coming years.

"By not dealing with it, we could be setting ourselves up for a very unwelcome surprise," said New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

The change will lower bottom lines by tens of billions for some state governments. In New York, the state's health-care liabilities as reported on its balance sheet will jump to \$72 billion once the new accounting rules are in place, up from \$17 billion. That new total would be 10 times the state's pension liabilities, Mr. DiNapoli's office said.

Mr. DiNapoli said New York has been upfront with bond-rating firms about its retiree health liabilities, but he hopes the new numbers will provide a wake-up call for policy makers. For the last decade, he has helped draft legislation annually that would establish a fund to set money

aside for retiree health costs, but he said those bills have stalled.

"If you can put money towards a school or a senior center today, that has a lot more appeal," Mr. DiNapoli said.

Most states have almost no money saved up for future retiree health-care costs and treat the benefits as an operating expense. States had just \$48 billion in assets set aside as of 2015, compared with \$693 billion in liabilities, according to Pew.

One state that has been setting aside more is Michigan, where retiree health-care liabilities have dropped by roughly \$20 billion since 2012 partly because of added state payments. The state also stopped offering retiree health care to new employees, instead contributing an additional 2% of salary to their defined-contribution plans to limit the state's exposure to rising health costs.

"It's transferring the risk for those inflationary items from the state to the employees," said Kerrie Vanden Bosch, director of Michigan's Office of Retirement Services.

Even so, states' retiree health obligations are still much smaller than future pension promises, which are already reported this way. Even if states were to start setting aside money for future costs, annual state spending on retiree health care would still be just 3.4% of expenditures, compared with 1.4% today, according to a study by the National Association of State Retirement Administrators and the Center for State and Local Government Excellence.

States that want to bring their liabilities down will likely face fewer legal hurdles to benefit cuts than they have with public pensions, which enjoy ironclad legal protections in many states. Courts have often upheld employers' rights to increase health-care costs and reduce coverage unless the benefits are laid out in explicit detail in a collective-bargaining agreement or protected by a state constitution, said University of Minnesota Law School Professor Amy Monahan.

"It's going to be really hard to prevent those changes," Ms. Monahan said.

Among more than 80 state and local governments surveyed last year by Segal Consulting, 57% said they were somewhat or very likely to reduce benefits in response to the new accounting standards. The guidelines aren't mandatory, though they are widely followed and ignoring them can complicate audits.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which represents public-sector workers, opposed the new Governmental Accounting Standards Board guidelines. It said in a comment letter that "implementing new standards during a fragile recovery may lead to hasty and unwarranted decisions about retiree health benefits."

"If you're going to tell people that you're going to give the best years of your life as a firefighter or cop, you have to figure out a way to bridge those people to Medicare," said Steven Kreisberg, director of research and collective bargaining for the union. "These are

Sept. 20, 2017 5:30 a.m. ET

When Aurora, Ill., closed its books last December, about \$150 million disappeared from the city's bottom line.

The Chicago suburb of 200,000 people hadn't become poorer. Instead, for the first time it recorded on its balance sheet the full cost of health care promised to public employees once they retire.

States and cities around the country will soon book similar losses because of new, widely followed accounting guidelines that apply to most governments starting in fiscal 2018—a shift that could potentially lead to cuts to retiree health benefits.

The new Governmental Accounting Standards Board principles urge officials to record all health-care liabilities on their balance sheets instead of pushing a portion of the debt to footnotes.

The adjustments will show that U.S. states as a group have promised hundreds of billions more in retiree health benefits than they have saved up. The shortfall amounts to at least \$645 billion, according to a new report from the nonprofit Pew Charitable Trusts based on 2015 data. That is in addition to the \$1.1 trillion that states need to pay for promised pension benefits, according to Pew.

The new level of transparency around retiree health expenses for

manageable expenses, if you want to manage them."

Write to Heather Gillers at heather.gillers@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition as 'States Face Crunch In Retiree Benefits STATES.'



## Editorial : Graham-Cassidy: Another day, another lousy GOP healthcare bill

The Times Editorial Board  
6-8 minutes

It's "Groundhog Day" for congressional Republicans: Rush out a bill to repeal and replace Obamacare, see it fail, rush out a bill again, see it fail, rush out a third bill, see it fail — following the same basic playbook over and over in the hope that somehow the end result will change.

The latest proposal — by Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Bill Cassidy (R-La.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.) and Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) — suffers from the same fundamental problems as all of its predecessors. Aiming to lower insurance costs for the healthy, it would allow states to herd people with preexisting conditions or potentially expensive risks — say, women who might want maternity coverage — into insurance gulags with egregiously high premiums.

Not content just to roll back the expansion of Medicaid in the Affordable Care Act, it would cap funding in a way that would threaten services for Medicaid's core beneficiaries, including impoverished disabled people and families. Pandering to social conservatives, it would cut off federal funding for Planned Parenthood and deny low-income Americans subsidies for private insurance policies that cover

abortion (a ban that would rule out aid to Californians, given that state law mandates such coverage in every policy).

Although it would overhaul the way millions of Americans pay for health insurance and treatment, the measure has undergone no formal public scrutiny and only limited expert analysis. And if it nevertheless managed to become law, Graham-Cassidy would produce many of the same unwelcome results as its failed forebears: more uninsured Americans, and millions of others facing higher premiums and deductibles for the coverage they have today.

Just like food and housing, healthcare costs more in some states than others — and in some cases, much more.

What makes the Graham-Cassidy bill different are its cost and complexity, as well as the blatant shifting of taxpayer dollars from (mostly) blue states to red ones. Unlike the other proposals, it would keep almost all of the tax hikes in the Affordable Care Act in place, raising about \$1.2 billion by 2026. The money would flow to states in the form of block grants with few strings attached, in the hope of spurring innovative approaches to insuring lower-income people and those not covered by group plans at work. But in another twist, it would change where those healthcare

dollars went, gradually transferring federal aid from the 31 states that had expanded Medicaid to the 19 that had not.

Although the block grants technically would have to be spent on healthcare-related programs, such as subsidies to attract more insurers and bring down premiums, they wouldn't actually require states to spend more than they're already spending. Instead, the grants could free states to spend more of their own dollars on roads, prisons or other programs instead of healthcare.

The big winners would be deeply red states that have spent comparatively little on healthcare for their residents, such as Oklahoma, Mississippi and Kansas. The losers would be states with large healthcare budgets, such as California and Massachusetts.

The bill's sponsors frame this as basic fairness, as money would be provided to almost every state at the same rate per low-income resident. But that's hogwash. Just like food and housing, healthcare costs more in some states than others — and in some cases, much more. The measure also uses a formula for divvying up dollars that would make it difficult, if not impossible, for a state to keep covering impoverished people who don't qualify for traditional Medicaid. So the "freedom" it provides for state innovation doesn't seem to

extend to that particularly vulnerable portion of the population.

Oh, and by the way, the new block grants would evaporate in 2027 — a gimmick to meet a federal requirement that such measures not raise the federal deficit over the long term. But the move would only force another bitter fight over healthcare policy before the grants run out, while making a mockery of long-term planning for doctors and health plans.

It's hard to say with much precision how many people might lose coverage under Graham-Cassidy, considering how many decisions would be left up to the states. The one thing it would be sure to do is make increasingly deep cuts in federal support for Medicaid and insurance subsidies while doing absolutely nothing to slow the rising cost of healthcare.

There are problems in some states's insurance markets that need to be addressed, and a bipartisan effort to do so showed promise before Republicans pulled the plug on it this week. The Graham-Cassidy proposal, on the other hand, may only make the individual insurance market more unstable — and inhospitable to people with preexisting conditions or limited means. There's a lot to be said for states' role as laboratories of innovation in healthcare. But supplying less money to cover more costs is just a formula for failure.



## Editorial : Latest Obamacare repeal would be poison

The Editorial Board, USA  
TODAY  
4 minutes

**Graham-Cassidy is another cynical effort that would deny health insurance to millions: Our view**

Sen. Lindsey Graham, left, and Sen. Bill Cassidy, center. (Photo: Alex Brandon, AP)

Given up as a lost cause this summer, the Republican effort to repeal and replace Obamacare is back, this time in the form of a last-ditch effort led by GOP Sens. Lindsey Graham, Bill Cassidy, Dean Heller and Ron Johnson.

Like previous efforts, this measure would strip tens of millions of people of their health coverage. It would gut Medicaid, the program responsible for funding nearly half of baby deliveries and most of nursing home care. It would allow insurers in some states to deny coverage based on a previous medical condition. And it would allow insurers to skip coverage of essential services, including maternity care.

That's all bad enough, but the Graham-Cassidy measure adds a new level of cynicism. Unlike previous efforts, it would retain — at least for the next 10 years — some of the revenue now helping low-income Americans buy private insurance. This money, however,

would be redirected to states in form of block grants, with states that vote largely Republican faring far better than Democratic ones. In other words, it would punish those who vote against this ill-considered measure while rewarding those who vote for it.

**SEN. JOHNSON:** Let states tailor health care plans

This measure is destructive, not only to the systems that everyday Americans rely on for their health and well-being, but also to the institutions that make America a governable nation. No hearings have been held, and no Congressional Budget Office analysis has been completed.

Many of the plan's supporters don't seem to know, or even care, what's in it. All they care about is fulfilling promises to repeal Obamacare. They make the Affordable Care Act sound like some radical, left-wing experiment. It's not. It is a sensible, if imperfect, law that draws heavily on the HEART Act, a largely Republican plan proposed in the 1990s.

About 20 million Americans have gained coverage as the result of ACA's passage in 2010. About 32 million would lose coverage if the Graham-Cassidy measure became law, assuming that the CBO "scores" it like the previous measure to repeal the ACA, which fell one vote short in July.

Graham-Cassidy is terrifyingly close to passage in the Senate now. And Speaker Paul Ryan said Tuesday that it would pass the House if it got that far.

At the same time, it is something of a Hail Mary pass.



## Sen. Ron Johnson: Let states tailor health care plans

Ron Johnson  
Published 7:10 p.m. ET Sept. 20, 2017 | Updated 7:24 p.m. ET Sept. 20, 2017

3 minutes

**Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson will repeal harmful, costly provisions: Opposing view**

Sen. Ron Johnson (Photo: Alex Wong, Getty Images)

Under Obamacare, insurance premiums in the individual market have more than doubled nationally, and without billions of additional taxpayer dollars, many of those markets are at risk of collapse.

Obamacare was never designed to be patient-friendly. In fact, one of the key tenets of Obamacare is

Several Republican senators had joined a bipartisan effort, which appears to have fallen apart for now, to shore up the shaky marketplaces in the ACA and don't relish going back to the divisive world of repeal.

taking power away from patients and local officials. Obamacare gives this decision-making power to the federal government, allowing bureaucrats to call the shots.

The Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson bill would change that by block-granting Obamacare spending to states, empowering those closest to their communities to provide effective solutions.

**OUR VIEW:** Last-ditch Obamacare repeal would be poison

It would also ensure that federal health spending will be distributed more equitably. Under Obamacare, three states with 20% of our population — California, New York and Massachusetts — get 36% of the funding. Our bill fixes that.

Graham and Cassidy have just until the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30 to get their repeal measure through using a special procedural tool that allows them to pass the bill with just a simple majority. They will have to flip one of the three GOP

Our bill also repeals harmful, costly provisions like the individual mandate, the employer mandate and the tax on medical devices, while maintaining protections for patients with high-cost and pre-existing conditions. And contrary to those who claim it would cut Medicaid, spending would rise annually in a sustainable way.

History has shown that states are laboratories of democracy. Our proposal is based on the principles of welfare reform, where states improved the lives of their citizens while saving taxpayers money.

If citizens in your state believe Obamacare is working, you can keep Obamacare by passing it into law at the state level. The federal government will provide equitable financial support to that state's plan.

senators who voted no the last time, while not losing anyone else.

Americans can only hope that at least three of the 52 Republican senators will show some courage, and let this Hail Mary pass fall harmlessly to the ground.

But if you live in a state where Obamacare isn't working — and is unlikely ever to work — your state will receive funding to design a system fitting to your state.

We strongly believe that state and local officials will demonstrate far more compassion for their constituents than will unelected, faceless bureaucrats in Washington. Our goal is to get the federal government out of the health care business by providing states the flexibility and funding to design plans that meet their unique needs.

*Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., is a sponsor of legislation to repeal and replace Obamacare.*



## Rove : The Republicans Who May Save ObamaCare

Karl Rove  
5-7 minutes

would meet the needs of their low-income residents.

Rather than operating under ObamaCare's top-down model, states could choose different ideas in an explosion of federalism. Some might provide low-cost plans for young people or catastrophic-care policies. Others might expand health savings accounts or institute more-sensible regulations. Liberal states could even duplicate the ObamaCare exchanges, if they want to implement a failed model. In any case, states would have to continue to provide some form of coverage for people with pre-existing conditions.

Passage of Graham-Cassidy would spark a nationwide conversation in state capitals about the best ways to increase access to health insurance, especially among the working poor and near-poor who don't have employer-provided coverage. This would be good for innovation and competition.

Still, with only 52 votes in the Senate, Republicans cannot afford more than two defections. They must also act before Sept. 30, the end of fiscal 2017, to take advantage of this year's budget reconciliation process, which would allow Graham-Cassidy to pass with only 51 votes. The danger is that

there are at least four Republican senators at risk of voting "no."

Sen. Rand Paul, the Kentucky libertarian, has already come out against Graham-Cassidy because it doesn't repeal all of ObamaCare. But by opposing a measure that does away with much of ObamaCare's structure, he may guarantee that the Affordable Care Act endures permanently. By contrast, Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin isn't making the perfect the enemy of the good. He believes his state can devise a better program, which is why he supports Graham-Cassidy.

Sen. John McCain, a strong opponent of ObamaCare for seven years, has said he wants to hear from his state's governor and to have Graham-Cassidy considered in regular order. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey responded by endorsing the bill, and Mr. McCain's colleagues have scheduled hearings on it next week.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski's Alaska faces unique health-care challenges: a population spread across vast distances and a substantial number of Native Alaskans without ready access to doctors and hospitals. If her state is guaranteed a significant flow of federal funds, as Graham-Cassidy would do, who's more likely to figure out what will really work for

Alaskans—lawmakers in Washington or those in Juneau?

Sen. Susan Collins faces a similar question: Who is in a better position to find the right solution for Maine? A safe bet is on state officials given Maine's record of home-brewed health policy innovation. For instance, Maine was a pioneer in devising a high-risk pool to cover people with pre-existing conditions.

There's also the question of political accountability. If Mr. Paul now votes "no" on Graham-Cassidy after his "yes" vote on the skinny ObamaCare repeal, it won't be easy to explain. Why was he against a substantial repeal of ObamaCare in September after supporting another substantial repeal of it in July?

A second ObamaCare disappointment in the Senate will embolden the very hard-line forces in the GOP that Mr. McCain, Ms. Murkowski and Ms. Collins have battled and beaten in the past—Mr. McCain in his 2016 primary, Ms. Murkowski in her 2010 general election, and Ms. Collins her entire career in public service.

The Senate's failure in July damaged the GOP's credibility, and not only among Republicans. Independents are now wondering if the party can be trusted to deliver on major promises and govern effectively.

Sept. 20, 2017 7:02 p.m. ET

Like Lazarus, the Republican effort to repeal ObamaCare has risen from the dead. Pundits dutifully filled out the toe tag in July, after a repeal-and-replace bill failed to pass the Senate. Now comes new legislation championed by Sens. Lindsey Graham and Bill Cassidy, which just might get the 50 GOP votes needed for Vice President Mike Pence to break the tie and pass the bill.

Since leaders in the House have signaled they're ready to approve Graham-Cassidy, Senate passage would clear the way to ending the individual and employer mandates, repealing the medical-device tax, and phasing out the ObamaCare exchanges and their highly prescriptive regulations.

The Graham-Cassidy bill would give states as a block grant the money now spent on ObamaCare's Medicaid expansion, its tax credits on the exchanges, and its cost-sharing and premium-support payments to insurers. States then could use those dollars on health-care initiatives devised by legislatures and governors that

If this second attempt to repeal ObamaCare collapses, President Trump will likely stoke the sense of grievance that's inflaming grass-roots Republicans. None of the four

skeptical senators are on the ballot in 2018, but the GOP's paper-thin majority is. So are their friends and colleagues, and voters aren't going to make distinctions if this fails.

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

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Chen : Republicans Get One Last Chance on ObamaCare Reform

Lanhee J. Chen  
5-7 minutes

Sept. 20, 2017 7:03 p.m. ET

For seven years Republicans promised to repeal ObamaCare, and now they have one last chance to deliver. A bill recently introduced by Sens. Lindsey Graham, Bill Cassidy, Dean Heller and Ron Johnson would eliminate some of ObamaCare's most unpopular provisions and enact reforms that would lower costs, expand choices, promote federal fiscal responsibility, and give power back to states and consumers. Democrats have been unwilling to support any legislation that would roll back parts of ObamaCare, so Republicans have until Sept. 30—the deadline for avoiding a filibuster by using budget reconciliation—to act on their own.

The Graham-Cassidy bill's biggest strength is the idea that states are uniquely equipped to design and implement health care programs that suit their residents. The bill would consolidate much of the federal funding given to states under ObamaCare's coverage provisions—including money for its Medicaid expansion and subsidies to help people buy private insurance—into a single block grant, which states could use for a wide variety of health reforms.

The block grant would help address the dramatic state inequities that ObamaCare's optional Medicaid

expansion created in federal health-care funding. According to the proposal's authors, Washington in 2016 sent states anywhere from about \$400 (Mississippi) to over \$10,000 (Massachusetts) per beneficiary whose annual income was between 50% and 138% of the federal poverty level. In contrast, the size of the Graham-Cassidy block grant would not depend on whether a state chose to expand its Medicaid program. Thus, it would equalize the base per-person amount the federal government gives states. In 2026 it would be about \$4,400 for each qualified beneficiary. The bill then adjusts these payments to compensate for factors such as demographic differences and various levels of illness among the states.

These block grants would give states significant latitude to institute reforms. Some would decide to continue ObamaCare's regulatory and coverage provisions. Others would create high-risk or reinsurance pools to help provide affordable coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, while making insurance cheaper for everyone else. Federal funds could be used to provide additional benefits for people in traditional Medicaid. States also could waive some of ObamaCare's regulatory requirements to encourage greater competition, expand consumer choices and lower premiums.

Not everyone will like the reforms states pursue. But what Graham-Cassidy creates is a competition of

ideas. The best programs would be emulated and the worst discarded—which is how policy making should work in a federalist system.

Equally important, the Graham-Cassidy proposal includes the structural Medicaid reforms from earlier Republican bills to replace ObamaCare. It would establish per capita caps on federal Medicaid expenditures to states, varying based on the needs of different categories of beneficiaries. The elderly and disabled would get higher allocations (which would grow faster over time) than healthy adults or children. The bill would create financial incentives for states to improve the quality of care provided through Medicaid and then to report the data.

Opponents of Graham-Cassidy have several bones to pick. First, they worry it could permit insurers to discriminate against sick patients. But as a default the bill would leave in place ObamaCare's protections for patients with pre-existing conditions. States that implement reforms would be required to certify that these people will retain access to "adequate and affordable" health insurance.

Second, the bill's opponents dislike the caps on Medicaid spending. But the status quo is unsustainable. Federal spending on the program has grown an average of 7.5% every year since 2000. Meanwhile, Medicaid is consuming an ever larger portion of state budgets, crowding out other priorities.

Changes like the ones in Graham-Cassidy are needed to put the program on a fiscally responsible trajectory and ensure its survival.

Finally, critics complain that the bill's block grants would cut funding to states that took ObamaCare's Medicaid expansion. But the goal of the legislation is to create funding parity, regardless of how states implemented ObamaCare. Furthermore, under Graham-Cassidy all but a handful of states would get increased funding per eligible beneficiary between 2020 (when the block grants begin) and 2026. The total amount of the block grants would grow from about \$140 billion to \$200 billion over that period.

Graham-Cassidy is not a perfect proposal. But Republicans no longer have the luxury of waiting for something better. The bill before them is the most thoughtful and, yes, conservative health-reform plan they have encountered in their yearslong effort to repeal and replace ObamaCare. They should act quickly to pass it and get the job done.

*Mr. Chen is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and director of domestic policy studies in Stanford's Public Policy Program.*

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Robert Mueller Looks at What White House Knew About Probe of Mike Flynn

Aruna Viswanatha, Rebecca Ballhaus and Del Quentin Wilber

6-7 minutes

Updated Sept. 20, 2017 7:22 p.m. ET

Special Counsel Robert Mueller is seeking to determine what White House officials knew about a federal investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn early this year.

The move comes as Mr. Mueller's team examines whether President Donald Trump or other administration officials sought to

obstruct that probe, according to people familiar with the matter.

As part of that effort, Mr. Mueller's prosecutors have indicated they would like to interview key White House officials and have requested a trove of documents on a range of topics, including Mr. Flynn and a warning from a Justice Department official about his interactions with a Russian diplomat, the people said.

Mr. Flynn was forced to resign on Feb. 13, just a few weeks into Mr. Trump's presidency, for giving misleading statements about his contacts with Russian officials to Vice President Mike Pence.

The day after Mr. Flynn's resignation, Mr. Trump met with then-Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey in the Oval Office. Mr. Comey later testified before Congress that he believed Mr. Trump was asking him to back off an investigation into Mr. Flynn when Mr. Trump allegedly asked the director if he could see his way "to letting Flynn go."

Mr. Mueller is investigating whether Mr. Trump's actions amounted to obstruction of justice. Mr. Trump has denied any wrongdoing.

Mr. Mueller's request, which includes a dozen other topics of interest, including the May firing of

Mr. Comey, provides a window into Mr. Mueller's investigation, the people said.

Mr. Mueller's probe has taken aim at two of Mr. Trump's top advisers during the 2016 campaign: Mr. Flynn and former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort.

The special counsel's office is exploring whether Mr. Manafort engaged in potential violations of lobbying and money-laundering laws, according to people familiar with the matter. Mr. Manafort has said he did nothing wrong.

Last month, federal agents working with Mr. Mueller raided one of Mr. Manafort's homes pursuant to a

search warrant. That warrant was served on July 26 at Mr. Manafort's residence in Alexandria, Va., seeking documents and other material tied to foreign bank accounts and tax matters, according to people familiar with the investigation.

Later in August, Mr. Mueller subpoenaed Mr. Manafort's spokesman, demanding records related to his work for Mr. Manafort and seeking his testimony before a federal grand jury. The spokesman, Jason Maloni, did so last week. CNN this week reported that investigators wiretapped Mr. Manafort before and after the election, including a period in which conversations with the president may have been overheard.

The investigation also focuses on alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign and whether the Trump campaign colluded with Moscow.

According to a January report from the U.S. intelligence agencies, the highest levels of the Russian government were involved in

directing the electoral interference. Its tactics included hacking state election systems; infiltrating and leaking information from party committees and political strategists; and disseminating through social media and other outlets negative stories about Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton and positive ones about Mr. Trump, the report said. Russia has denied interfering in the election, and Mr. Trump has denied any collusion.

Mr. Mueller's document request came last month, according to one of the people. A spokesman for the special counsel declined to comment.

"The White House does not comment on any specific requests being made or our conversations with the special counsel," said Ty Cobb, the White House special counsel, in an interview. "The White House is fully committed to cooperating" with Mr. Mueller's probe, he said.

White House aides were ordered earlier this year to begin preserving documents that Mr. Mueller might

request. Aides weren't surprised by the special counsel's latest request, a White House official said. It was first reported by the New York Times.

People close to the president's legal team described the requests as within Mr. Mueller's mandate as a special counsel. Exploring the president's history of business dealings, they said, would fall outside that mandate.

The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday that Mr. Mueller's office had also interviewed Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who is overseeing the investigation, about Mr. Trump's firing of Mr. Comey.

Mr. Rosenstein has remained as the supervisor of the probe, a possible sign that Mr. Mueller's team doesn't view Mr. Rosenstein as a central witness in the probe.

Investigators are also interested in speaking to former White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus and White House counsel Don McGahn about Mr. Flynn's brief tenure, one person familiar with the

investigation said. Investigators are trying to better understand what the then-acting attorney general, Sally Yates, warned them about Mr. Flynn, the person said.

In May Ms. Yates told Congress she had alerted a top White House official that Mr. Flynn had misled Mr. Pence and others about his conversations with a top Russian diplomat, and that it had put him at risk of blackmail.

Investigators are interested in understanding what Mr. Trump knew about continuing investigations when he made the alleged comments to Mr. Comey. Mr. Trump has publicly denied making any such request of the FBI director.

**Write to** Aruna Viswanatha at Aruna.Viswanatha@wsj.com, Rebecca Ballhaus at Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com and Del Wilber at del.wilber@wsj.com

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition as 'Mueller Studies White House Ties to Flynn.'

## **The New York Times** **Mueller Seeks White House Documents Related to Trump's Actions as President (UNE)**

Michael S. Schmidt  
6-8 minutes

Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel, at the Capitol in June. Mary F. Calvert for The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel, has asked the White House for documents about some of President Trump's most scrutinized actions since taking office, including the firing of his national security adviser and F.B.I. director, according to White House officials.

Mr. Mueller is also interested in an Oval Office meeting Mr. Trump had with Russian officials in which he said the dismissal of the F.B.I. director had relieved "great pressure" on him.

The document requests provide the most details to date about the breadth of Mr. Mueller's investigation, and show that several aspects of his inquiry are focused squarely on Mr. Trump's behavior in the White House.

In recent weeks, Mr. Mueller's office sent a document to the White House that detailed 13 areas in which investigators are seeking information. Since then, administration lawyers have been

scouring White House emails and asking officials whether they have other documents or notes that may pertain to Mr. Mueller's requests.

One of the requests is about a meeting Mr. Trump had in May with Russian officials in the Oval Office the day after James B. Comey, the F.B.I. director, was fired. That day, Mr. Trump met with the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, and the Russian ambassador to the United States at the time, Sergey I. Kislyak, along with other Russian officials. The New York Times reported that in the meeting Mr. Trump had said that firing Mr. Comey relieved "great pressure" on him.

Mr. Mueller has also requested documents about the circumstances of the firing of Michael T. Flynn, who was Mr. Trump's first national security adviser. Additionally, the special counsel has asked for documents about how the White House responded to questions from The Times about a June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower. That meeting was set up by Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, to get derogatory information from Russians about Hillary Clinton.

Russia's official news agency photographed President Trump's meeting with Sergey V. Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, in the Oval Office in May. The American news

media was denied access. Alexander Shcherbak/TASS, via Getty Images

In July, when The Times put questions about the meeting to the White House, Mr. Trump and senior administration officials prepared a response on Air Force One that made no mention of the meeting's real purpose, saying instead that it focused on Russian adoptions. Mr. Mueller has asked for all documents the White House has about the meeting, and all internal White House communications about the statement drafted on Air Force One.

Ty Cobb, the lawyer Mr. Trump hired to provide materials related to the Russia investigation to the special counsel and Congress, has told Mr. Mueller's office that he will turn over many of the documents this week.

"We can't comment on any specific requests being made or our conversations with the special counsel," he said.

Based on the document request to the White House, there is no indication that Mr. Mueller is pressing to examine Mr. Trump's personal finances or business dealings — areas the president has said should be off limits. It is not clear whether Mr. Mueller has made separate document requests

elsewhere to examine those subjects.

Mr. Mueller has asked for all internal White House communications about numerous former campaign officials, including Paul J. Manafort, the former campaign chairman who is now under federal investigation. The document request also seeks communications about Mr. Trump's campaign foreign policy team: Carter Page, J. D. Gordon, Keith Kellogg, George Papadopoulos, Walid Phares and Joseph E. Schmitz.

Of the 13 subjects in Mr. Mueller's document request, four are related to Mr. Flynn. The retired lieutenant general was fired in February after it was revealed that he misled Vice President Mike Pence about December phone calls he had with Mr. Kislyak, the Russian ambassador at the time.

American officials said Mr. Flynn had told the vice president that he had only exchanged holiday greetings with Mr. Kislyak, when in fact the two men had discussed economic sanctions against Russia. The phone calls took place in late December, around the same time the Obama administration was announcing sanctions to punish Russia for what American officials said was a Russian campaign to



disrupt the November presidential election.

F.B.I. agents interviewed Mr. Flynn about the phone calls, and the special counsel has requested all internal White House communications about the F.B.I. interview. Mr. Mueller has also asked for documents about how the White House responded to concerns raised by the Justice Department that Mr. Flynn might be subject to Russian blackmail for

misleading Mr. Pence about the calls.

Three of Mr. Mueller's requests focus on Mr. Comey's firing. The special counsel wants any White House documents about the decision-making that led to Mr. Comey's firing, and about all meetings Mr. Comey had with Mr. Trump.

Mr. Mueller was appointed in May, shortly after it was revealed that Mr.

Comey had written a series of memos about his interactions with Mr. Trump — including one Oval Office meeting when Mr. Comey said Mr. Trump had asked him to end the F.B.I. investigation of Mr. Flynn. During another meeting, the president asked for a pledge of loyalty from the F.B.I. director, according to Mr. Comey's public testimony.

The special counsel has requested documents about a statement made

a week before Mr. Comey's firing by the former White House press secretary, Sean Spicer.

During a May 3 news briefing, Mr. Spicer said that "the president has confidence in the director."

The previous night, Mr. Trump had tweeted that Mr. Comey "was the best thing that ever happened to Hillary Clinton in that he gave her a free pass for many bad deeds!"



## Mueller casts broad net in requesting extensive records from Trump White House

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

7-9 minutes

President Trump has weighed in on special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election time and time again. Here's a look at how he can limit the probe, and what Congress is trying to do about it. President Trump has weighed in on special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election time and time again. Here's a look at how he can limit the probe, and what Congress is trying to do about it. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

President Trump has weighed in on special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election time and time again. Here's a look at how he can limit the probe, and what Congress is trying to do about it. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

The special counsel investigating Russian election meddling has requested extensive records and email correspondence from the White House, covering areas including the president's private discussions about firing his FBI director and his response to news that the then-national security adviser was under investigation, according to two people briefed on the requests.

White House lawyers are now working to turn over internal documents that span 13 categories that investigators for the special counsel have identified as critical to their probe, the people said. Special counsel Robert S. Mueller III, appointed in May in the wake of Trump's firing of FBI Director James B. Comey, took over the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election and whether the Trump campaign coordinated with the Russians in that effort.

The list of requests was described in detail by two people briefed on them. Both insisted on anonymity to discuss a sensitive investigation. Some details of the requests were first reported Wednesday afternoon by the New York Times.

The requests broadly ask for any document or email related to a series of highly publicized incidents since Trump became president, including the ouster of national security adviser Michael Flynn and firing of Comey, the people said.

The list demonstrates Mueller's focus on key moments and actions by the president and close advisers that could shed light on whether Trump sought to block the FBI investigations of Flynn and of Russian interference.

After the revelation that the special counsel is examining a letter President Trump drafted to fire former FBI director James Comey, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said they're working with the special counsel on Sept. 1. After the revelation that the special counsel has a letter President Trump drafted to fire James Comey, Sarah Sanders said they're working with Mueller. (Reuters)

After the revelation that the special counsel is examining a letter President Trump drafted to fire former FBI director James Comey, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said they're working with the special counsel on Sept. 1. (Reuters)

His team is also eyeing whether the president sought to obstruct the earlier Russia probe overseen by Comey.

The special counsel team's work in recent months has zeroed in on Paul Manafort, a former chairman of the Trump campaign, and Flynn. An official close to the probe said both men are under investigation.

Mueller's agents have questioned witnesses and business associates

of both men about whether the men sought to conceal the nature of consulting work they did that could have benefited foreign governments. In a raid of Manafort's home last month, agents sought to seize records related to Manafort's finances.

Over the past few weeks, White House lawyer Ty Cobb began sending records to the special counsel. Cobb is working within the White House to gather more of those documents and has told staffers and other lawyers that he hoped to turn over many more this week.

Cobb declined to discuss the subjects that Mueller's team has questioned him about.

"The White House doesn't comment on any communications between the White House and the Office of Special Counsel out of respect for the Office of Special Counsel and its process," Cobb said in a statement. "We are committed to cooperating fully. Beyond that I can't comment."

Mueller also asked for any email or document the White House holds that relates to Manafort, the people briefed on the requests said. Manafort resigned from the campaign before the election amid scrutiny of his work for a powerful Ukrainian political party aligned with the Russian government.

Who's who in the government's investigation into Russia ties

Mueller has requested that the White House turn over all internal communications and documents related to the FBI interview of Flynn in January, days after he took office, as well as any document that discusses Flynn's conversations with then-Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in December. Mueller has also asked for records about meetings then-Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates held with White House counsel Don McGahn in late January to alert him

to Justice Department concerns about Flynn, as well as all documents related to Flynn's subsequent ouster by the White House.

Regarding Comey, Mueller has asked for all documents related to meetings between Trump and Comey while Comey served at the FBI, records of any discussions regarding Comey's firing and any documents related to a statement by then-press secretary Sean Spicer made on the night Comey was fired. He has also asked for any documents related to a meeting Trump held in the Oval Office with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov the day after Comey was fired.

Today's Headlines newsletter

The day's most important stories.

Mueller has also asked for all records related to the June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower with a Russian lawyer hosted by the president's son, as well as all documents related to the White House's response to the publication of accounts of that meeting in July 2017.

Mueller is moving as quickly as he can and is taking his mandate very seriously, one government official told The Washington Post. He believes for the moment that he has all the resources he needs and that the office is now a fully formed agency vigorously using a grand jury for subpoenas and interviews, the official said.

"I am convinced that no matter where they end up, this investigation will run to completion even if they fire Mueller," the official said. "There is a feeling of inevitability now that we didn't have before — not of the outcome of the investigation but that there will be an outcome. There is no escaping this thing, whatever the conclusions."

## Manafort offered to give Russian billionaire 'private briefings' on 2016 campaign

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

11-14 minutes

Less than two weeks before Donald Trump accepted the Republican presidential nomination, his campaign chairman offered to provide briefings on the race to a Russian billionaire closely aligned with the Kremlin, according to people familiar with the discussions.

Paul Manafort made the offer in an email to an overseas intermediary, asking that a message be sent to Oleg Deripaska, an aluminum magnate with whom Manafort had done business in the past, these people said.

"If he needs private briefings we can accommodate," Manafort wrote in the July 7, 2016, email, portions of which were read to The Washington Post along with other Manafort correspondence from that time.

The emails are among tens of thousands of documents that have been turned over to congressional investigators and special counsel Robert S. Mueller III's team as they probe whether Trump associates coordinated with Russia as part of Moscow's efforts to interfere in the 2016 U.S. election.

There is no evidence in the documents showing that Deripaska received Manafort's offer or that any briefings took place. And a spokeswoman for Deripaska dismissed the email exchanges as scheming by "consultants in the notorious 'beltway bandit' industry."

FBI agents raided the home of President Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort without warning on July 26 with a search warrant, and seized documents and other records, say people familiar with the special counsel investigation. FBI agents raided the home of President Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort without warning on July 26 with a search warrant and seized records. (Photo: Michael Robinson Chavez/The Washington Post)

FBI agents raided the home of President Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort without warning on July 26 with a search warrant, and seized documents and other records, say people familiar with the special counsel investigation. (The Washington Post)

Nonetheless, investigators believe that the exchanges, which reflect Manafort's willingness to profit from his prominent role alongside Trump, created a potential opening for Russian interests at the highest level of a U.S. presidential campaign, according to people familiar with the probe. Those people, like others interviewed for this story, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss matters under investigation.

Several of the exchanges, which took place between Manafort and a Kiev-based employee of his international political consulting practice, focused on money that Manafort believed he was owed by Eastern European clients.

The notes appear to be written in deliberately vague terms, with Manafort and his longtime employee, Konstantin Kilimnik, never explicitly mentioning Deripaska by name. But investigators believe that key passages refer to Deripaska, who is referenced in some places by his initials, "OVD," according to people familiar with the emails. One email uses "black caviar," a Russian delicacy, in what investigators believe is a veiled reference to payments Manafort hoped to receive from former clients.

In one April exchange days after Trump named Manafort as a campaign strategist, Manafort referred to his positive press and growing reputation and asked, "How do we use to get whole?"

Manafort spokesman Jason Maloni said Wednesday that the email exchanges reflected an "innocuous" effort to collect past debts.

"It's no secret Mr. Manafort was owed money by past clients," Maloni said.

Maloni said that no briefings with Deripaska ever took place but that, in his email, Manafort was offering what would have been a "routine" briefing on the state of the campaign.

As a lobbyist and political consultant in the 1980s, Donald Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort worked with international clients that included two dictators who were then allied with the United States. As a lobbyist and political consultant in the 1980s, Donald Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort worked with clients that included two dictators. (Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

As a lobbyist and political consultant in the 1980s, Donald Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort worked with international clients that included two dictators who were then allied with the United States. (Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

Vera Kurochkina, a spokeswoman for Rusal, the company led by Deripaska, on Wednesday derided inquiries from The Post that she said "veer into manufactured questions so grossly false and insinuating that I am concerned even responding to these fake connotations provides them the patina of reality."

Collectively, the thousands of emails present a complex picture. For example, an email exchange from May shows Manafort rejecting a proposal from an unpaid campaign adviser that Trump travel abroad to meet with top Russian leaders. "We need someone to communicate that DT is not doing these trips," Manafort wrote, according to an email read to The Post.

The email exchanges with Kilimnik add to an already perilous legal situation for Manafort, whose real estate dealings and overseas bank accounts are of intense interest for Mueller and congressional investigators as part of their examination of Russia's 2016 efforts. People close to Manafort believe Mueller's goal is to force the former campaign chairman to flip on his former Trump associates and provide information.

In August, Mueller's office executed a search warrant during an early-morning raid of Manafort's Alexandria, Va., condominium, an unusually aggressive step in a white-collar criminal matter.

Mueller has also summoned Maloni, the Manafort spokesman, and Manafort's former lawyer to answer questions in front of a grand jury. Last month, Mueller's team told Manafort and his attorneys that they believed they could pursue criminal charges against him and urged him to cooperate in the probe by providing information about other members of the campaign. The New York Times reported this week that prosecutors had threatened Manafort with indictment.

The emails now under review by investigators and described to The Post could provide prosecutors with additional leverage.

Kilimnik did not respond to requests for comment. A spokesman for Mueller declined to comment.

Deripaska, one of Russia's richest men, is widely seen as an important ally of President Vladimir Putin. A U.S. diplomatic cable from 2006, published by WikiLeaks, referred to Deripaska as "among the 2-3 oligarchs Putin turns to on a regular basis."

The billionaire has struggled to get visas to travel to the United States because of concerns he might have ties to organized crime in Russia, according to the Wall Street Journal. He has vigorously denied any criminal ties.

Russian officials have frequently raised the visa matter over the years with U.S. diplomats, according to former U.S. officials familiar with the appeals.

In 2008, one of Manafort's business partners, Rick Davis, arranged for Deripaska to meet then-presidential candidate John McCain at an international economic conference in Switzerland.

At the time, Davis was on leave from Manafort's firm and was serving as McCain's campaign manager. The meeting caused a stir, given McCain's longtime criticism of Putin's leadership.

The Post reported in 2008 that Deripaska jointly emailed Davis and Manafort after the meeting to thank them for setting it up. Davis did not respond Wednesday to a request for comment.

At the time of the McCain meeting, Manafort was working in Ukraine, advising a Russia-friendly political party. He ultimately helped to elect Viktor Yanukovich as president in 2010. In 2014, Yanukovich was ousted from office during street protests and fled to Moscow.

Manafort and Deripaska have both confirmed that they had a business relationship in which Manafort was paid as an investment consultant. In 2014, Deripaska accused Manafort in a Cayman Islands court of taking nearly \$19 million intended for investments and then failing to account for the funds, return them or respond to numerous inquiries about exactly how the money was used. There are no signs in court documents that the case has been closed.

The emails under review by investigators also show that Manafort waved off questions within the campaign about his international

dealings, according to people familiar with the correspondence.

Manafort wrote in an April 2016 email to Trump press aide Hope Hicks that she should disregard a list of questions from The Post about his relationships with Deripaska and a Ukrainian businessman, according to people familiar with the email.

When another news organization asked questions in June, Manafort wrote Hicks that he never had any ties to the Russian government, according to people familiar with the email.

Hicks, now the White House communications director, declined to comment.

Former campaign officials said that Manafort frequently told his campaign colleagues that assertions made about him by the press were specious. They also privately shared concerns about whether Manafort

was always putting the candidate's interests first.

The emails turned over to investigators show that Manafort remained in regular contact with Kilimnik, his longtime employee in Kiev, throughout his five-month tenure at the Trump campaign.

Kilimnik, a Soviet army veteran, had worked for Manafort in his Kiev political consulting operation since 2005. Kilimnik began as an office manager and translator and attained a larger role with Manafort, working as a liaison to Deripaska and others, people familiar with his work have said.

People close to Manafort told The Post that he and Kilimnik used coded language as a precaution because they were transmitting sensitive information internationally.

In late July, eight days after Trump delivered his GOP nomination acceptance speech in Cleveland, Kilimnik wrote Manafort with an

update, according to people familiar with the email exchange.

Local Politics Alerts

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Kilimnik wrote in the July 29 email that he had met that day with the person "who gave you the biggest black caviar jar several years ago," according to the people familiar with the exchange. Kilimnik said it would take some time to discuss the "long caviar story," and the two agreed to meet in New York.

Investigators believe that the reference to the pricey Russian luxury item may have been a reference to Manafort's past lucrative relationship with Deripaska, according to people familiar with the probe. Others familiar with the exchange say it may be a reference to Ukrainian business titans with whom Manafort had done business.

Kilimnik and Manafort have previously confirmed that they were in contact during the campaign, including meeting twice in person — once in May 2016, as Manafort's role in Trump's campaign was expanding, and again in August, about two weeks before Manafort resigned amid questions about his work in Ukraine.

The August meeting is the one the two men arranged during the emails now under examination by investigators.

That encounter took place at the Grand Havana Club, an upscale cigar bar in Manhattan. Kilimnik has said the two discussed "unpaid bills" and "current news." But he said the sessions were "private visits" that were "in no way related to politics or the presidential campaign in the U.S."

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**  
Board

5-6 minutes

## Editorial : Tax Reform Progress

The Editorial Board

votes. The alternative is relying on the tender mercies of Chuck Schumer's Democrats to come up with 60 votes.

In an ideal world, the Senate deal would create room for tax cuts of \$2.5 trillion or more. That's at least how much more revenue the government would get if the economy returned to its historic growth rate of 3% a year from the Obama era's 2%. Better policy like tax reform would help growth get to 3%, but Senate leaders fear such an estimate might scare some Members and they can only afford to lose two of their 52 GOP Senators on the floor. The \$1.5 trillion figure is fiscally conservative to a fault, and if Republicans can't agree on that much they ought to pack up and go home.

The \$1.5 trillion deal will also be scored on a "static" basis, which means it won't be hostage to growth estimates from the gnomes at the Joint Tax Committee and Congressional Budget Office. Those outfits will still produce an additional "dynamic" score that considers economic growth, but their Keynesian assumptions mean they always underestimate the growth impact of cuts in tax rates and on capital income. The \$1.5 trillion deal liberates Congress from that process tyranny.

The Senate is more crucial this time because the House still hasn't found a majority for its budget resolution.

Freedom Caucus Reps. Mark Meadows and Jim Jordan complained Wednesday on these pages that House leaders want Members to vote on a budget without first releasing the details of tax reform. They contend this order doomed ObamaCare repeal: Members were presented with a fait accompli and weren't allowed to influence policy.

This is fake history. The Freedom Caucus demanded—and won—many accommodations on health care. One was preserving the tax exclusion for employer-sponsored health insurance that is a subsidy for large companies, and so much for conservative purity on that one. By Messrs. Meadows and Jordan's own account, their later demands improved the House ObamaCare repeal bill that eventually passed.

On tax reform, the Freedom Caucus has already helped scuttle the border-adjustment tax. Now the gang has pivoted in private to target expensing provisions, while claiming in public that they have no idea what the reform includes. The real question is whether any concession will appease them—or if they'll keep moving the goal posts until the bill is impossible to pass.

Another foolish sticking point is whether the budget is "balanced." The budget outline traditionally runs for 10 years, though the length of the window is merely a convention. But some Republicans like to insist

on voting for a budget that balances within the decade.

This is a futile exercise, for at least two reasons. One is that the budget document is fiction: There is zero chance government spending rolls on autopilot for 10 years without political intervention. The budget also makes dubious assumptions about the future of revenues and outlays, which change in recessions, for example. More to the point, whether the budget "balances" is a poor proxy for whether government is large or small or fulfilling its functions.

The political reality is that the budget resolution has only one purpose: A vehicle to pass tax reform in the Senate with 51 votes. Everything else is political eyewash. If the Toomey-Corker deal passes the Senate, the House should adopt it and move on to the substance of tax reform.

On that score, the \$1.5 trillion is a decent start, and Republicans can create more running reform for lower rates by closing loopholes. The state and local tax deduction is worth another \$1.25 trillion or so. Republicans should follow the Toomey-Corker lead, get past phony budget obstacles, and move on to fulfill their promise to reform the tax code.

Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Editorial : Tax Cuts for the Rich by Another Name

The Editorial Board

4-6 minutes

Republicans on the Senate Budget Committee violated their supposedly sacrosanct principles of fiscal hawkishness this week, by saying that it would be just fine with them to add \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over 10 years in order to cut taxes. They justify this hypocrisy by asserting what has been disproved time and again — that tax cuts spur the economy and compensate for any lost revenue.

In fact, these cuts could hurt the very people they purport to help — small-business owners, middle-class professionals and working-class Americans.

While even initial details of the tax plan are not expected before next week, deep corporate tax cuts have been a Republican priority for some time. Much of the discussion of that has revolved around the top rate, now 35 percent. President Trump has called for lowering it to 15 percent, while his economic aides and House Republicans favor a top rate around 25 percent.

But the rate cut on corporate profits is only part of the plan. A centerpiece of proposals made in

the past by Mr. Trump and the House speaker, Paul Ryan, has been to tax so-called pass-through income at the same rate as corporate profits.

Currently, such income passes through businesses — including partnerships, limited liability companies and sole proprietorships — onto the owners' personal income tax returns, where it is taxed at rates of up to 39.6 percent. Instead, the Republicans would tax it at the new corporate rate of 15 or 25 percent.

The speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, center, and Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy. J. Scott Applewhite/Associated Press

Republican advocates of this proposed sleight-of-hand like to sell it as a benefit for small businesses, freelancers and moonlighters — the middle class. But pass-through income from nearly 70 percent of small businesses already is taxed at top rates of 15 percent or less, because those businesses are, in fact, small, and their owners' income is modest.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Avila

8-10 minutes

Updated Sept. 20, 2017 4:46 p.m. ET

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico—Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico, pounding the U.S. territory with huge waves, massive rain and fierce winds and shutting down the power grid across the entire island of 3.4 million people.

Maria made landfall on the island's southeast section early Wednesday as a Category 4 storm with maximum sustained winds of 155 miles an hour, the most powerful hurricane to hit Puerto Rico since a 1928 storm that killed more than 300 people.

"Around here, everything is destroyed," said Luis Diaz, a car company owner from Fajardo, a coastal town roughly 30 miles north of where Maria made landfall. Mr. Diaz said the area had been hit by waves as high as 25 feet. "We are going to be without light for a long, long time."

A spokesman for Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said the storm had cut off virtually all power from the entire island for the foreseeable future.

## Hurricane Maria Slams Into Puerto Rico

José de Córdoba and Joseph De

Mr. Rosselló tweeted he was ordering a curfew from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. on Wednesday to Saturday. The move appears to be an effort to prevent any looting. After Hurricane Irma, there were reports of incidents of looting in St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands, some of the British Virgin Islands, and in St. Martin.

"I am making a call for calm, understanding and prudence during these difficult days for Puerto Rico," he wrote.

As Maria tore across the island, floods coursed through neighborhoods. Storm surges rose 5 feet above ground level in spots, according to the National Hurricane Center. By early afternoon, Maria had been downgraded to a Category 3 storm, moving off the island's north coast while still delivering strong winds and heavy rains.

Hours before the storm made landfall in Puerto Rico, its winds knocked out power in many places throughout the island. Puerto Rico's electricity grid had been hit hard two weeks ago when Hurricane Irma passed off the island's north coast, knocking out power for more than 1 million people. Thousands who lost power during Irma never had it restored before Maria hit.

"This hurricane will be a historic event for the people of Puerto Rico," Abner Gómez, executive director of Puerto Rico's emergency

management agency, said at a media briefing Wednesday. "We are going to find our island destroyed...The effects are incalculable."

Mr. Gómez said key transmission lines on the island had been knocked out of service, leaving 100% of the island without power. He said he couldn't provide precise information on loss of running water because the water utility's headquarters suffered an electricity outage.

Carlos Anselmi, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Puerto Rico, said rainfall estimates ranged from 15 to 35 inches around the island and were breaking records and triggering flooding. Buoys measured storm surges of 20 to 25 feet, he said.

Mr. Anselmi said hurricane and tropical-storm conditions would persist into Thursday night, and urged Puerto Ricans not to lower their guard.

"Dangerous conditions will continue," he said.

Before dawn Wednesday, Maria's howling winds pelted San Juan with driving rain that knocked down street signs and broke streetlights in the historic old city. By midmorning, winds had changed course and were blowing from the south, turning the bay into a cauldron of whitecaps.

The strategy now is for the committee's Republicans to pass the budget, after the expected vote next week on yet another attempt to repeal of the Affordable Care Act. After the Senate passes that budget, it would likely become the template for compromise budget legislation with the House. Self-styled deficit hawks in the House are expected to raise a fuss about tax cuts that are not offset by spending cuts, but when faced with a choice between controlling deficits and cutting taxes, it's a safe bet a majority of Republicans will choose tax cuts.

Republicans claim to seek broad support, and a White House official said on Tuesday that the rich would not see a benefit from the tax plan. But the proposals they have floated would not benefit their middle-class constituencies in any lasting way and could actually harm them. If a pass-through plan is enacted, it will deprive the Treasury of revenue that might otherwise be used to invest in infrastructure, health care, science and education — in other words, the real priorities of most Americans.

Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz said Maria caused extensive flooding throughout San Juan.

"The devastation, the number of homes that have disappeared" in parts of the city "are difficult to process," Ms. Cruz told reporters at the Roberto Clemente Coliseum, the city's largest shelter. She added that the storm had caused parts of the shelter's roof to fall off.

As the winds and the rains slowed Wednesday evening, the streets of old San Juan, a colonial jewel and big tourist destination, were empty except for an occasional passerby checking damage and a band of municipal policemen clearing roads of fallen trees and branches with chainsaws and machetes.

Except for fallen trees and damaged street lamps there appeared to be little structural damage. Lt. Roberto Casado, of the municipal police, said there had been two incidents of looting in the old city, a Kentucky Fried Chicken and a furniture store. No deaths had been reported. "This is a disaster, but we will recover," he said.

"This is the worst I've seen," said Walter Pedreira, a solar-energy developer who was riding the storm out in a house in a San Juan suburb where electricity had yet to be restored from Hurricane Irma. "It will take a long time, maybe a couple of years to recover."

He praised the island's government officials who pushed hard to convince people who live in flood zones or in flimsy houses to move into government shelters.

"It scares you. One is not used to seeing the fury of nature like this," he said.

The two storms will add pressure on Puerto Rico's already strained finances. Both the island's government and its state-owned public-power monopoly are under bankruptcy protection after years of over borrowing and a decade of economic recession. The U.S. Congress installed an oversight board last year to renegotiate about \$73 billion in debt and coax business interests back to the island.

Puerto Rico's economic woes have caused the government to slash its budget, cutting deeply into education and shutting schools. The island's downward spiral has led to a mass migration of residents to the U.S.

Eric Gavilan 37, who works in the pharmaceutical-drug industry, took

refuge in a San Juan hotel with his French bulldog after he saw Maria gain strength and reach Category 5 strength.

Mr. Gavilan, who lives with a roommate in a 13th-floor apartment facing the sea, decided it was too much of a risk to ride out the storm after seeing images of the destruction brought upon smaller Caribbean islands by Irma.

"The apartment is all windows," he said. "We saw it was a 5 and we decided to get out."

Before hitting Puerto Rico, Maria struck the island of St. Croix, one of the U.S. Virgin Islands that had been largely spared major damage when Hurricane Irma decimated its sister islands of St. John and St. Thomas two weeks ago.

And on Monday night, the storm—then a Category 5—tore into the Caribbean island of Dominica with maximum sustained winds near 160 miles an hour, ripping away roofs, knocking out electricity and inundating streets and mountainsides with heavy rain.

Hartley Henry, principal adviser to Prime Minister Roosevelt Skeritt, said the hurricane had claimed seven lives and knocked out all telephone services.

"It's really very grim," said Mr. Henry in an interview with ABS TV Radio Antigua & Barbuda. "We now have far more persons who are now homeless and now without a roof over their head and little or no hope of having one in the short or medium term."

Mr. Skeritt, who implemented a curfew from 4 p.m. Wednesday to 8 a.m. Thursday, was scheduled to board a helicopter to view the destruction on the hard-hit eastern side of the island, Mr. Henry said. The damage likely will far exceed the damage from Tropical Storm Erika, which battered the island in 2015, he said.

Erika killed about 30 people there and left hundreds homeless. In 1979, Category 3 Hurricane David killed an estimated 56 people on the island and left three out of four homes uninhabitable.

Maria blew the roof off many of the shelters on the island of 74,000 that is heavily reliant on agriculture, offshore banking and some tourism, Mr. Henry said. "The housing stock is severely damaged if not destroyed in many instances," he said.

A hurricane warning remained in effect for the northern coast of the Dominican Republic, Turks and Caicos Islands and the Bahamas, where the storm is expected to bring dangerous winds, storm surge and heavy rains.

—Adrian Campo-Flores contributed to this article.

**Corrections & Amplifications**  
Puerto Rico's governor is Ricardo Rosselló. An earlier version of this article misspelled his name. (Sept. 20, 2017)

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Appeared in the September 21, 2017, print edition as 'Maria Batters Puerto Rico.'



## Hurricane Maria: Forceful storm knocks out power to all of Puerto Rico

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sandhya-Somashekhar/424900341023463>

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12-15 minutes

Residents of Cataño, Puerto Rico, contended with homes destroyed by wind and flooding after Hurricane Maria passed over the island on Sept. 20. Residents of Cataño, Puerto Rico, contended with homes destroyed by wind and flooding after Hurricane Maria passed over the island on Sept. 20. (The Washington Post)

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Hurricane Maria delivered a destructive full-body blow to this U.S. territory on Wednesday, ripping off metal roofs, generating terrifying and potentially lethal flash floods, knocking out 100 percent of the island's electrical grid and decimating some communities.

With sustained winds of 155 mph at landfall — a strong Category 4 storm and nearly a Category 5 — Maria was so powerful that it disabled radar, weather stations and cell towers across Puerto Rico, leaving an information vacuum in which officials could only speculate about property damage, injuries or deaths.

"Definitely Puerto Rico — when we can get outside — we will find our island destroyed," Abner Gómez,

director of Puerto Rico's emergency management agency, said in a midday news conference here. "The information we have received is not encouraging. It's a system that has destroyed everything it has had in its path."

The entire island experienced hurricane conditions, with 20 inches or more of rain falling, often at torrential rates of up to seven inches per hour, leading

to reports of raging floodwaters and people seeking help to escape them.

The storm, having passed through the U.S. Virgin Islands earlier, made landfall on the Puerto Rican coast near Yabucoa at 6:15 a.m. It was the first Category 4 storm to strike the island directly since 1932. By midmorning, Maria had fully engulfed the 100-mile-long island.

[*Capital Weather Gang: Tracking Maria*]

Hurricane Maria made landfall early Sept. 20 in the southeast coastal town of Yabucoa as a Category 4 storm. It's one of the strongest hurricanes to ever hit Puerto Rico. Hurricane Maria made landfall early Sept. 20 in the southeast coastal town of Yabucoa as a Category 4 storm. (The Washington Post)

Winds snapped palm trees, shredded homes and sent debris skidding across beaches and roads. Recreational boats sank in San

Juan's marinas. Across the island, residents reported trees downed and blocking roadways. Far inland, floodwaters inundated homes that had never before flooded.

In San Juan, the capital, Maria shook buildings and blew out windows. Residents of high-rise apartments sought refuge in bathrooms.

First responders, including a fire-rescue team deployed from Fairfax, Va., had to ride out the storm for hours before emerging to help people. In the meantime, calls to emergency services went in vain. A family in the southern coastal town of Guayama, for example, reportedly pleaded for help as they were trapped in their home with rising water. In Hato Rey, a San Juan business district, a woman sought assistance as she was experiencing labor pains. "Unfortunately, our staff cannot leave," Gómez said at the news conference. "They will be rescued later."

Macarena Gil Gandia, a resident of Hato Rey, helped her mother clean out water that had started flooding the kitchen of her second-floor apartment at dawn.

"There are sounds coming from all sides," Gil Gandia said in a text message. "The building is moving! And we're only on the second floor, imagine the rest!"

Farther west, in the community of Juana Matos, in the city of Cataño, 80 percent of the structures were destroyed, the mayor of Cataño told El Nuevo Día.

"The area is completely flooded. Water got into the houses. The houses have no roof," the mayor said. "Most of them are made of wood and zinc, and electric poles fell on them."

William "Brock" Long, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, told The Washington Post that rescue and recovery operations are poised to help the U.S. territories — and had significant resources already deployed in the area as a result of Hurricane Irma, which hit the region just days ago.

"Right now we're in wait-and-see mode," Long said Wednesday afternoon. "We know that St. Croix took a tremendous hit, and we know obviously Puerto Rico took the brunt of the storm. Once the weather clears and the seas die down, we'll be in full operation."

Satellite images showed that Maria became disorganized, without a defined eye, and weakened as it moved slowly across the high terrain of Puerto Rico. Late Wednesday afternoon, the center of the vast storm exited the north coast of the island, its peak winds having dropped to 110 mph as a

dangerous but less powerful Category 2 storm.

As Maria journeys across open Atlantic waters, it is expected to reorganize and gain strength. It is moving parallel to the northeast coast of the Dominican Republic, heading toward the Turks and Caicos Islands and the southeast Bahamas.

Fishing boats with severe damage at Club Nautico in the San Juan Bay. (Photo by Dennis M. Rivera Pichardo for The Washington Post)

The storm track and atmospheric conditions suggest it will stay offshore of the U.S. East Coast and eventually curve northeast and out to sea. But forecasters warn that it is too soon to say with certainty that the U.S. mainland is in the clear.

Southern New England already is dealing with pounding surf and powerful wind gusts from Hurricane Jose. That storm could help in keeping Maria away from the coast by drawing it to the northeast. If Jose weakens too quickly, Maria could drift closer to the East Coast by the middle of next week.

Maria was the most violent tropical cyclone to hit Puerto Rico in more than 80 years. It had raked St. Croix hours earlier, just two weeks after that island was the only major land mass in the U.S. Virgin Islands that was spared Hurricane Irma's wrath. Maria also produced flooding in St. Thomas, an island that Irma hit.

In the French island of Guadeloupe, officials blamed at least two deaths on Maria, and at least two people were missing after a ship went down near the tiny French island of Desirade. At least seven deaths have been reported on the devastated island of Dominica.

Del. Stacey Plaskett, who represents the U.S. Virgin Islands in Washington, said St. Croix had been a staging ground for relief efforts after Hurricane Irma devastated other parts of her district before Maria's eye skimmed the edge of St. Croix on Tuesday night as a Category 5 storm with winds of 175 mph.

The damage has yet to be fully assessed, but in a sign of the possible devastation, Plaskett said the roof of the local racetrack blew into the runway of the airport, complicating relief efforts.

NOAA's GOES 16 satellite captured a close view of Hurricane Maria's

swirling eye on Sept. 19 as it made its way to Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the British Virgin Islands. NOAA's GOES 16 satellite captured a close view of Hurricane Maria's swirling eye on Sept. 19 as it made its way to Puerto Rico. (NOAA)

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló on Wednesday afternoon imposed a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew for the general public, which will continue until Saturday.

"Resist, Puerto Rico," the governor tweeted earlier as the storm blew in. "God is with us; we are stronger than any hurricane. Together we will lift up."

Speaking on NBC's "Today" show Wednesday, Rosselló said, "This is clearly going to be the most devastating storm in the history of our island."

Buildings that meet the island's newer construction codes, established around 2011, should have been able to weather the winds, Rosselló said. But wooden homes in flood-prone areas "have no chance," he predicted.

The last hurricane to make landfall in Puerto Rico was Georges in 1998. Just one Category 5 hurricane has hit Puerto Rico in recorded history, in 1928.

Broken windows at an apartment in the Ciudadela complex of Santurce. (Photo by Dennis M. Rivera Pichardo for The Washington Post)

Puerto Rico's vulnerability to tropical cyclones has been driven home in the past two weeks as first Irma and then Maria have howled into the Caribbean. The back-to-back nature of the storms has had one minor upside: Some 3,200 federal government staffers, National Guardsmen and other emergency personnel overseen already were in Puerto Rico when Maria approached.

President Trump praised FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security for "lifesaving and life-sustaining" work in the islands, and he sent his thoughts and prayers to "all those in harm's way," according to a White House statement. Late Wednesday, Trump issued a message on Twitter naming the Puerto Rican governor, adding: "We are with you and the people of Puerto Rico. Stay safe! #PRStrong."

The federal recovery effort, FEMA administrator Long said, will attempt

to restore power to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as quickly as possible but in a way that makes the grid less vulnerable to similar disruptions. The power grid, he said, "is a fragile system in both territories. It's going to be a long and frustrating process to get the power grid up."

In the lobby of Ciqala Luxury Home Suites in Miramar, a neighborhood in San Juan, Maria Gil de Lamadrid waited with her husband as the rain and wind pounded the hotel's facade. The door of the hotel's parking garage flopped violently in the wind.

Hurricane Maria passed through Puerto Rico leaving behind a path of destruction. (Photo by Dennis M. Rivera Pichardo for The Washington Post)

Gil de Lamadrid had spent the night in the hotel after evacuating her nearby 16th floor waterfront apartment. But even in a luxury hotel room, Gil de Lamadrid could not evade flooding. On Wednesday morning, water began seeping into her room through the balcony doors.

"I'm feeling anxious," she said.

Her husband shrugged.

"For me, it's an adventure," he said. "Something to talk about later."

By midafternoon, the gusts had become less frequent, and lashing rains had eased. Soon residents emerged to survey the damage from a storm for the ages. Some walked their dogs.

"The hotels, they lost all the windows, they had structural damage even on concrete," reported Dennis M. Rivera Pichardo, a freelance photographer working for The Washington Post, as he surveyed the tourist area of San Juan. "Trees are without a single leaf."

In Miramar, residents began clearing the roads of larger trees. One man walked down the street wearing only a T-shirt, shorts and a fedora hat, beaming despite the rain. "I was bored," he said.

The Nieves Acarón family decided to walk their dogs just before nightfall.

"He couldn't last any longer," Adriana Acarón said, pointing at her dog, Toffee.

She had been anxious throughout the storm. With cellphone reception down, she had not yet heard from her mother-in-law, who is 83 and lives in an area where a river reportedly overflowed its banks.

"It didn't stop for hours," she said of the storm. "I could feel everything. You could feel things flying at your window shutters."

Residents of San Juan take refuge at Roberto Clemente Coliseum, the biggest shelter in the island. (Photo by Dennis M. Rivera Pichardo for The Washington Post)

In the San Juan district of Santurce, residents used machetes to cut branches from trees blocking the road. The sidewalks were rendered impassable by downed trees, metal roofing and power lines.

Anton Rosarios, 81, looked over what remained of the front of his wooden house, the walls of which had collapsed, exposing the interior. He said he was hoping that FEMA would show up: "They are the only ones who can help fix this neighborhood. God willing, they will be coming to help us soon."

The home of his neighbor, Vitin Rodriguez, 55, had lost its roof, and all of his belongings had been ruined by Maria. A tree had fallen and crushed his car, and he said he had no way to check on the status of family members.

Further down the block, a small crowd gathered at an emergency shelter, as residents checked on friends and neighbors, some of whom had ridden out the storm playing dominoes.

"It's important to help, to give a life to people who don't have homes because of the storm," said Eudalia Sanata, 46, one of the four employees of the shelter. "Look, there are even a few dogs here. Dogs are part of the family, too, and no one wants to leave their family out in the rain."

*Achenbach and Somashekhar reported from Washington. Daniel Cassidy in San Juan; Amy Gordon in Vieques, Puerto Rico and Brian Murphy, Jason Samenow and Angela Fritz in Washington contributed to this report.*