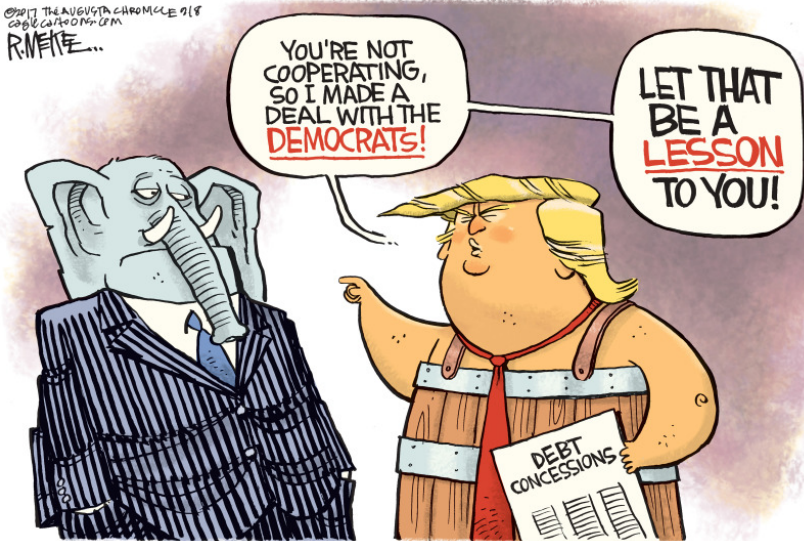


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FRANCE - EUROPE



EN LIGNE : France's Macron Set to Defy Doubters Again

Simon Nixon

5-7 minutes

PARIS—When Emmanuel Macron ran for president of France, his critics dismissed him as an empty suit who didn't stand a chance.

When he won, they said he would never secure a parliamentary majority so he would be a lame duck. When he secured a massive majority, they said he would never be able to deliver his program because he would be defeated on the street—just as all his recent predecessors had been.

This week it seems likely the doubters will be proved wrong again: One of the country's most powerful trade unions is planning a day of protests on Wednesday against Mr. Macron's planned overhaul of labor market rules but no other major trade union is backing the strikes. Government officials aren't complacent—they recall how similarly bold overhauls were defeated on the street in 1995 despite union acquiescence—but few observers expect Mr. Macron to suffer the same fate so soon after securing a clear electoral mandate.

Even if Mr. Macron manages nothing else, this labor market overhaul would be a substantial achievement, delivering changes that all governments of the past 20 years have recognized are needed but which none has been able to

deliver.

It addresses the two main criticisms of France's byzantine labor code highlighted by businesses and investors. First, it removes much of the uncertainty that surrounds laying off workers by clarifying what constitutes a legitimate economic circumstance, streamlining legal procedures and capping awards for unfair dismissal. Second, it extends to France's smallest companies—crucially including those without union representation—the ability to set their own pay and working conditions at firm level in consultation with their employees, whose own representation is to be streamlined from three committees to just one. The benefit to firms will come not only from increased flexibility but also by improving the quality of dialogue with workers, says one senior French business leader.

But Mr. Macron knows that changes to the labor code alone aren't enough to tackle the two big challenges facing the French economy: persistently high unemployment, currently at 9.5%, and a worrying slide in productivity growth that has reduced the economy's long-term potential growth rate to as low as 1% on some estimates from closer to 2% two decades ago.

The government hopes that the labor market changes should over time lead to increased investment and job creation. But senior government officials know that to

deliver the decisive change in economic fortunes necessary to put government debt as a proportion of gross domestic product on a downward trajectory from its current level of 96%, other bold overhauls are also needed. Those include rebalancing France's tax system away from high taxes on business and investment; overhauling the country's social security and training system to boost incentives and skills for work; and revising a pension system that left unchanged poses a long-term risk to fiscal stability.

These are the real tests of Mr. Macron's presidency and where the greatest political challenges may lie. The government has already pledged to deliver €12 billion (\$14.4 billion) of business and investment tax cuts this year out of a total of €20 billion planned over Mr. Macron's five-year term. But it has yet to explain how these cuts will be squared with the government's commitment to stick within eurozone budget rules which require it to reduce its budget deficit below 3% of GDP. Attempts to plug holes in this year's budget with cuts to military spending and welfare prompted a political backlash over the summer and a slide in Mr. Macron's approval ratings.

Similarly, plans to overhaul the welfare system to introduce a Scandinavian-style "flexicurity" model in which unemployment benefits are linked to accepting training will bring the government into conflict with some of the most

powerful vested interests in the country, not least the trade unions who currently tightly control access to vocational training. Pension changes too will hinge on persuading powerful vested interests to forego generous future entitlements.

Even if Mr. Macron survives this week's showdown on the streets, he knows he may face tougher resistance in the future: after all, even trade unions must pick their battles. Mr. Macron will instead hope to overcome future resistance by proceeding in the same way as he has with his labor overhauls: by being transparent about his plans from the start, unlike his predecessors who only discovered a taste for reform after being elected; by proposing comprehensive one-off changes, rather than piecemeal revisions that can be undermined by endless compromises; and by consulting intensively with trade unions and other stakeholders at every stage in an attempt to build as broad a coalition of support.

Above all, he will seek to take advantage of the unique political circumstances in which he finds himself, with a substantial majority in parliament, all opposition political forces in disarray and facing no electoral test for three years. Perhaps Mr. Macron will fall short, as his doubters keep insisting. But it is too soon to write him off yet.



Macron to visit Caribbean as France defends hurricane prep

ABC News

6-8 minutes

The French government on Sunday defended its hurricane preparations for the hard-hit Caribbean islands of St. Martin and St. Barts, rejecting criticism by political opponents and by islanders who felt abandoned as their homes and towns were devastated.

French President Emmanuel Macron announced he would be traveling to St. Martin on Tuesday on an Airbus carrying aid supplies to show that Paris is committed to both helping and rebuilding its far-away

territories pummeled by Hurricane Irma.

Some Caribbean officials said Britain was also too slow in responding to destruction on the British Virgin Islands and the Dutch government faced criticism for not acting more quickly to evacuate tourists stranded on St. Maarten, the Dutch side of St. Martin. The Dutch king is also heading to the region.

The hurricane killed at least nine people on St. Martin as it hit Wednesday, destroying a huge number of houses, cars and boats and cutting off all water and electricity for days. Extra troops had to be sent to stop the looting of

stores. Another four people were killed on St. Maarten.

The arrival of Hurricane Jose, a Category 4 that passed by on Sunday, only delayed recovery efforts across the Leeward Islands.

In St. Martin on Sunday, authorities were trying to set up the first large distribution points for food and water as the smell of churned-up rotting debris wafted over the island.

In the western coastal town of Grand-Case, a 76-year-old man who only gave his first name, Michel, emerged from a grocery store laden with food, explaining that he had nothing else to eat.

"Everything has been destroyed where I work. There's nothing there," said Manon Brunet-Vita, 27, as she walked through Grand-Case. "When I got to this neighborhood, I cried."

French government spokesman Christophe Castaner, speaking Sunday with Europe1-CNews-Les Echos, said he "perfectly (understood) the anger" of island residents. But he insisted that officials had known of the "extremely high risk" posed by the hurricane days in advance and had mobilized military and health care personnel in nearby Guadeloupe.

Castaner said many islanders were suffering from "emotional shock, an

impact that's extremely hard psychologically."

More than 1,000 tons of water and 85 tons of food along with fuel have been shipped to St. Martin and St. Barts, and additional deliveries are expected in upcoming days, government officials in Guadeloupe said. Crews with heavy equipment and chain saws were clearing the roads of debris.

St. Martin's port of Marigot, which has been too dangerous to enter due to the scores of wrecked boats either sunk or scattered across its shores, was to reopen Monday morning. A ship is expected to dock with a 5-ton crane capable of unloading large containers.

An increase in police and soldiers patrolling the streets has reduced the amount of looting.

Authorities in St. Martin have set up some 1,500 emergency shelters, doctors have treated around 100 people at a makeshift triage area and nearly 250 people have been evacuated, including seven facing medical emergencies, officials in Guadeloupe said.

The French military had positioned two frigates in the area ahead of the storm with helicopters ready to ferry supplies but the sheer violence of Irma seemed to take authorities by surprise.

Far-right National Front party leader Marine Le Pen, who lost the presidency to Macron in May, accused the French government of having "totally insufficient" emergency and security measures in place. Far-left leader Jean-Luc Melenchon and conservative politician Eric Ciotti called Sunday for a parliamentary inquiry into the government's handling of Irma, Macron's first major challenge.

The families of some island residents have taken to social media to voice similar criticisms.

Macron held emergency meetings Saturday and Sunday about Irma and its successor, Jose, and Prime Minister Edouard Philippe insisted that the government's support for Irma's victims isn't "empty words."

"I am aware of the fear, the exhaustion and the anguish that the current situation is causing families in the Antilles and on the mainland,"

Philippe said. "We are completely mobilized to rescue, to accompany and to rebuild."

France's main electricity provider EDF says it transported 140 tons of electrical equipment to help restore the power supply on St. Martin and St. Barts. Camp beds, sleeping bags and life-saving equipment were also sent.

With Jose past, French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb said Sunday that authorities were concentrating on getting tons of water to island residents. He praised the hundreds of police and soldiers sent in, saying they ended the looting.

On St. Maarten, where the airport was badly damaged by Irma, dozens of Dutch tourists were forced to watch as Canadian and American flights picked up their vacationing citizens. They had to hunker down in whatever shelter they could find Saturday night as a second hurricane, Jose, passed to the north of the island.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte defended his government's actions, saying that authorities prioritized

evacuations to ensure the safety of patients in St. Maarten's hospital, including 65 people who needed kidney dialysis, pregnant women and other emergency cases.

"The Netherlands had one major priority ... that is evacuating the patients," Rutte told reporters. "Other countries with tourists — the Canadians, the Americans — don't have that."

Military cargo planes or aid flights were expected to pick up stranded Dutch tourists later Sunday and take them to Curacao, from where they would be able to catch flights home.

Some 500 British soldiers, meanwhile, were sent to the Caribbean to help local police re-establish security, including 120 to the British Virgin Islands. The British aid ship Mounts Bay landed on Tortola carrying personnel and heavy equipment to fix communications systems and to try to clear airport runways so aid flights can come in.

NORTHWEST HERAKD : French President Emmanuel Macron to visit Caribbean as France defends hurricane prep

By AMANDINE ASCENCIO and ANGELA CHARLTON - The Associated Press

British Ministry of Defence via AP This undated photo provided by the British Ministry of Defence shows cars that have been wrecked by Hurricane Irma on the British Virgin Islands. The wild isolation that made St. Barts, St. Martin, Anguilla and the Virgin Islands vacation paradises has turned them into cutoff, chaotic nightmares in the wake of Hurricane Irma, which left 22 people dead, mostly in the Leeward Islands.

MARIGOT, St. Martin – The French government on Sunday defended its hurricane preparations for the hard-hit Caribbean islands of St. Martin and St. Barts, rejecting criticism by political opponents and by islanders who felt abandoned as their homes and towns were devastated.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Joffe : Germany's Boring Election Is Nothing to Snore At

Josef Joffe
5-7 minutes

Germany goes to the polls in little more than two weeks, but you'd never know it with a campaign as thrilling as a week-old weather report. Nobody doubts that Angela Merkel will get her fourth four-year term on Sept. 24. The only question is who her junior coalition partner will be: the center-left Social Democrats, the center-right Free Democrats or the Greens, who are somewhere in between.

It matters little whom Mrs. Merkel will pick. Germany is a nation pleased with itself and its three-term leader. There's no Donald Trump, who makes "House of Cards" look soporific, no Emmanuel Macron, who promises to make La France great again.

The campaign posters tell it all, offering nothing that might enthuse, let alone rile, a placid electorate. Here's a sampling: "Good jobs and good wages." "For a Germany where we like to live and live well." "Education must be free of charge." Or, best of all: "Have a nice holiday!"

A vacation from politics. Just what Dr. Merkel ordered. Just what the patient wants.

Picking your way through this smorgasbord of pap, you couldn't tell which party is touting what. Up there in Red

Sunday that authorities were concentrating on getting tons of water to island residents. He praised the hundreds of police and soldiers sent in, saying they ended the looting.

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Heaven, Marx's sidekick Friedrich Engels must be smiling. His dream has come true in 21st-century Germany.

Engels famously predicted that, after the revolution, the "rule over men" would be replaced by the "administration of things"—by the end of politics, no less. No more "contradictions," as the Marxists have it, no class struggles or culture wars. Just a wise bureaucracy directing society's traffic.

Naturally, the media, which thrive on conflict, don't like it. There isn't even a decent campaign-finance scandal. The tabloids must make do with obscenely expensive soccer trades topping out at €222 million (\$264.7 million). So the pundits ridicule the mainstream parties while desperately searching for pickings among the two smallish outliers.

The Left Party tries to score with "Socialism, Not Barbarism," while at the other end of the political spectrum the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) fishes for votes with subtly racist slogans.

Voters in the vast middle aren't biting. Anti-Muslim resentment might work in France or Holland, but not in Germany. The nation remembers how communism crashed in East Germany and Nazism ended in catastrophe.

Centrism is Germany's civil religion now, and Mrs. Merkel—known as *Mutti*, or mom—its high priestess.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte defended his government's actions, saying that authorities prioritized evacuations to ensure the safety of patients in St. Maarten's hospital, including 65 people who needed kidney dialysis, pregnant women and other emergency cases.

"The Netherlands had one major priority ... that is evacuating the patients," Rutte told reporters. "Other countries with tourists — the Canadians, the Americans — don't have that."

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Dutch tourists later Sunday and take them to Curacao, from where they would be able to catch flights home.

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What's wrong with boredom? "May you live in interesting times," as the curse goes. The Germans have had their fill of excitement in the 20th century. This is why they keep electing Mrs. Merkel.

Even better, Mrs. Merkel, a notional conservative, has moved her party to the left, signaling to the electorate: You can have it all—social spending and tax cuts, gay marriage and family values. Her ideological imperialism has left little room for her challenger, Martin Schulz, whose Social Democrats trail Mrs. Merkel's Christian Democrats by up to 17 points.

Nor does Mrs. Merkel threaten any surprises. If she makes a move, it's only a couple of degrees to the right or left. When she does jerk the tiller, as she did in 2015 by suddenly taking in about a million refugees, she swiftly reverses course. The so-called Balkan Route was quickly sealed, and now border controls are back. The flow was down in July to a manageable 15,000. Not coincidentally, the AfD is now down to single digits.

If Germans could elect their chancellor directly rather than vote for the parties, Mrs. Merkel would win in a landslide, 52% to 30%, over Mr. Schulz, the long-term president of the European Parliament who last won a German election as mayor of a tiny town. These numbers reflect a truth transcending personalities:

Mrs. Merkel presides over 80 million happy subjects.

Look around. Britain is torn in two over Brexit. France is an economic basket case, its savior, Mr. Macron, plunging in the polls. Italy remains ungovernable. In the East, Hungary and Poland are going authoritarian. Mr. Trump's America is abdicating U.S. leadership with his what-do-we-care nationalism.

Meanwhile, boring Germany boasts full-employment and bloated trade surpluses. Extremism is safely contained on the fringes. The bureaucracy runs smoothly. It doesn't take 10 years, as it does in Italy, to get a verdict in civil court. Income inequality is lower than in Britain, France or Italy. Germany's social safety net is the envy of the world, drawing masses from the Middle East and North Africa. Integration remains iffy, but there are no *banlieues* as in France or no-go zones as in Belgium.

Socrates was supposedly asked, "How is your wife, Xanthippe?" To which the philosopher replied, "Compared to what?" Compared to the rest, Germany is a country at ease, light years removed from its horrifying 20th-century incarnations.

Can its luck last in a world whose liberal order is under assault? The electorate, at least, seems intent to say, as it has since 2005: "In *Mutti* we trust."

The Washington Post

9-11 minutes

UNE - As Germans prepare to vote, a mystery grows: Where are the Russians?

BERLIN — In 2015, suspected Russian hackers broke into the computer networks of the German Parliament and made off with a mother lode of data — 16 gigabytes,

enough to account for a million or more emails.

Ever since, German politicians have been watching nervously for the fruits of that hack to be revealed, and for possible embarrassment and scandal to follow. Many warily eyed September 2017 — the date of the next German election — as the

likely window for Russian meddling to once again rattle the foundations of a Western democracy.

But with the vote only two weeks away — and with Russian President Vladimir Putin's European nemesis, Chancellor Angela Merkel, seemingly on track for a comfortable

win — the hacked emails haven't materialized.

Nor have Russian-linked propaganda networks churned into overdrive with disinformation campaigns. Even Kremlin-orchestrated bots — blamed for the viral spread of fake news in last

year's U.S. presidential campaign — have been conspicuously silent.

The apparent absence of a robust Russian campaign to sabotage the German vote has become a mystery among officials and experts who had warned of a likely onslaught.

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

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

Have Germany's defensive measures — significantly boosted after the hacks and propaganda campaigns that preceded last November's U.S. vote — actually succeeded? Or has Russia decided to pull back, reckoning that the costs of antagonizing Merkel outweigh the benefits?

Or perhaps Moscow is simply biding its time.

"That's what makes me worried," said Maksymilian Czuperski, director of the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab. "Why is it so quiet? It doesn't feel right."

Much is at stake for Russia in the German vote. Merkel, a Russian speaker who has jostled with Putin throughout her 12-year tenure as chancellor, is critical to the Western alliance's chances of hanging together amid a concerted Russian campaign to pick it apart.

To her left and her right are German parties that have advocated a far softer line on Moscow. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, in particular, has taken stands that would please Putin, including calls to abolish the European Union.

Putin has denied that his government is behind efforts to influence elections in the United States and beyond, while coyly acknowledging that "patriotically minded" Russians may be acting on their own.

But if Russia was hoping to undermine Merkel before the Sept. 24 vote, it doesn't appear to be working: Her center-right party has remained well ahead of all competitors in all polls, while the AfD's support seems to have topped out at about 10 percent.

Whether Russia makes a concerted push to meddle may not be known until election night — or beyond. German authorities are certainly not yet declaring victory, and they have urged politicians and the public to remain on alert as the campaign hits the homestretch.

In recent days, German cybersecurity officials have warned that Russian-linked networks may try to manipulate the vote count, perhaps throwing the outcome into disarray. And the country's top domestic intelligence officer said his staff is conducting hourly checks of sites such as BTleaks to make sure there's no fresh sign of the hacked documents from the Bundestag, the German Parliament.

[Homeland Security official: Russian government actors tried to hack election systems in 21 states]

Meanwhile, a leading Merkel ally reported that on the eve of the campaign's only nationally televised debate this month, her website was hit with thousands of cyberattacks — many of which appeared to emanate from Russian IP addresses.

But overall, officials and experts say the scale of apparent Russian interference is far lower than they had expected.

Volker Wagner, chairman of the German Association for Security in Industry and Commerce, said his group recently conducted a comprehensive survey of its members on the issue and came up empty.

The organization, which works closely with German intelligence agencies to counteract shared threats, did not find "any evidence . . . that there are more sophisticated attacks coming from Russia in the pre-election period."

Czuperski, meanwhile, said the stream of fake news and bot-spread disinformation had visibly slowed.

If evidence of Russian meddling continues to be minimal, experts say, there may be valuable lessons

in understanding why Germany has proved unusually resilient.

One is that German authorities have been especially aggressive in trying to publicize and combat Russian sabotage efforts as they emerge — a contrast to the United States, where the Obama administration last year was reluctant to sound the alarm on what intelligence agencies later concluded was a concerted Russian campaign to help then-candidate Donald Trump defeat Hillary Clinton.

When pro-Russian news outlets began circulating a story last year about a Russian-German girl named Lisa who was allegedly abducted and raped by Arab migrants, German officials shot down the story and accused Moscow of "political propaganda."

German intelligence officials have also named Russian-linked groups as the likely culprit behind the Bundestag hack, and they have been outspoken in their belief that Moscow will try to sway the German electorate against Merkel.

German lawmakers, meanwhile, in June passed stringent legislation that imposes multimillion-euro fines on companies that fail to remove fake news and defamatory content from their websites.

The legislation, which was vigorously opposed by Facebook and other social media firms, does not go into effect until October. But already, companies have begun to comply.

Patrick Sensburg, a Merkel ally in Parliament and an intelligence expert, said he has reported some 30 accounts to Facebook in the past several months that he suspects of being pro-Russian bots. The accounts all have the same friends, offer no personal details and use the same language to attack him.

"They'll say, 'Are you a Muslim?' or 'Merkel let everybody in' or 'You're selling out our country,'" he said.

In most cases, he said, Facebook has acted on his complaints by taking the accounts down.

"We're in the beginning on social media of the fight against fake news and fake accounts," he said.

German defense may not account entirely for the apparent lack of a game-changing Russian offense.

Sijbren de Jong, a Russia expert at the Hague Center for Strategic Studies, said the Russians may have decided to play a less aggressive role in the German vote after they "overplayed their hand in the U.S."

For a variety of reasons, de Jong said, direct interference in German elections would be a risky bet. Not least are the economic considerations for two countries that remain close trading partners, despite sanctions that Merkel has championed.

"The German economy is a large market for key Russian companies," he said. "You don't bite the hand that feeds you."

Nor do you meddle in a vote where the outcome appears preordained. Several German parties — including the far-right AfD, the center-left Social Democrats and the far-left Die Linke, or the Left — have far more Moscow-friendly policies than the ones espoused by Merkel's Christian Democrats.

But even after 12 years of Merkel, German voters appear in little mood to shake up the system and veer away from her studied centrism.

"The intention [of Russia] is to destabilize European society," said Annegret Bendiek, an analyst with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. "In Germany, that's not so easy."

Bendiek said it is still possible that in the waning days of the campaign, Russian operatives will try to unsettle things. But she's doubtful. Even the hacked Bundestag documents may never see the light of day, if only because the people who stole them may have concluded that they wouldn't change anything if they did.

Hacking into the inner sanctum of German politics was one thing. But finding anything salacious or tawdry among what are likely to be hundreds of thousands of tedious policy documents, Bendiek said, is quite another.

"It's been my job for 10 years to read these kinds of documents," she said. "You can't imagine. They are so boring."

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Drew Hinshaw in Warsaw and Valentina Pop in Brussels

European Union Grapples With Defiance on Its Eastern Edge

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban barely mentions his political rivals as he campaigns for a fourth term. Instead, he is targeting the

European Union and its biggest members.

"Our fiercest opponents are not in Hungarian opposition parties," Mr. Orban said in a speech last week. "They are abroad...Berlin. Brussels."

In neighboring Poland, government rhetoric is even harsher. Politicians have one-upped each other in attacking France and Germany, arguing they are forcing multicultural, liberal democracy on more traditional Poles. Commentators on state-run TV compare the EU to the Soviet Union.

Tensions between Western European capitals on one side and Warsaw and Budapest on the other have hit their highest levels since their countries stepped out from Soviet domination, a sign of the nationalist challenge to the bloc even after pro-EU candidates defeated populists in France and the Netherlands this summer.

The fight is part of a larger argument about what the EU's balance of power should look like after the U.K. leaves. London has long advocated for smaller, eastern countries, who now feel they will be dominated by France and Germany.

EU membership is broadly popular in both Poland and Hungary—neither government wants to follow the U.K. out. EU funding helped Poland steer clear of a recession during the eurozone crisis and Hungary's main source of foreign direct investment is the EU budget. Their neighbors like Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania are growing closer to Europe's west on several key issues. Even Mr. Orban talks fondly of his country's membership in the community.

But relations have soured. Even with Brexit negotiations under way, "Britain is closer to us than the

Poles," said one senior EU official who described the dispute with Poland, and to a lesser extent with Hungary, as the bloc's biggest challenge this year.

Countries on the bloc's eastern edge have resisted opening their borders to migrants, a fight that flared anew last week as the EU's highest court ruled they must resettle refugees. Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic have refused to comply.

Poland has shrugged off EU criticism that its government is limiting the independence of the courts and ignored an injunction from the EU high court to stop logging in an ancient forest. Hungary has brushed aside criticisms from the EU Parliament that it limits journalistic independence.

Their disagreements underscore how the U.K.'s impending departure has upended Europe's uneasy balance of power. French President Emmanuel Macron, in the wake of the British referendum, has proposed economic overhauls and restrictions on free movement that have upset the newer, ex-communist members, whose citizens are a source of inexpensive labor. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel has expressed openness to some of his ideas.

"Right now, the older member states are dominating," Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo said last week. "They dictate the terms to new member states."

Officials in Brussels worry that if countries get away with ignoring bloc-wide decisions and EU court rulings, the entire system will start unraveling. Until now, governments of other EU members have hesitated to punish their peers, but that may be changing.

This month, ministers overseeing EU affairs from member states will meet to discuss Poland. The European Commission, the EU executive, could ask them to start proceedings that culminate with sanctions, including suspending Poland's voting rights. It has the 22 countries it needs to do that, the EU official said.

To cut voting rights completely it would need unanimity, and Hungary and Poland have each promised to block any attempt to sanction the other, but the EU official said that just starting the process would be "a big nuclear weapon" never before triggered against a member state. It is also possible Hungary wouldn't veto the more drastic vote.

A critical factor will be Ms. Merkel, who is up for re-election later this month and appears set to win comfortably. Germany has hesitated to criticize Poland, which suffered more than most countries at Nazi hands in World War II. Some diplomats argue her speaking out would make the situation worse. Such restraint could ebb after the German election, observers predict, if Ms. Merkel feels she can speak more freely. Ms. Merkel has already hinted that her patience is eroding. She warned Poland last month that "we will not keep our

mouth shut" on the issues of rule of law just for the sake of good relations.

"This fall the crisis will reach boiling point because these two countries are not backing down and the EU can't afford this renegade behavior corrupting all the rest," said Heather Grabbe, head of the Open Society European Policy Institute, a Brussels-based think tank.

Mr. Macron snubbed Poland and Hungary during an extensive tour of Europe last month. In a break from two centuries of close French-Polish relations, Mr. Macron said "Poland is not defining Europe's future today, and nor will it define the Europe of tomorrow."

Following Brexit, opinion polls indicate Poles and Hungarians don't want to leave the EU. Roughly 74% of Poles and 67% of Hungarians approve of EU membership, according to a Pew Research Center poll from June.

While few analysts foresee a Brexit-style departure, some envision a two-speed EU, in which Poland, Hungary or others ignore rules they don't like and become more and more isolated within the bloc, hit by financial sanctions and challenges to their voting rights.

"The important question is are we in a community of European free nations, or part of an empire with its headquarters in Brussels," Mr. Orban said in a radio interview Friday. "The real battle is only beginning."

INTERNATIONAL

Los Angeles Times

Korzen : Osama bin Laden is still with us

David Max Korzen

Osama bin Laden's body decomposed long ago somewhere in the Indian Ocean. His death in 2011 provided some finality to the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. Yet on this, the 16th anniversary of the attacks, Bin Laden is still very much alive within us, and still victorious.

The events of 9/11 are seared into the memory of Americans like none other. Although the attack on Pearl Harbor was of course a nasty shock, the warships anchored there were legitimate military targets and newsreel footage of the Arizona

exploding was not witnessed in real-time. On 9/11, fear gripped Americans in a visceral way that we had never quite experienced. We felt vulnerable, confused, victimized.

These emotions and their aftershocks remain an essential part of the American identity. What's more, they are a prime mover of U.S. foreign policy, animating our interminable wars in Central Asia and the Middle East. We can never feel safe enough, but if we lash out we can pretend we're warding off disaster.

As President Trump acknowledged in his recent speech about the war in Afghanistan, many of those who fought and died in Afghanistan "enlisted in the months after Sept.

11, 2001." He said that "they loved America, and they were determined to protect her."

That's undoubtedly the case, but they were also led into a trap.

The damage we have wrought upon ourselves far exceeds what Al Qaeda could ever have achieved on its own accord.

Bin Laden's objective on 9/11 was not simply to destroy the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Rather, these were the means to an end. Terrorists kill to induce people to alter their behavior, to force them into bad decisions or tempt a government to crack down on their populations.

In our case, we've bled ourselves dry on military adventures around the world.

Afghanistan is now the longest war in the history of the United States. A few countries over, U.S. forces are once more on the ground in Iraq. Our troops are deployed on every corner of the globe while their combat readiness declines. Aircraft crashes are up. We've seen unprecedented ship collisions and a significant rise in suicides among members of the military. Our veteran care system is ungainly and dysfunctional. Our international influence is waning.

These problems are a direct consequence of our military misadventures brought about by

fear. The damage we have wrought upon ourselves far exceeds what Al Qaeda could ever have achieved on its own accord.

Some believe that U.S. intervention in Afghanistan to fight Al Qaeda was necessary and that these actions have made us safer. Trump explicitly used this argument when he said that "thanks to the vigilance and skill of the American military and of our many allies throughout the world, horrors on the scale of

Sept. 11th... have not been repeated on our shores."

Better U.S. security, however, is not a product of the U.S. military actions. It is a consequence of better policing, screening and surveillance, as well as heightened vigilance.

Conversely, American military actions in the Middle East and Central Asia have reduced our security by extending the narrative of an East-West divide. We lend

ammunition to the propaganda and recruiting efforts of Islamic extremists.

This is not to say that the U.S. should immediately abandon Afghanistan or Iraq, or that we should abrogate our responsibilities to our allies in the region. Rather, as we look to the future, we must carefully meter our emotions, be prepared to acknowledge our folly and back away from unending war.

Even as 9/11 slips deeper into distant memory, it continues to drive our policies. We will likely face more terror acts in the future which will re-inflame our fears. But we must keep in mind that no terrorist is, or will ever be, an existential threat to the United States. Only our response to terrorism can destroy our way of life.



Bergen : 16 years after 9/11: The state of the terrorist threat (Opinion)

Peter Bergen,
CNN National

Security Analyst

Peter Bergen is CNN's National Security Analyst, a vice president at New America and the author of "United States of Jihad: Who Are America's Homegrown Terrorists and How Do We Stop Them?"

(CNN)Sixteen years after the 9/11 attacks, there is a fair amount of good news about the state of the battle against jihadist terrorists: The United States has not suffered a successful attack by a foreign terrorist organization since al Qaeda's horrific attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Al Qaeda's core group, based in Afghanistan and Pakistan, hasn't launched a successful attack in the West since the suicide bombings on London's transportation system more than a decade ago in 2005, which killed 52 commuters.

The terrorist group that sprang up in the wake of the setbacks suffered by al Qaeda, ISIS is itself now largely defeated, having lost the city of Mosul, its headquarters in Iraq, and much of the city of Raqqa, its headquarters in Syria.

The US-led coalition has also killed an estimated 60,000 to 70,000 ISIS fighters, according to US Special Operations Command's Gen. Raymond "Tony" Thomas, speaking at the Aspen Security Forum in July.

A month later Brett McGurk, the US envoy to the anti-ISIS coalition, said ISIS had lost control of more than three-quarters of the territory that it had once held in Iraq and more than half of what it had once controlled in Syria.

The threat posed by American "foreign fighters" returning to the United States who were trained by ISIS or other jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria is quite low compared to European countries. According to public records, only seven American militants have returned from the Syrian and Iraqi battlefields and none has carried out an act of terrorism.

That's the good news, but there are other troubling trends. Since 2014 there have been six lethal jihadist terrorist attacks in the United States, killing 74 people, according to New America's research.

Those attacks were carried out by American citizens and legal permanent residents, not by foreign terrorists as was the case on 9/11.

These American terrorists were inspired by ISIS propaganda online, but had no direct contact with the group.

Jihadist terrorists in the United States today overwhelmingly radicalize online. Of the 129 militants from the United States who joined jihadist terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria, or attempted to do so, or helped others to do so, 101 of them downloaded and shared jihadist propaganda online and some conducted encrypted online discussions with ISIS militants based in the Middle East, according to New America research.

The Israeli counterterrorism expert Gabriel Weimann rightly points out that the "lone wolf" is now part of a virtual pack.

In the cases of the 129 militants drawn to the Syrian conflict, none appears to have been recruited in person by other militant operatives.

The Trump administration's temporary travel ban from six Muslim majority countries does nothing to address this "homegrown" militant threat that is enabled by jihadist propaganda online. Travel bans, of course, have no impact on the Internet.

While the United States has seen no lethal attacks in which the perpetrators were trained and directed by foreign terrorist organizations since 9/11, there have been five ISIS-directed attacks in Europe since 2014 that killed 188 people, around twice the death toll of all deadly jihadist attacks in the United States since 9/11.

Meanwhile, the Taliban in Afghanistan are at their strongest points since their defeat by US forces shortly after 9/11.

Other forms of political violence in the United States

Terrorism in the United States doesn't emanate only from jihadists, who have killed 95 people in the States since 9/11.

Individuals motivated by far-right ideology have killed 68 people in the United States during the same period, while individuals motivated by black nationalist ideology have killed eight people, according to New America research.

The drivers of terrorism

Even though ISIS is largely defeated, the conditions that led to the group's emergence largely remain, including the regional civil war in the Middle East between Sunni and Shia that has consumed Iraq, Syria and Yemen; the collapse of Arab governance around the region; the collapse of economies in

war-torn Muslim states and the population bulge in the Middle East and North Africa.

This has precipitated a tidal wave of Muslim immigration into Europe. Those immigrants are arriving in countries where Muslims are often marginalized and this wave of Muslim immigration has helped fuel the recent rise of European ultranationalist parties. This is a combustible mix, which may help propel some European Muslims to subscribe to the tenets of militant jihadism.

These drivers of jihadism strongly suggest that a son of ISIS will form in coming years.

Even as ISIS suffers repeated setbacks, al Qaeda's branch in Syria has shown surprising resiliency and it's possible that a rump version of ISIS might merge with al Qaeda in Syria. The two groups split from each other in 2014.

Al Qaeda's core group also seems to be grooming Hamza bin Laden, one of Osama bin Laden's sons, as a next generation leader. Hamza bin Laden, who is in his late twenties, has appeared in a number of al Qaeda media productions in recent years.

The continued resilience of al Qaeda in Syria and the fact that the drivers of global jihadism are not going away anytime soon suggests that the long war that began on 9/11 more than a decade and half ago has many years left before it finally sputters out.



Trump Has Left America Less Prepared for Another 9/11

Conor Friedersdorf

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks struck an unprepared America mere months into President George W. Bush's first term.

Nothing in his tenure to that point was particularly memorable. Nothing he had ever faced in life was remotely comparable. And the United States was forever shaped by the strengths and weaknesses exhibited by the Bush administration

as its officials decided how to respond.

For the couple of weeks preceding the anniversary of 9/11, I've been fretting about what would happen if Donald Trump, who has reached the

same point in his first term, is still president if and when this country next faces a challenge as significant. As a staunch, longtime critic of both Presidents Bush and Obama, I am under no illusion about the costly consequences of their

warmaking in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, the dangers posed by their civil-liberties abrogations, or the abuses they perpetrated and courted with mass domestic surveillance.

Even so, I do not think that the United States has ever elected anyone less suited than Trump to lead it through a major terrorist attack, a war, or a challenge of similar scale.

I don't merely mean that President Trump has no governing experience, though he does not; or that his past bankruptcies make one wonder what Taj Mahal Casino-like ruins are in his future; or that I think poorly of his moral compass and his ability to master himself, though I find him unfit to lead in a nuclear age based on those traits alone.

No, one needn't share my low opinion of his competence or character to recognize various shortcomings that will surely diminish America's resilience in a trying moment.

For example:

- The White House is in constant disarray as key personnel are hired and fired at an unprecedented rate. One cost is that most basic measure of experience: days on the job. Another is an inability to forge sustained working relationships as colleagues are summarily dispatched in the manner of a reality-TV show. And how can those who remain do their best work when the boss at the top exhibits a management style that is as volatile and erratic as it is petty? Many dignified people have simply refused to consider working for him.
- Huge numbers of important State Department positions are still unfilled, including key undersecretary positions; and the ability of the United States to conduct diplomacy or to draw on country-specific expertise seems to have atrophied.
- The United States is as divided as it has been at any time in my life. And according to a recent Fox News poll, it isn't just that a majority of Americans disapprove of the job Trump is doing—56 percent say that he is “tearing the country apart.”
- The Trump Organization's murky asset portfolio, with heavy investments in numerous foreign countries, and the Trump family's refusal to divest from it, makes it impossible for congressional overseers or the public to adequately discern when the Trump family's business interests diverge from America's interests.

Those are just a few of the factors that have rendered Trump's America less prepared to meet major challenges than it was during the administration of any other president in the postwar era—and there is a lot to lament about the performance of some of those presidents. Some performed so badly that there are voters today who could not imagine that anyone would do worse. That caused them to roll the dice on a sleazy entertainer.

Such voters haven't reflected enough on history. Things could get much, much worse—and quickly. That is one of the lessons many in my generation absorbed most fully on September 11, 2001. So in a world that has neither certitude nor peace, my pain at the unpreparedness of my country and the needlessly weak position it occupies seems likely to persist until Trump, who stokes that weakness, is no longer president.



Nichols : OPINION | After 9/11, America is losing the battle against terrorism

Tom Nichols, opinion contributor

Every year since 9/11, we grieve for the those who died, and honor the heroes among us who responded that day and who have defended us every day since. This is as it should be. But every Sept. 11 is also an opportunity to take stock of where we stand, and whether we have met the challenges the terrorists have placed before us.

The record, unfortunately, is mixed. Our armed forces have answered the call and demonstrated unparalleled martial — and civic — virtue both at home and on battlefields far from the United States. But have Americans, as a society, faced down the threat from terrorism, or have we surrendered to it, perhaps in ways we don't even understand?

The terrorists who attacked us at the turn of the 21st century did not think they would defeat us by force. Instead, their goal was to bait us into defeating ourselves: They hoped that we would overreact, abandon our values and lash out in ways that would make the rest of the world turn against us. They have succeeded more than we might like to admit.

Yes, Osama bin Laden and his minions made some key

miscalculations, to be sure. Like so many defeated enemies in the past, they fatally underestimated the United States and the determination we would exhibit in hunting them down and destroying their organizations. If the terrorist goal, however, was to force us to change our way of life and to abandon some of the core beliefs that make us Americans, then their efforts have had at least some of their intended effect.

First and foremost, we remain obsessed with terrorism far out of proportion to the actual threat, even to the point of irrationality. People who do not think twice about texting while driving are terrified of being caught in the next 9/11. Driven by their own ignorance of statistics, preyed on by opportunistic politicians and transfixed by live images from terrorist attacks around the world, American citizens have abandoned the courage and self-confidence that made us a great nation, and instead cheer on pointless, mostly symbolic “Muslim bans” against countries that produced exactly none of the attackers of 2001.

Likewise, we have mortgaged our privacy, no small number of our civil rights, and even the precious hours of our daily lives to laws and regulations and travel rituals meant to protect us from the smallest chance of terrorist harm, all while

ignoring the material and psychological price of such policies. We rail against “the government” for inflicting these indignities on us, but our elected representatives and our security services are doing exactly what we've told them to do: to protect us at all costs.

Speaking of costs, we're also spending money. Lots of it. In the rush to “do something,” we created an entirely new department (and gave it the creepy name of “Homeland Security” that wouldn't have sounded out of place in communist-era Eastern Europe), and we now spend billions upon billions of dollars in maintaining a new national security state that dwarfs the one we created to handle the existential threat aimed at us during the Cold War. The glittering skylines in once-sleepy suburban neighborhoods around Washington are the artifacts of nearly two decades of a single-minded focus on national security to the exclusion of many other priorities.

Of course, we haven't experienced a second 9/11, nor have our Western allies, despite the ghastly attacks on civilians in cities such as London, Paris and Madrid. (Ironically, the one nation to suffer grievous mass casualty attacks since 9/11, including synchronized airliner bombings, has been the authoritarian security state of Vladimir Putin's Russia.) To some

extent, this is testimony to the effectiveness of our intelligence, police and defense organizations. We will likely never know how many plots were secretly scotched by our soldiers, spies and detectives, and for this, we should be grateful.

But we are buying all of this at a very high a cost in money spent and wasted, in lives risked and lost — and in principles compromised or even abandoned. The reality is that we will almost certainly suffer more terrorist attacks by smaller groups or individuals, no matter how childishly we insist on perfect security. There is no such thing as absolute security, and we must stop looking for magical solutions, in which one war or one military victory brings all of this to an end. The battle against terrorists and the Islamic extremists who send them against us is going to be a long struggle, just as the fight against communist totalitarians was during the Cold War.

Accordingly, we must stop asking when it will be over. A mature society needs to realize, and to accept, that this fight may not be “over” in our lifetimes. We should instead scale back our unreasonable expectations of security, and return to a stoic and measured concentration on the daily fight, all the while living our lives and holding firm to our ideals as a Western, tolerant, open society. Those Western principles are what

made us a target in the first place. If we surrender them in order to fight our enemies on their preferred

terms, we are doing their work for them.

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : 9/11: Finding Answers in Ashes 16 Years Later

The Editorial Board

An inscription on the lobby wall greets visitors in Latin at the offices of the New York City medical examiner. It is an adage familiar to places where autopsies are performed. Reasonably translated, it says: "Let conversation cease. Let laughter flee. This is the place where death rejoices to help the living."

Another saying, borrowed from the Book of Proverbs, Chapter 31, might also work were it to be put on that wall: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves." That, too, is what the medical examiner's office is about. Rarely has it been called upon to speak up as relentlessly as it has for those whose voices were silenced at the World Trade Center 16 years ago.

For the chief medical examiner, Dr. Barbara Sampson, and her staff, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, are never past. All these years later, the team still strives to scientifically identify each of the 2,753 people who were killed in the destruction of the twin towers. "We made a commitment to

the families that we would do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes," Dr. Sampson said. "We're the family physician to the bereaved."

Death certificates for the victims were issued long ago. But assigning identities to the 21,905 human remains that were recovered from the wreckage is a separate matter. Only 1,641 of the 2,753 victims — 60 percent — have been positively identified, mostly through DNA analysis. The success rate is slightly better, 64 percent, in regard to the 405 firefighters, police officers and emergency medical workers who died at ground zero.

Time has not been a friend of the forensic teams. Victim No. 1,641 — a man who, at his family's request, has not been publicly named — became known to them a month ago. This was nearly two and a half years after No. 1,640 was identified: Matthew David Yarnell, a 26-year-old technology specialist who worked on the 97th floor of the south tower. Before that, six months had gone by since No. 1,639: Patrice Braut, 31, the lone Belgian citizen among the victims. He worked on the 97th floor of the north tower.

"It's a slow go," Dr. Sampson said. "We're now down to the ones that are very difficult to get useful DNA."

The genetic material that's available is sometimes no more than the tiniest patch of flesh. Some remains lay in the wreckage for weeks, months, even years — degraded by water, burning jet fuel and all manner of debris from the downed buildings. In addition, bacterial DNA intermingled with human matter. "It was the worst combination of events you could have for a DNA specimen," said Dr. Sampson, who has been the city's chief medical examiner since December 2014.

Recent scientific advances, including what she described as a bone-extraction technique, made it possible to identify the 1,641st victim. That gives her hope that the process is not stuck. "I am optimistic we will identify more people," she said. "But do I think we will be able to identify every single person? Probably not."

Apparently, relatives of the victims have not given up. None of them have told the medical examiner's office that, after the passage of so much time, they no longer care about matching slivers of remains to

their loved ones. "We work very closely with the families," Dr. Sampson said. "We know every family's wishes as for what they want us to do."

Since 2014, unclaimed remains have rested 70 feet underground in a repository at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in Lower Manhattan. Only members of the medical examiner's office may enter the area (though no laboratory work is done there). Next to the repository is a quiet space known as the reflection room, reserved for Sept. 11 families and their guests. Not surprisingly, the anniversary is a time of pilgrimage there. In a typical month, 20 or so people go to the room. On Sept. 11 alone last year, 65 visited.

Just about every week, a few families will call the medical examiner's office with questions, mostly of a technical or administrative nature. Still, often enough, there's a catch in the caller's voice or a verbal tic that makes plain how time is an imperfect healer. "You can get a sense of despair," Dr. Sampson said.

"And hope," she added.

POLITICO The Iran Deal Is on Thin Ice, and Rightly So

The future of the Iran deal is again under question. President Donald Trump garnered much attention in July by stating he no longer wanted to certify that Iran is in compliance with the agreement, which is required by law to occur every 90 days and thus due again next month. European leaders reacted by affirming their support for the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and the Iranian government responded by claiming that it was in compliance — but would take measures to accelerate its nuclear program if Washington were to stop its compliance. Meanwhile, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) certified Iran's compliance again in June, weakening the president's case.

But given the extraordinary threat that Iran poses with its expansionism in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and elsewhere, as well as the ongoing administration review of Iran policy, the status of the JCPOA cannot be sacrosanct.

It's clear that those within Trump's orbit are already thinking hard about the best way to remake U.S. policy toward Iran. Former Ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton recently published a detailed "game plan" for pulling out of the agreement and adopting a course of political pressure on Iran amounting almost to regime change. And this week, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley laid out the case for Iran's non-compliance in a speech at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), without endorsing a specific action by the administration.

The Trump administration, Haley noted, sees the agreement as flawed because it is time-limited, front-loaded in Iran's favor, and does not end enrichment. Thus, it does not totally exclude Iran's path to the accumulation of sufficient fissile material for a nuclear device. Moreover, it does not effectively address prior nuclear weaponization efforts, which were left to an opaque side deal between the IAEA and Iran, which now blocks inspections of military facilities.

But a primary problem with the agreement, in Haley's view, is that it does nothing to curb Iran's aggressive regional expansionism. This behavior, which profoundly worries every friendly Middle East leader, kicked into high gear just weeks after the JCPOA was signed in 2015. International agreements, particularly concerning weapons of mass destruction, are obviously important in themselves, but their strategic context should not be ignored. For example, while there has been little genuine angst over the Israeli nuclear weapons program, regional and global concern about Iranian nukes has been profound due to its destabilizing regional policies.

The Obama administration's behavior stoked Iran's aggressive regional approach.

The Obama administration's behavior stoked Iran's aggressive regional approach. U.S. officials in the previous administration were slippery on the issue of "linkage" between the agreement and Iran's disruptive regional agenda. At times, such as a speech Vice President

Joseph Biden made at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in April 2015, officials argued that the agreement was simply concerned with nuclear restraints, and Iran's regional behavior would be dealt with in other ways. But it never was — not in Syria, Yemen, or elsewhere. Rather, the administration's implicit position appeared best reflected in President Barack Obama's 2015 interview with the *Atlantic*, wherein he argued that the long game engendered by the agreement would help return Iran to respectability and calm the region, while also signaling that he was not overly troubled by Iran's deprivations. He opined that Saudi Arabia had to find a way to "share the neighborhood" with Iran, and that backing U.S. allies in the region too strongly against Iran would only fan the flames of conflict.

But Iran's behavior is now too dangerous to ignore. Tehran has facilitated Bashar al-Assad's scorched-earth policy, encouraged Russia to intervene in Syria, and abetted the rise of the Islamic State by allowing Assad and its clients in

Iraq to oppress Sunni Arabs to the point of embracing the jihadist organization. While the JCPOA itself did not enable Iran's regional policies or finance its expeditionary campaigns — which were well-funded before 2015 — the agreement encouraged Iran's behavior. Certainly its huge arms purchases from Russia would not have been possible under the oil export and foreign deposit sanctions, and the agreement gave Iran a "seal of approval" facilitating its aggressiveness.

Leveraging the Iran deal to pressure Tehran, or even negotiating a more restrictive agreement, may look at first blush like mission impossible. Despite the nibbling at the edges described above, there is as yet no serious Iranian JCPOA violation. Under these conditions, as Richard Nephew and Ian Goldberg argue in *Foreign Policy*, there is little likelihood that the United States could convince the agreement's other signatories and third parties to again implement U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil exports, which brought Iran to the negotiating table last time.

While this fact seemingly argues for leaving the agreement alone, there are other considerations that the administration must take into account. This includes a looming crisis in the Middle East: The Iranian-Assad-

Russian campaign for dominance in Syria, and the American-led Coalition campaign to destroy the Islamic State, are both coming to a close. This leaves the United States and its partners with the choice of pulling out of enclaves in Syria and northern Iraq, which were established to fight the Islamic State but useful to counter the Iranian alliance, or if not, face possible direct military confrontation with Iran and its surrogates in both countries, as they see these enclaves as obstacles to Iranian domination of the Levant. Under such circumstances, no aspect of Iranian relations, including the JCPOA, can be immune from a re-think.

The United States can take measures here short of a full-scale JCPOA annulment — which, given the difficulties imposing international sanctions, would likely be a diplomatic disaster. European allies, for example, recently joined the United States in challenging an Iranian missile test "in defiance of" U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the JCPOA. The issue of blocked IAEA access to Iranian military facilities should also be reviewed.

Iran's expectation of commercial benefits from the JCPOA is also its Achilles' heel.

Iran's expectation of commercial benefits from the JCPOA is also its Achilles' heel. The administration

could discourage global firms from doing business with Iran by leaving open its final position on the deal, and thus placing at risk their business with America. This is a technical violation of the JCPOA's terms, but of the most unrealistic condition — the commitment to support Iranian economic development. While such actions would disappoint Iran, they are unlikely to drive Tehran from an otherwise beneficial agreement.

Furthermore, as Haley signaled in her AEI remarks, the law passed by the U.S. Congress requiring the president to certify that Iran is abiding by the Iran deal defines "compliance" more broadly than the JCPOA terms does. In contrast to the Iran deal, the president is required to certify that sanctions relief is in the vital national security interests of the U.S. The president thus could hold Iran in "non-compliance" under that act without necessarily stopping — or allowing Congress to stop — American compliance with the terms of the JCPOA. Under JCPOA Paragraph 36, the United States could also reinstitute token or partial sanctions in response to Iranian actions without pulling out of the agreement.

To many in the international community — especially Europe, but less so in the countries closer to Iran — such steps are anathema. But few if any countries really consider

preserving the JCPOA their overriding interest in the Middle East: Even in Europe, what really impacts populations is threats from the Islamic State and unchecked refugee flows, which are largely a result of Iran's policies in Syria. Moreover, a possible collapse of the U.S.-led Middle East security system by an unchecked Iran endangers them more than it does the United States.

No matter what Trump or another president does, the Iran deal is poised to run up against an uncomfortable political reality. Under the JCPOA, Congress must formally terminate sanctions — which until now have only been waived by the executive branch — by January 2024. It defies credulity to think that anything like today's Congress, given anything like Iran's current behavior, would take such a step by 2024. But not doing so would violate a key JCPOA provision and block Iranian formal adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty's Additional Protocol. Under these conditions, it may be feasible to pressure those in the international community favorable to the JCPOA to rethink overall relations with Iran, as the "price" for salvaging the agreement's nuclear restraints.



Lake : The Art of Renegotiating the Iran Nuclear Deal

by Eli Lake
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Since Donald Trump assumed the presidency, European allies have worried he will fulfill his campaign promise and pull the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal.

Trump's national security cabinet has a different idea. U.S. officials tell me that a new strategy on the agreement is ready for the president's approval. Instead of blowing it apart, the plan is to make it stronger.

The idea can be summed up as "waive, decertify and fix." On Sept. 14, Trump is expected to waive the crippling sanctions on Iran's banks and oil exports that were suspended as a condition of the 2015 nuclear bargain known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. A law passed by Congress in 2015 requires the president to make a decision on those sanctions every 120 days. Trump waived the sanctions in May and is expected to do so again.

That's the carrot for the Europeans. The stick will be that Trump is also expected to lay out the U.S.

government's concerns with the 2015 nuclear deal. It has three major flaws, according to U.S. officials. These are the sunset provisions that lift limits on elements like Iranian stockpiles of low-enriched uranium between 2025 and 2030; the failure of the deal to prohibit Iran's development of ballistic missiles; and the weak provisions on inspections of suspected Iranian military sites.

This is important because the 2015 legislation that requires the secretary of state to certify Iranian compliance provides a lot of flexibility. As Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, explained in a speech Tuesday at the American Enterprise Institute, Trump can decertify Iranian compliance if he deems the deal does not advance the U.S. national interest, even if Iran is technically obeying the letter of the agreement. As of now, U.S. officials tell me Trump is planning to rule Iran is out of compliance, in part because it continues to test ballistic missiles.

Trump's decertification would not kill the nuclear deal. Instead it would send the matter to Congress, which

could choose to vote to re-impose the crippling sanctions Trump is expected to waive this week. Trump will have to decide on certifying Iran by Oct. 15.

The timing of the waiver and the deadline for certification creates a diplomatic window. Next week the U.N. General Assembly will meet in New York, and Trump is expected to make the case to his counterparts from the U.K. and France to persuade Germany to support re-opening negotiations on the deal. (The 2015 nuclear deal was negotiated with Iran by the U.S. and those three partners, plus the European Union, Russia and China.)

With the Oct. 15 deadline looming over the U.N. General Assembly, Trump will have some leverage with the Europeans who support the deal and whose banks and energy companies stand to make deals in Iran now that sanctions are lifted. If Congress re-imposes the crippling sanctions, European investors would have to choose between doing business with the U.S. and doing business with Iran.

"The real fear that Donald Trump will walk away from the nuclear deal is terrifying Europeans," Mark Dubowitz, the chief executive of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies told me. "This opens up potential space to finally address Barack Obama's fatally flawed agreement and to break the paralysis that has been America's Iran policy for the last eight years."

Already the French and the British seem open to it. Two U.S. diplomats told me this week that their counterparts from London and Paris have signaled they would consider pressuring Iran to address some of the deal's flaws. French foreign ministry spokeswoman Agnes Romatet-Espagne last month told reporters that President Emmanuel Macron "on Aug. 29 indicated that the Vienna accord could be supplemented by work for the post-2025 period (and) by an indispensable work on the use of ballistic missiles."

If anything Trump has proven to be unpredictable. If he rejects the strategy of his national security team, it would not be the first time. Trump waited three months before

approving a plan for the Afghanistan war.

But the proposal fits very much with Trump's personality. As he counsels

in his book, "Art of the Deal:" "Leverage, don't make deals without it." In this case Trump has created leverage by threatening to withdraw the U.S. from the nuclear bargain

negotiated by his predecessor. It remains to be seen whether he can turn that leverage into a better Iran deal.

the Atlantic

What the Iran Deal Can Teach America About North Korea

Ariane Tabatabai

UN Ambassador Nikki Haley said something particularly telling on Tuesday, in a speech on the Iran deal that seemed designed to discredit it. Broadly speaking, under the agreement the United States and other world powers struck with Iran, Tehran agreed to suspend its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief; it's an arrangement President Trump seems anxious to reconsider, and Haley's speech detailed some of the thinking. "Judging any international agreement begins and ends with the nature of the government that signed it," she said. "Can it be trusted to abide by its commitments?"

She was, of course, talking about the nature of the Iranian government, but the question of commitment could apply equally well to the administration in which she serves. If, as Obama's critics argued in the context of the Syrian red-line crisis, American credibility depends in part on its willingness to follow through on military threats, surely it also depends on whether it abides by its diplomatic commitments. And as the Trump administration attempts to find a solution to the growing North Korean nuclear threat while openly hinting it will withdraw from the nuclear deal with Iran—despite independent monitors repeatedly verifying that Iran is holding up its end—it's this kind of credibility that may determine whether the crisis on the Korean peninsula is resolved peacefully.

The North Koreans will be watching what happens to the Iran deal, and it will be every bit the test of American credibility that Obama's famous "red line" crisis over Syria was. Obama's failure to punish the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons—after having declared their use a "red line" that would entail "enormous consequences" for Syria if crossed—was widely criticized, including in these pages. In his own defense, Obama dismissed the question of credibility in this context as "dropping bombs on someone to prove that you're willing to drop bombs on someone." That view does enjoy some support in foreign policy circles, with some positing that theorists and policymakers have fetishized credibility to such an extent that it can pull the United

States into wars that aren't in its national interest.

Yet credibility does not pertain only to military power. States' military threats may be taken more seriously when it's clear that they have followed through on them in the past. The same must be true diplomatically: States can better advance their agenda through diplomatic channels if they have a track record of following through on commitments made through those conduits. Just as a nation needs to show the ability and willingness to use force to present a viable threat to its adversaries, a state that enters international agreements needs to demonstrate the ability and willingness to uphold its end of the bargain. Otherwise there's no point inviting them to the negotiating table in the first place.

This isn't to say that credibility is the only thing that matters. After all, diplomatic failures and breaches don't always translate into the complete collapse of diplomatic efforts or lead into military alternatives. Despite their history of tension, and their respective violations of previous diplomatic settlements, the United States and North Korea may still return to the table once again, as America and Iran did in the past. This is for a very simple reason that can trump even deep mistrust: It's in countries' interests to negotiate when the alternatives look much worse, and the costs of even failed negotiations are lower than the potential costs of no negotiations.

Haley is right in her assessment: Countries' track records matter. Without some level of predictability, all international agreements would fall apart. Moreover, the failure to see diplomatic solutions through can put countries in a worse position than they were in before negotiations started. And in focusing on Tehran's track record, she fails to consider what her administration's own actions are telling the world about the United States.

In just a few months, President Trump has started to chip away at a credibility his predecessors, both Republicans and Democrats, built over decades. In the first few weeks, his administration put Iran "on notice" for its work on its missile program (without saying what the notice entailed), before stating that it was pulling the United States out of the Paris Agreement on climate

change. The administration has sent mixed signals to a range of countries, including adversaries, such as Iran and North Korea, but also allies, particularly the NATO countries, as well as the most significant economic power in the world, China. Indeed, the president declared NATO "obsolete" before revisiting this a few months later and calling it "no longer obsolete." And, in one of his major campaign promises on foreign and economic policy, he vowed to label the "grand champion" of currency manipulation, China, as such before reversing himself and declining to do so. This has left friends and foes equally confused and has proven that neither the pledges of "fire and fury," targeting North Korea, nor international agreements, are to be taken too seriously under this administration.

If America isn't viewed as credible in the diplomatic realm, how much incentive do other states have to come to the table and agree to change their behavior?

Today, America is facing a mischievous Iran, whose nuclear program was curtailed by the nuclear deal. This summer, the UN nuclear watchdog verified the country's compliance with the agreement for the eighth time since its implementation started less than two years ago. The Islamic Republic remains a challenge in a number of arenas, including its human-rights track record, support for terrorist groups, and general regional activities, as Haley correctly noted in her speech. But as America's allies and negotiating partners—France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, along with China and Russia—have stated repeatedly, the deal is working in its narrow aim of limiting Iran's nuclear program. Haley said as much when she stated that "the deal was constructed in a way that makes leaving it less attractive." In other words, while the deal isn't perfect, alternatives to it are far worse.

What's more, the agreement has provided an opening for the international community to build on it to explore diplomatic solutions on other security challenges Tehran's behavior creates. Importantly, as the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini frequently reminds Trump, it is also a multilateral agreement. That means it's a

commitment not just to Iran, but to the other parties to the agreement, whose interests are also implicated. None of them want to withdraw.

Despite all this, the Trump administration appears hell-bent on rocking the boat. All the while, America is facing down North Korea, a country whose brutal regime has acquired a small, but growing, arsenal of nuclear weapons—something Iran never achieved and that the Iran deal was designed, so far successfully, to prevent. North Korea has now tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles, before detonating what it claims is a thermonuclear weapon. And as Pyongyang's nuclear capabilities have expanded, America's foreign-policy toolkit for addressing it has shrunk. As Mark Bowden wrote in a recent issue of *The Atlantic*, "any effort to crush North Korea flirts not just with heavy losses, but with one of the greatest catastrophes in human history." A military campaign on the Korean peninsula could cost hundreds of thousands of lives, just in its initial phase, and could very well drag on to become even more devastating.

This makes diplomacy, with both North Korea and China, an indispensable part of any solution. And it means that the best-case scenario for a peaceful resolution is a deal that looks a bit like the Iran deal—meaning a far-from-perfect arrangement involving economic inducements in exchange for a freeze on aspects of Pyongyang's nuclear development—except that North Korea already has nuclear weapons.

But with regard to Iran, U.S. officials have not only shown a lack of strategy and consistency, but also overt efforts to torpedo the deal and blame Tehran for it. As part of these efforts, some White House officials have stated that they'd be looking to reimpose the sanctions lifted by the nuclear deal under different pretexts, such as Iran's missile activities, which weren't covered by the deal. Others, including Haley, have tried to find evidence of what they decry as Iranian noncompliance, despite the UN atomic watchdog, the Joint Commission overseeing the deal's implementation, and U.S. partners arguing otherwise. Moreover, these international bodies, along with U.S. allies and partners, are joined by senior members President Trump's own cabinet, including well-known

Iran hawks like Defense Secretary James Mattis and National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster.

There have been small bumps on the road: For example, Tehran briefly went above its heavy-water cap. But such bumps are an inherent part of the implementation of any technically complex and

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

14-18 minutes

Editor's Note: *On January 31, 2017, Nicholas Eberstadt testified before members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the threat posed by North Korea. The following is adapted from his testimony with permission.*

Our seemingly unending inability to fathom Pyongyang's true objectives, and our attendant proclivity for being taken by surprise over and over again by North Korean actions, is not just a matter of succumbing to Pyongyang's strategic deceptions, assiduous as those efforts may be.

The trouble, rather, is that even our top foreign-policy experts and our most sophisticated diplomatists are creatures of our own cultural heritage and intellectual environment. We Americans are, so to speak, children of the Enlightenment, steeped in the precepts of our highly globalized era. Which is to say: We have absolutely no common point of reference with the worldview, or moral compass, or first premises of the closed-society decision makers who control the North Korean state. Americans' first instincts are to misunderstand practically everything the North Korean state is really about.

The DPRK is a project pulled by tides and shaped by sensibilities all but forgotten to the contemporary West. North Korea is a hereditary Asian dynasty (currently on its third Kim) — but one maintained by Marxist-Leninist police-state powers unimaginable to earlier epochs of Asian despots and supported by a recently invented and quasi-religious ideology.

And exactly what is that ideology? Along with its notorious variant of emperor worship, "Juche thought" also extols an essentially messianic — and unapologetically racialist — vision of history: one in which the long-abused Korean people finally assume their rightful place in the universe by standing up against the foreign races that have long oppressed them, at last reuniting the entire Korean peninsula under an

politically charged agreement. And the nuclear deal has proven its resilience and effectiveness as all these technical challenges have been addressed thanks to the mechanisms built into the nuclear deal.

The administration's efforts to undermine the deal are hurting U.S.

credibility. And they will constrain U.S. attempts to rein in North Korea's nuclear ambitions, as well as future potential cases of nuclear misbehavior—including Iran, should the country return to non-compliance.

The United States shouldn't make military or diplomatic decisions

based solely on what will maintain its credibility. After all, credibility should be a means, not an end in itself. But the United States can't continue to lead international processes designed to sanction countries and bring them to the table—and thereby avoid using force—without it.

North Korean Nuclear Threat: Understanding Regime Key to Neutralizing It

independent socialist state (i.e., the DPRK). Although highly redacted in broadcasts aimed at foreign ears, this call for reunification of the *mijnok* (race), and for retribution against the enemy races or powers (starting with America and Japan), constantly reverberates within North Korea, sounded by the regime's highest authorities.

This is where its nuclear weapons program fits into North Korea's designs. In Pyongyang's thinking, the indispensable instrument for achieving the DPRK's grand historical ambitions must be a supremely powerful military: more specifically, one possessed of a nuclear arsenal that can imperil and break the foreign enemies who protect and prop up what Pyongyang regards as the vile puppet state in the South, so that the DPRK may consummate its unconditional unification and give birth to its envisioned earthly Korean-race utopia.

In earlier decades, Pyongyang might have seen multiple paths to this Elysium, but with the collapse of the Soviet empire, the long-term decline of the DPRK's industrial infrastructure, and the gradually accumulating evidence that South Korea was not going to succumb on its own to the revolutionary upheaval Pyongyang so dearly wished of it, the nuclear option increasingly looks to be the one and only trail by which to reach the Promised Kingdom.

* * *

Like all other states, the North Korean regime relies at times upon diplomacy to pursue its official aims — thus, for example, the abiding call for a "peace treaty" with the U.S. to bring a formal end to the Korean War (since 1953 only an armistice, or cease-fire, has been in place). Yet strangely, few foreign-policy specialists seem to understand why Pyongyang is so fixated on this particular document. If the U.S. agreed to a peace treaty, Pyongyang insists, it would then also have to agree to a withdrawal of its forces from South Korea and to a dissolution of its military alliance with Seoul — for the danger of "external armed attack" upon which

the Seoul-Washington Mutual-Defense Treaty is predicated would by definition no longer exist. If all this could come to pass, North Korea would win a huge victory without firing a shot.

With apologies to Clausewitz, diplomacy is merely war by other means for Pyongyang.

But with apologies to Clausewitz, diplomacy is merely war by other means for Pyongyang. And for the dynasty the onetime anti-Japanese guerrilla fighter Kim Il Sung established, policy and war are inseparable — this is why the DPRK is the most highly militarized society on the planet. This is also why the answer to the unification question that so preoccupies North Korean leadership appears to entail meticulous and incessant preparations, already underway for decades, to fight and win a limited nuclear war against the United States.

To almost any Western reader, the notion that North Korea might actually be planning to stare down the USA in some future nuclear face-off will sound preposterous, if not outright insane. And indeed it does — to us. Yet remember, as we already know from press reports, North Korea has been diligently working on everything that would actually be required for such a confrontation: miniaturization of nuclear warheads, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and even cyberwarfare (per the Sony hacking episode). Note further that while North Korean leadership may be highly tolerant of casualties (on the part of others, that is), it most assuredly is not suicidal itself. Quite the contrary: Its acute interest in self-preservation is demonstrated *prima facie* by the fact of its very survival, over 25 years after the demise of the USSR and Eastern European socialism. It would be unwise of us to presume that only one of the two forces arrayed along the DMZ is capable of thinking about what it would take to deter the other in a time of crisis on the peninsula.

* * *

At this juncture, as so often in the past, serious people around the world are calling to "bring North Korea back to the table" to try to settle the DPRK nuclear issue. However, seeing the DPRK for what it is, rather than what we would like it to be, should oblige us to recognize two highly unpleasant truths.

First, the real existing North Korean leadership (as opposed to the imaginary version some Westerners would like to negotiate with) will never willingly give up their nuclear option. Never. Acquiescing in de-nuclearization would be tantamount to abandoning the sacred mission of Korean unification: which is to say, disavowing the DPRK's *raison d'être*. Thus submitting to foreign demands to de-nuclearize could well mean more than humiliation and disgrace for North Korean leadership: It could mean delegitimization and de-stabilization for the regime as well.

Second, international entreaties — summitry, conferencing, bargaining, and all the rest — can never succeed in convincing the DPRK to relinquish its nuclear program. Sovereign governments simply do not trade away their vital national interests.

Now, this is not to say that Western nonproliferation parlays with the DPRK have no results to show at all. We know they can result in blandishments (as per North Korea's custom of requiring "money for meetings") and in resource transfers (as with the Clinton Administration's Agreed Framework shipments of heavy fuel oil). They can provide external diplomatic cover for the DPRK nuclear program, as was in effect afforded under the intermittent 2003–07 six-party talks in Beijing. They can even lure North Korea's interlocutors into unexpected unilateral concessions, as witnessed in the final years of the George W. Bush administration, when Washington unfroze illicit North Korean overseas funds and removed Pyongyang from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism in misbegotten hope of a "breakthrough." *The one thing "engagement" can never produce,*

however, is North Korean de-nuclearization.

It is time to set aside the illusion of 'engaging' North Korea to effect nonproliferation and to embrace instead a paradigm that has a chance of actually working.

Note, too, that in every realm of international transaction, from commercial contracts to security accords, the record shows that, even when Western bargainers think they have made a deal with North Korea, the DPRK side never has any compunction about violating the understanding if that should serve purposes of state. This may outrage us, but it should not surprise us. For under North Korea's moral code, if there should be any advantage to gain from cheating against foreigners, then *not* cheating would be patently unpatriotic, a disloyal blow against the Motherland.

Yes, things would be so much easier for us if North Korea would simply agree to the deal we want *them* to accept. But if we put the wishful thinking to one side, a clear-eyed view of the North Korea *problematik* must be resigned to the grim reality that diplomacy can only have a very limited and highly specific role in addressing our gathering North Korean problem.

Diplomacy must have some role because it is barbaric not to talk with one's opponent — because communication can help both sides avoid needless and potentially disastrous miscalculations. But the notion of a "grand bargain" with Pyongyang — in which all mutual concerns are simultaneously settled, as the "Perry Process" conjectured back in the 1990s and others have subsequently prophesied — is nothing but a dream.

It is time to set aside the illusion of "engaging" North Korea to effect nonproliferation and to embrace instead a paradigm that has a chance of actually working. Call this "threat reduction": Through a

coherent long-term strategy, working with allies and others but also acting unilaterally, the United States can blunt, then mitigate, and eventually help eliminate the killing force of the North Korean state.

* * *

In broad outline, North Korean threat reduction requires progressive development of more effective defenses against the DPRK's means of destruction while simultaneously weakening Pyongyang's capabilities for supporting both conventional and strategic offense.

A more effective defense against the North Korean threat would consist mainly, though not entirely, of military measures. Restoring recently sacrificed U.S. capabilities would be essential. Likewise more and better missile defense: THAAD systems (and more) for South Korea and Japan, and moving forward on missile defense in earnest for the USA. It would be incumbent on South Korea to reduce its own population's exposure to North Korean death from the skies through military modernization and civil defense. The DPRK would be served notice that 60 years of zero-consequence rules of engagement for allied forces in the face of North Korean "provocations" on the peninsula had just come to an end. But diplomacy would count here as well: most importantly, alliance strengthening throughout Asia in general and repairing the currently frayed ROK-Japan relationship in particular. Today's ongoing bickering between Seoul and Tokyo reeks of interwar politics at its worst; leaders who want to live in a postwar order need to rise above such petty grievances.

As for weakening the DPRK's military economy, the foundation for all its offensive capabilities, reinvigorating current counterproliferation efforts such as PSI and MCTR is a good place to start — but only a start. Given the "military first" disposition of the North

Korean economy, restricting its overall potential is necessary as well. South Korea's subsidized trade with the North, for example, should come to an end. And put Pyongyang back on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list — it never should have been taken off. Sanctions with a genuine bite should be implemented — the dysfunctional DPRK economy is uniquely susceptible to these, and amazing as this may sound, the current sanctions strictures on North Korea have long been weaker than, say, those enforced until recently on Iran. (We can enforce such sanctions unilaterally, by the way.) And not least important: revive efforts like the Illicit Activities Initiative, the brief, but tremendously successful DUBYA-era task force for tracking and freezing North Korea's dirty money abroad.

Then there is the China question. Received wisdom in some quarters notwithstanding, it is by no means impossible for America and her allies to pressure the DPRK if China does not cooperate (see previous paragraph). That said: China has been allowed to play a double game with North Korea for far too long, and it is time for Beijing to pay a penalty for all its support for the most odious regime on the planet today. We can begin by exacting it in diplomatic venues all around the world, starting with the U.N. NGOs can train a spotlight on Beijing's complicity in the North Korean regime's crimes. And international humanitarian action should shame China into opening a safe transit route to the free world for North Korean refugees attempting to escape their oppressors.

If North Korean subjects enjoyed greater human rights, the DPRK killing machine could not possibly operate as effectively as it does today. Activists will always worry about the instrumentalization of human-rights concerns for other policy ends — and rightly so. Today and for the foreseeable future, however, there is no contradiction between the objectives of human-

rights promotion and nonproliferation in the DPRK. North Korea's human-rights situation is vastly worse than that in apartheid South Africa — why hasn't the international community (and South Korean civil society) found its voice on this real-time, ongoing tragedy? The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner on Human Rights has already prepared a comprehensive commission of Inquiry on the situation in the DPRK. Let governments of conscience seek international criminal accountability for North Korea's leadership.

Many in the West talk of "isolating" North Korea as if this were an objective in its own right. But a serious DPRK threat-reduction strategy would not do so. The North Korean regime depends on isolation from the outside world to maintain its grip and conduct untrammelled pursuit of its international objectives. The regime is deadly afraid of what it terms "ideological and cultural poisoning": what we could call foreign media, international information, cultural exchanges, and the like. We should be saying, "Bring on the 'poisoning!'" The more external contact with that enslaved population, the better. We should even consider technical training abroad for North Koreans in accounting, law, economics, and the like — because some day, in a better future, that nation will need a cadre of Western-style technocrats for rejoining our world.

This brings us to the last agenda item: preparing for a successful reunification in a post-DPRK peninsula. The Kim regime *is* the North Korean nuclear threat; that threat will not end until the DPRK disappears. We cannot tell when, or how, this will occur. But it is not too soon to commence the wide-ranging and painstaking international planning and preparations that will facilitate divided Korea's long-awaited reunion as a single peninsula, free and whole.

The New York Times

Instead of Launching a Missile, North Korea Throws a Party

Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea marked its government's 69th anniversary not with another missile test, as many had feared, but with a gala party for the scientists involved in carrying out the country's most powerful nuclear test yet last week, the state-run news media reported on Sunday.

The country's leader, Kim Jong-un, celebrated the national holiday on

Saturday by bringing his nuclear scientists and engineers to Pyongyang, the capital, and holding a banquet.

On their way from the country's underground nuclear test site in northeast North Korea to Pyongyang, the technicians had been cheered by people who poured out to see them passing by, the country's official Korean Central News Agency reported. And upon their arrival in the city, on Wednesday, they were met with a

hero's welcome, including a huge outdoor rally and firecrackers.

North Korea described the test, on Sept. 3, as the detonation of a hydrogen bomb that could be delivered on a missile. Mr. Kim's government called it "a merciless sledgehammer blow to the U.S. imperialists."

Outside officials and analysts had feared that the country would commemorate the birthday of its government on Saturday by conducting another weapons test,

possibly launching another intercontinental ballistic missile.

South Korean officials predicted that such a missile test was almost certain to happen soon, particularly given the tougher sanctions being considered by the United Nations Security Council. On Friday, Washington called for the Council to vote on a draft resolution Monday that would impose new sanctions on North Korea for its latest nuclear test.

During the banquet on Saturday, Mr. Kim spurred his engineers to make “redoubled efforts, not slackening the spirit displayed by them in bringing the great auspicious event of the national history,” the North Korean news agency said.

“The recent test of the H-bomb is the great victory won by the Korean people at the cost of their blood while tightening their belts in the arduous period,” Mr. Kim was quoted as saying. “He put forward the tasks for the scientists and technicians in the field of defense science to conduct scientific researches for bolstering up the nuclear deterrence of self-defense in the drive to attain the final goal of completing the state nuclear force.”

North Korea launched two ICBMs in July, the last of which demonstrated the potential of reaching the mainland United States.

But North Korea has yet to demonstrate that its warhead would not burn up while re-entering the atmosphere or that it could hit a target with reasonable accuracy, analysts said. The county would probably focus on mastering such technologies in future tests, they said.

Mr. Kim attended his banquet with his wife, Ri Sol-ju, and top members of his ruling Workers’ Party. The party included performances and patriotic songs swearing loyalty to

the party and Mr. Kim, the North Korean news media said.

In its report on the banquet, the state news agency mentioned the names of two senior party officials, Ri Man-gon and Hong Sung-mu. Mr. Ri is North Korea’s minister of defense industries, and Mr. Hong is his deputy. As such, they are in charge of the country’s nuclear weapons development.

Mr. Hong accompanied Mr. Kim, the leader, during his recent visit to his country’s Nuclear Weapons Institute, where the head of the institute, Ri Hong-sop, briefed Mr. Kim about what was called a hydrogen bomb. Hours after the photo of the three men together was

carried in the North Korean media on Sept. 3, the country conducted its nuclear test.

Later, the North Korean media carried a photo of Mr. Hong and Ri Hong-sop in military uniforms bearing a four-star and a three-star insignia, respectively, and receiving flowers during a ceremony. Mr. Ri once served as director of North Korea’s atomic energy institute at its main nuclear complex in Yongbyon, the birthplace of the North’s nuclear weapons program.

All three men, Ri Man-gon, Hong Sung-mu and Ri Hong-sop, have been placed on United Nations sanctions lists.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Economic Sanctions Have Limited Reach

Ian Talley

The Trump administration is turning to economic warfare—an intensified sanctions program—to deal with an increasingly belligerent North Korean regime.

But economic tools have a mixed record of success addressing geopolitical problems.

Sanctions helped end apartheid in South Africa. They pushed Iran to an agreement to curtail its nuclear program, though many critics say the deal is insufficient. Over 50 years they haven’t budged the Castro family from its hold on power in Cuba and failed to turn Russia back from its Ukraine incursions.

Much depends on how forcefully Washington applies its economic weapons and how much cooperation it gets from other nations.

Alarmed by Pyongyang’s latest nuclear test and preparations for another intercontinental ballistic missile test, the Trump administration is crafting harsher economic penalties against North Korea and its facilitators. Washington hopes tougher measures would avert a potentially catastrophic military conflict and forestall the evolution of Pyongyang’s nuclear-weapons technology.

U.S. officials are pushing the United Nations Security Council to ban North Korea textile exports, embargo oil sales to the country and prohibit it from renting out its workers abroad. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is readying new

sanctions likely targeting the largest importers of North Korean goods and some of the banks facilitating that trade.

Past U.S. sanctions efforts have a spotty record.

Among the successes: U.S. lawmakers championed sanctions in 1986 against South Africa’s apartheid regime that eventually led to a global trade embargo against the nation. By 1991, with its economy in recession, the government repealed the apartheid laws.

A U.S. sanctions regime against Myanmar’s antidemocratic government was a key factor in precipitating a collapse in that country’s economic growth. By 2012, as democracy slowly returned to the country, the U.S. began easing those measures.

The Bush administration in 2007 was able to force North Korea to shut down a nuclear facility critical to the regime’s weapons program by cutting off a small Macao-based bank from the U.S. financial system. That temporarily chilled international financing for Pyongyang as foreign banks feared losing access to the dollar, the currency used for most of the world’s trade.

But the regime soon secretly restarted its nuclear-weapons program. China has since stepped in to become its biggest trade partner—accounting for 90% of the total—and Pyongyang has improved its sanction-evasion techniques.

“Targeted sanctions—unintentionally and counterintuitively—helped to create more efficient markets in

China for North Korea Incorporated,” said John Park, director of the Korea Working Group at the Harvard Kennedy School.

The Trump administration is hoping now to replicate with North Korea the sanctions approach that forced Iran to negotiate a nuclear deal under the Obama administration. In that case, the U.S. secured European allies’ support to stem oil revenue to the Persian economy.

Former U.S. officials say the extent of the efforts against Iran dwarf the current North Korea sanctions regime. Countering Tehran required applying pressure through the U.N., conducting global shuttle diplomacy through the State and Treasury departments and the Justice Department’s using the legal system to wrangle foreign banks into compliance.

In contrast, foreign government compliance with U.N. sanctions against North Korea is poor. China, in particular, is proving to be a reluctant partner.

U.S. sanction experts say a severe escalation in economic pressure that threatens North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s hold on power is needed to change his calculus.

“It would mean placing a stranglehold on the North Korean economy that makes it impossible for the leader to pay his military and security forces, to fuel his planes and trucks, or to provide bribes to his family and cronies,” said Adam Szubin, the former head of Treasury’s sanctions office who is now at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

Asia analysts say China often fails to crack down on the firms and individuals that help finance Mr. Kim’s regime. Even when Beijing does act, those measures are often temporary, and cross-border sales are often soon resumed.

“One way the Trump administration can get the Chinese into the game here in a more effective fashion is by looking at more sanctions on Chinese entities, especially certain smaller banks and trading companies, that are critical to the North Korean economy,” said David Cohen, a former top CIA and Treasury official now a partner at WilmerHale.

Studies by C4ADS, a nonprofit tracking global security threats, show Pyongyang’s evasion networks are financed by a centralized and limited system. “A relatively small number of networks that bridge licit and illicit systems” means they are vulnerable to disruption, said David Lynch, chief of analysis.

Capitalizing on that premise, U.S. lawmakers including Sen. Cory Gardner (R., Colo.) are backing legislation that would target the 10 largest Chinese importers of North Korean goods.

Treasury is also setting its sights on Chinese banks. Banning them from U.S. markets could scare the broader Chinese financial system into better sanctions compliance. But applying hefty fines would likely require the administration to develop a more coordinated strategy through the Justice Department, some analysts say.

The Washington Post

Rogin : Time for maximum pressure on North Korea, even without China’s permission

North Korean soldiers salute at Mansudae hill in Pyongyang, North Korea, on Sept. 9. (Kyodo/Reuters)

The time has come for the United States to acknowledge that its policy of trying to induce North Korea's friends to rein in Pyongyang has failed. The best option for stopping the mounting nuclear threat from Kim Jong Un's regime is to muster maximum pressure without waiting for approval or cooperation from Beijing and Moscow.

As early as Monday, the U.N. Security Council could consider a new resolution put forth by the Trump administration that proposes cutting off North Korea's energy imports, textile exports and ability to deploy workers abroad, according to a leaked draft. If put to a vote, that resolution will likely fail in the face of Russian and Chinese resistance.

Should that happen, there will be no more excuse for the United States not to move forward with allies Japan and South Korea with crippling sanctions aimed at the regime, its institutions and its elite supporters. Until now, the administration has held back as it sought to persuade and prod Beijing to use its considerable leverage to bring Kim to heel.

Once the Trump administration acknowledges that China and Russia have done all they intend to, the United States can go much further

unilaterally, or with allies, to finally test whether drastic sanctions, combined with tough diplomacy, can move Kim from his defiant position.

"The amount of pressure North Korea has been put under economically is still far short of what we applied to Iran or even Iraq," a senior administration official said. "There is a long way to go before North Korea is going to feel the pressure they would need to feel to change their calculus."

But time is running out as North Korea speeds up work on its nuclear program. That's why Congress and parts of the North Korea expert community are ramping up calls for the Trump administration to pivot from using only those tools approved by China and Russia.

"I've watched the calibrated strategy which is enunciated by the administration and it doesn't work," House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Edward R. Royce (R-Calif.) told me. "I believe we have to come in full throttle with cutting off institutions, primarily financial institutions domiciled in China."

The Trump administration has dabbled in imposing sanctions on Chinese entities that help enable the Kim regime's illicit activities, but it has yet to cross the line into any area that might put delicate U.S.-China coordination at risk. Royce urged Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim

Mattis to put such measures into action during a briefing last week.

His committee also wrote a letter to the administration listing large Chinese entities ripe for sanctions, including the Chinese Agricultural Bank and the China Merchant Bank.

"We have not had the resolve to put these sanctions on those major institutions," said Royce. "It's time to go to maximum pressure."

There are risks in confronting large Chinese banks, which are essentially arms of the Chinese government. Former top Treasury Department official Adam Szubin testified to the Senate Banking Committee last week that imposing sanctions on the banks could harm the Chinese economy and have unintended consequences for the U.S. economy.

Nevertheless, he said, the United States should move forward: "The only hope we have lies in a qualitatively different and more severe level of pressure — one that threatens Kim Jong Un's hold on power," Szubin testified.

Cutting off hard currency to the Kim regime could undermine Kim's fragile position with the North Korean elites and military leaders whom he needs to keep happy. Moreover, Kim needs hard currency to continue to develop his nuclear and missile programs, which rely

heavily on smuggled components from other countries.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said last week that even if Kim doesn't change course, crippling sanctions could slow his progress toward achieving the capability to threaten the United States.

"Do we think more sanctions are going to work on North Korea? Not necessarily," she said at the American Enterprise Institute. "But what does it do? It cuts off the revenue that allows them to build ballistic missiles."

Going after the regime's funding proved effective in 2005, when the Bush administration sanctioned a Macau bank laundering money for the Kim family. That led to a series of events that brought North Korea to the negotiating table. President Trump said recently that talking to the North Korean regime would not be productive, but his State Department is working toward direct diplomacy.

Whether the goal is to negotiate, undermine the regime's legitimacy or simply slow its nuclear progress, moving forward without China and Russia on maximum pressure is the right move. It may also be the last chance to avoid a binary choice between a nuclear North Korea that can blackmail the world or war.

Ryun : On North Korea, we must make China accommodate our interests



Ned Ryun,

opinion contributor

As we come barreling down to the end of the road on how we confront North Korea, there can be no denying that this situation is very different from other nuclear weapons threats. In fact, the real comparison is to what we face with Iran and the position President Obama put us in with that hostile country. But North Korea is essentially not like any other nation. There are no real economic pressure points with North Korea to use as leverage. The Soviets and the Chinese wanted some kind of integration into the global marketplace; even Iran does.

But the Kim regime has no interest or ability to benefit from global commerce. It is a hermit regime almost completely closed off from other states intentionally for the sake of the regime. It is mostly a criminal thug operation that trades in weapons of mass destruction, aids terrorists, and kidnaps people.

So traditional deterrence and containment have little chance to succeed. North Korea under Kim has no other reason to exist except to be an existential threat to the world with its nuclear weapons. Kim Jong-un is trapped within a system of China's and his own making with the only real thing that he has to lose are his nuclear weapons, which is the only reason for his existence.

China nurtured the regime as it is, and China maintains it. It sold or facilitated the technology and science needed to acquire the capability, and let's be honest: China delighted in the threat a nuclear North Korea posed to the United States, South Korea and Japan, the later two nations who China hates and fears.

And yet we cannot excuse our own role in allowing North Korea to become what it has become. The three previous administrations naively thought we could talk the North Korean regime out of its pursuit of nuclear weapons, which, to repeat, is the main reason for existence. China has also realized

that it naively thought it could control its Frankenstein pit-bull, but it now is realizing it has to confront hard problems.

Sanctions helped end apartheid in South Africa. They pushed Iran to an agreement to curtail its nuclear program, though many critics say the deal is insufficient. Over 50 years they haven't budged the Castro family from its hold on power in Cuba and failed to turn Russia back from its Ukraine incursions.

Much depends on how forcefully Washington applies its economic weapons and how much cooperation it gets from other nations.

Alarmed by Pyongyang's latest nuclear test and preparations for another intercontinental ballistic missile test, the Trump administration is crafting harsher economic penalties against North Korea and its facilitators. Washington hopes tougher measures would avert a potentially catastrophic military conflict and forestall the evolution of

Pyongyang's nuclear-weapons technology.

U.S. officials are pushing the United Nations Security Council to ban North Korea textile exports, embargo oil sales to the country and prohibit it from renting out its workers abroad. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is readying new sanctions likely targeting the largest importers of North Korean goods and some of the banks facilitating that trade.

Past U.S. sanctions efforts have a spotty record.

Among the successes: U.S. lawmakers championed sanctions in 1986 against South Africa's apartheid regime that eventually led to a global trade embargo against the nation. By 1991, with its economy in recession, the government repealed the apartheid laws.

A U.S. sanctions regime against Myanmar's antidemocratic government was a key factor in precipitating a collapse in that country's economic growth. By

2012, as democracy slowly returned to the country, the U.S. began easing those measures.

The Bush administration in 2007 was able to force North Korea to shut down a nuclear facility critical to the regime's weapons program by cutting off a small Macao-based bank from the U.S. financial system. That temporarily chilled international financing for Pyongyang as foreign banks feared losing access to the dollar, the currency used for most of the world's trade.

But the regime soon secretly restarted its nuclear-weapons program. China has since stepped in to become its biggest trade partner—accounting for 90% of the total—and Pyongyang has improved its sanction-evasion techniques.

“Targeted sanctions—unintentionally and counterintuitively—helped to create more efficient markets in China for North Korea Incorporated,” said John Park, director of the Korea Working Group at the Harvard Kennedy School.

The Trump administration is hoping now to replicate with North Korea the sanctions approach that forced Iran to negotiate a nuclear deal under the Obama administration. In that case, the U.S. secured European allies' support to stem oil revenue to the Persian economy.

Former U.S. officials say the extent of the efforts against Iran dwarf the current North Korea sanctions regime. Countering Tehran required applying pressure through the U.N., conducting global shuttle diplomacy through the State and Treasury departments and the Justice Department's using the legal system to wrangle foreign banks into compliance.

In contrast, foreign government compliance with U.N. sanctions against North Korea is poor. China, in particular, is proving to be a

reluctant partner.

U.S. sanction experts say a severe escalation in economic pressure that threatens North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's hold on power is needed to change his calculus.

“It would mean placing a stranglehold on the North Korean economy that makes it impossible for the leader to pay his military and security forces, to fuel his planes and trucks, or to provide bribes to his family and cronies,” said Adam Szubin, the former head of Treasury's sanctions office who is now at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

Asia analysts say China often fails to crack down on the firms and individuals that help finance Mr. Kim's regime. Even when Beijing does act, those measures are often temporary, and cross-border sales are often soon resumed.

“One way the Trump administration can get the Chinese into the game here in a more effective fashion is by looking at more sanctions on Chinese entities, especially certain smaller banks and trading companies, that are critical to the North Korean economy,” said David Cohen, a former top CIA and Treasury official now a partner at WilmerHale.

Studies by C4ADS, a nonprofit tracking global security threats, show Pyongyang's evasion networks are financed by a centralized and limited system. “A relatively small number of networks that bridge licit and illicit systems” means they are vulnerable decisions.

Now we must figure out how our interests and China's interests can be realigned in regards to North Korea. And lest China think that somehow there are joint interests to be accommodated, that is not the case.

The United States and its allies face an existential threat from a nuclear weapons-armed Kim regime. He threatens and tests weapons and launches missiles provocatively; it's what he does to maintain his existence. The United States and its allies in the region have no wriggle room where this is concerned. North Korea, for now anyway, does not threaten China, but it does threaten us. The United States and our allies have an uncompromising interest in ending the threat.

China perceives its interest to be the maintenance of the status quo: that the United States and its allies are threatened. That is, China enjoys the peril we face because China wants us all weak, intimidated and not pursuing what China considers to be our hegemony in East Asia.

So Chinese and U.S. interests are not aligned. It is the job of the Trump administration to make China appreciate that it must accommodate our interests; that it must seek a new interest where we are concerned, namely stability and the end to the North Korean threat to us. China does not need a North Korea intimidating the United States and our allies even if it wants it; the United States and its allies cannot tolerate the North Korean threat. Therefore, China has to accommodate the U.S. and its allies where North Korea is concerned.

We must confront China with its dirty little secret: it has enjoyed the threat North Korea poses to us. And now we must tell China that it must do what is necessary to control North Korea, including regime change if necessary, which is not easy to do, and will be risky. If it will not do this of its own volition and bring its pit-bull to heel, we have two options.

The first is for the United States, for really the first time, lean on China economically: if they will not immediately deal with North Korea, we will cut off Chinese banks, we

will cut off trade, we will cut off real estate investments in the United States, and urge others to do the same. We will make it clear that if you support North Korea's nuclear dictatorship, you will have zero business with the United States and its allies.

If China is spurred to action it then must cut off financial aid to North Korea; stop backdooring the scientists and technology needed to continue its nuclear program; and cut off its oil imports to North Korea. With over 90 percent of North Korea's oil imports coming from China, the entire country, but more importantly the military and the nuclear program, would come to a grinding halt in months and put Kim Jong-un directly in the crosshairs of his generals.

If, however, China will not respond to economic pressure, then there is nothing left but military options. The one to be avoided, that we must hope does not happen, is a kinetic one in which there is war and a potential nuclear exchange. But a military option short of open conflict is also possible: the one in which South Korea and Japan become nuclear nations and are supported in that by the United States. China's greatest fear is to be surrounded by enemies that it has fear and loathed for centuries equipped with nuclear weapons.

As Donald Trump now squarely confronts the threat that the three previous administrations handed down to him, he must lay every card on the table in dealing with the North Korean situation. And the world would do well to remember: An American president's most important responsibility is to protect and safeguard the lives of American people.

The New York Times

12-16 minutes

For Iraq's Long-Suffering Kurds, Independence Beckons

Tim Arango

Men bought and sold prayer beads last month in front of the citadel in Erbil, a Unesco World Heritage site, in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Ivor Prickett for The New Times

BARZAN, Iraq — A pair of rusted eyeglasses, a grimy antique watch, torn bank notes and old identification cards.

These simple items on display at a museum here in northern Iraq, dug from a mass grave of Kurdish tribesmen massacred by Saddam Hussein's henchmen, help explain why there is little doubt about how Kurds will vote in a referendum this month on independence from Iraq.

“How could the international community expect us to be part of Iraq after these crimes?” said Khalat Barzani, who is in charge of the museum that memorializes the deportation and killings of thousands of Kurds in 1983.

Even if the outcome is a forgone conclusion — nearly every Kurd

holds dear the dream of statehood — the vote in Iraqi Kurdistan represents a historic moment in the Kurds' generations-long struggle for political independence.

Numbering about 30 million people spread across four countries — Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran — the Kurds are often described as the world's largest ethnic group without their own homeland. Iraqi Kurdistan, an oil-rich enclave in northern Iraq, may be their best hope yet.

The referendum's approval would start the process of turning the autonomous region into an independent state.

But outside of Kurdistan, every major player in the neighborhood opposes the vote, which could break up Iraq and further destabilize a volatile, war-torn region.

Baghdad has indicated that it would not recognize the results.

Across the border in Turkey, officials worry that Kurds declaring independence in Iraq would inflame the separatist sentiments of Kurds in Turkey. Turkey has opposed the referendum and warned that it could lead to a new civil war in Iraq.

American officials, concerned that it would hobble the fight against the

Islamic State, have urged the Kurds to delay the vote. An open rift between Baghdad and Kurdistan could end the cooperation between Iraqi and Kurdish forces, which is seen as critical in the campaign to defeat the Islamic State. Kurdish secession would also deprive the United States of one of its primary goals since it invaded this country: keeping Iraq intact.

Iran, the pre-eminent foreign power in Iraq, with its close ties to the Shiite-led government in Baghdad and Iraqi Shiite militias under its control, has emphasized that its priority is maintaining the unity of Iraq.

Without the support of neighboring countries, the vote could backfire, failing to achieve independence and becoming another in a long history of lost opportunities for a long-suffering people.

It also could set off violence in disputed areas like Kirkuk, a multiethnic city under Kurdish control that has long been contested between the central government and Kurdish authorities.

"Having a referendum on such a fast timeline, particularly in disputed areas, would be, we think, significantly destabilizing," Brett H. McGurk, President Trump's envoy to the international coalition battling the Islamic State, said last month.

But the Kurdistan Regional Government says the vote will go forward as scheduled on Sept. 25, and will be binding. Assuming it passes, Kurdish officials say, it will set in motion a formal breakaway process, including negotiations with the Iraqi government and a diplomatic push to win the support of regional powers.

"If you look at our history we have been mistreated throughout history," said Masrour Barzani, the chancellor of the Kurdistan Region Security Council and the son of the region's president, Massoud Barzani, who is leading the drive for sovereignty. "We as a nation have every right to self-determination."

He added, "We believe it is the right time" to seek independence.

Many believe it is only a matter of time before the Kurds have their own state.

"The final destination is clear – it is independence," said Peter W. Galbraith, a former American diplomat who has close ties to the Kurdish leadership. "By announcing the date of the referendum, it can't

be pulled back."

As a young Senate staff member in the late 1980s, Mr. Galbraith traveled to Iraqi Kurdistan to document atrocities the Kurds suffered at the hands of Mr. Hussein, the Iraqi dictator, including the use of chemical weapons and the destruction of villages. His report helped raise international awareness of the Kurds' plight and played a part in the United States' decision to establish a no-fly zone in northern Iraq in 1991. That protection gave the Kurds breathing room to build an autonomous region and the bones of an independent state.

Mr. Galbraith likened the referendum to Britain's decision to leave the European Union, a vote followed by negotiation. "At the end, it's Brexit," he said.

As the region has been troubled by turmoil, the Kurds have steadily capitalized on chaos to make gains. In northeastern Syria they have fought off the Islamic State, with support of the United States, and carved out a self-governing enclave. In Turkey, the Kurds won new political power in national elections and pushed for more rights.

And in Iraq, the onslaught of the Islamic State allowed the Kurds to claim new territory, including Kirkuk, which was abandoned by fleeing Iraqi soldiers.

But with each gain have come setbacks. In Syria, Turkey moved troops into the north to push back Kurdish advances. Turkey, after holding peace talks, reignited a long war with its own Kurds, and jailed Kurdish leaders. In Iraq, territorial gains were offset by a deep economic crisis after the price of oil collapsed and Baghdad stopped sending budget payments.

The economic crisis has created unease even among many Kurds who support the broader drive for independence but believe now is not the right time.

Thousands of Kurdish civil servants, including teachers, have not been paid their full salaries in years, and the regional government, which has not been able to export enough oil to achieve financial self-sufficiency, is close to \$20 billion in debt.

"There are so many political, social, economic and legal issues in Kurdistan that we must solve," said Kamal Chomani, a Kurdish analyst who has opposed the referendum.

Mr. Chomani worries that a declaration of independence now

could fail, much like the experience of the only Kurdish state in history, the Republic of Mahabad, carved from Iranian territory in 1946 with support of the Soviet Union. But the Soviets quickly abandoned the Kurds, and the republic crumbled.

"The Kurds don't want to see a short-lived Kurdistan," Mr. Chomani said.

Another hurdle to independence is the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Baghdad has said it would never give up its claim to the city, and Iraqi Shiite militias with ties to Iran have indicated they would fight to keep Iraq intact, raising the possibility of a military battle.

An oil field in Kirkuk in 2014, the year the Islamic State advanced into the city. Andrea Bruce for The New York Times

Kirkuk, inhabited by Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens, has long been the center of dispute between Baghdad and Kurdistan. A referendum on the city's fate, originally scheduled for 2007 and a key component of the Iraqi Constitution the Americans helped write, has never been held.

But in 2014, as the Islamic State's fighters bore down on the city and Iraqi soldiers dropped their weapons and ran, the Kurds took the city, which they consider a spiritual homeland and whose vast oil wealth could sustain an independent state.

The governor of Kirkuk, Najmaldin Karim, dismisses the argument that the Kurds have too many problems – an economic crisis, political divisions, the uncertain status of Kirkuk and other disputed areas – to seek independence now.

"Did the U.S. have a constitution when it declared independence?" he said. "No. Before African countries declared independence did they have everything in order?"

At 67, Mr. Karim is among a generation of Kurdish leaders who have come up in the Kurdish nationalist movement and now see, at the end of their careers, a chance to fulfill a long-held dream of independence. As a child, he saved his allowance to send money to the pesh merga, the Kurdish fighters who were battling the Iraq government then led by the Baath Party, to buy shoes and shirts.

Kurdish pesh merga soldiers trained by American-led coalition forces attending a graduation ceremony

last month on the outskirts of Erbil. Ivor Prickett for The New Times

Analysts say Baghdad is open to talking about independence with the Kurds, as long as their state does not include Kirkuk.

"People in Baghdad are willing to negotiate on independence," said Joost Hiltermann, program director for the Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group, a conflict resolution organization. "But not with Kirkuk. That is an absolute red line for everyone in Baghdad who isn't a Kurd."

Mr. Hiltermann said he would not be surprised if the referendum was delayed for that reason.

Ceding Kirkuk to the Kurds is also anathema for the city's Arabs and Turkmens.

The city's Arab deputy mayor, Rakan Saeed al-Jibouri, ticks off a list of Arab grievances in Kirkuk, documented by Human Rights Watch: being forcibly displaced by Kurdish security forces, denied jobs and barred from buying land.

"For the Kurds to decide on their own the fate of the city is a mistake," he said.

On the streets of Kirkuk, where Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens mingle in cafes and on street corners, talk of the referendum among them is taboo.

On a recent afternoon, Assam Hussein, a Turkmen taxi driver, was hanging out in the streets with his Kurdish friends. But when asked about the referendum, he insisted on finding privacy to talk.

"I cannot talk in front of the Kurds," said Mr. Hussein, who like most Turkmens does not want to live in a Kurdish state. "They are my brothers, but they will be upset. To be honest, we cannot talk about politics."

At a nearby cafe, Kamaran Mohammed, a Kurd who works for the local intelligence agency, was jubilant about the referendum. Mr. Mohammed nodded toward his brother, who was sitting next to him, and said: "He spent most of his life in Abu Ghraib prison. That is what happens when Arabs rule."

As for the referendum, he said: "You can imagine my feeling. I am free. I have power."

Margherita Stancati and Nicolas Parasia

5-6 minutes

Saudi Arabia sought to reassure citizens and potential investors of its commitment to revamp the country's oil-dependent economy after a series of setbacks that slowed the effort.

The government has backtracked on some politically-sensitive moves in recent months, postponing an increase in fuel prices and reinstating some government employee perks. It is now redrafting part of the plan to allow more time for implementation.

"It is important to adjust and adapt to unexpected situations," Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Culture and Information said Saturday. "Such flexibility should not undermine the stability and predictability needed to allow the private sector to plan its new investments and expansions."

Saudi Arabia last year rushed to put in place a plan to end the kingdom's dependence on oil and overhaul a sluggish bureaucracy on a strict timeline. The changes underscore the challenge the Saudi leadership is facing amid worries about a public backlash and the limited capacity of the kingdom's bureaucracy.

The Saudi economic plan, called Saudi Vision 2030, was unveiled in April 2016 by Prince Mohammed bin Salman, 32, who in June leapfrogged his older cousin Mohammed bin Nayef to become crown prince.

Since then, the government has pared back spending and narrowed its budget deficit. The more-austere stance has weighed on the economy, dampening consumer confidence, hurting the private sector and causing the unemployment rate to rise. It reached 12.7% this year.

As the kingdom struggles to quickly create new sources of wealth, it continues to rely heavily on oil sales. The International Monetary Fund expects economic growth to be close to zero this year.

Under Prince Mohammed, the government has taken some bold steps, such as reducing subsidies for fuel, electricity and water. But he has also backed away from parts of the plan that have proven deeply unpopular with ordinary Saudis.

In April, the government reinstated allowances and perks for state employees that it had canceled months earlier, a move that was aimed in part at boosting consumer confidence. A planned increase in domestic energy prices, which was

expected to take place in July, hasn't happened yet.

"Before, the approach was: 'Let's march ahead and push economic reform regardless of the pain,'" said John Sfakianakis, a former economic adviser to the Saudi government and the Riyadh-based director of research for the Gulf Research Center. "That is changing because the reality on the ground paints a different picture."

One important part of the economic plan is the National Transformation Program, or NTP, which sets efficiency goals for ministries and looks for ways to spur private sector growth.

The program is now being revised, maintaining goals on key policies such as privatization and job creation but extending deadlines to achieve them up to 2030, say people familiar with the document.

The government currently employs about 70% of working Saudi citizens, and is trying to shift that burden to private companies. The government this weekend said it has allocated 200 billion Saudi riyals, or about \$53 billion, to support the private sector, including by funding industrial projects.

To encourage private investment, the government last month created a new agency to spearhead

privatization of state assets in areas ranging from transport to energy. It also relaxed rules on foreign investment, allowing 100% foreign ownership in the health care and education sectors, for example.

At the same time, a cornerstone of the Vision 2030 plan—the sale of up to 5% of the kingdom's state-owned oil firm, Saudi Arabian Oil Co., or Aramco—has hit snags.

The money from that sale, which Prince Mohammed said could value the company at least at \$2 trillion, would be transferred to the country's sovereign-wealth fund for investments at home and abroad.

But an initial public offering slated for the first half of 2018 was recently pushed back to the end of 2018, according to a timetable seen by The Wall Street Journal, partly due to indecision over where to list.

"The IPO process is well underway and Saudi Aramco remains focused on ensuring that all IPO-related requirements are completed on time and to the very highest standards," the Saudi Ministry of Information and Culture said.

ETATS-UNIS

The
Washington
Post

Editorial : Trump's travel ban may expire before it reaches the Supreme Court

ONCE AGAIN, a federal court has ruled against the Trump administration's temporary ban on admission into the United States of refugees and citizens of six majority-Muslim countries. And once again, the Justice Department is appealing the ruling to the Supreme Court — this time arguing that the government should not have to exclude from the ban grandparents or other close family members of people within the United States, along with refugees sponsored by American resettlement organizations, while the case is pending before the court.

It's not clear what the Justice Department hopes to gain by appealing this injunction against Mr. Trump's executive order, as the Supreme Court was already set to

hear arguments on the ban's legality on Oct. 10. What's more, a significant portion of the ban will likely have expired by that date — and the rest before the justices can even rule on the case.

Mr. Trump's order halts entry into the United States by citizens of the six banned countries for 90 days and suspends refugee admissions for 120 days. After courts blocked the ban, Mr. Trump clarified that these clocks would begin ticking as soon as the policy was allowed to go into effect. Because the Supreme Court lifted in part the lower-court injunctions against the order on June 26, the refugee ban will expire in late October, and the entry ban at the end of September.

As a matter of law, the Supreme Court can't rule on a case that no longer presents an ongoing issue.

Yet the Justice Department hasn't given any indication of awareness that the court might well dismiss the case without deciding whether the ban is legal. Not only is the department now battling over an injunction on a policy that likely expires in two weeks, but its opening brief before the Supreme Court didn't even address the issue.

If the White House wants to keep the case alive, Mr. Trump could declare that the clock has yet to start with respect to those immigrants and refugees with "bona fide" connections to the United States, for whom the ban has remained on pause. Or he might extend the order on the grounds that the government has been unable to conduct reviews of vetting procedures — ostensibly what the halt in travel was meant to allow —

without the ban fully in place. He could even issue a new ban or make the existing order permanent.

Yet the government's best option would be to allow time to run out on an executive order lacking in any security benefit to justify its cruelty. Permitting the ban to expire would let the administration save face while avoiding the risk of a damaging Supreme Court decision that could not only strike down the order but also place lasting constraints on presidential power over immigration and national security. Let's hope that, despite its choice to appeal the injunction, the Justice Department's silence on the ban's expiration is a sign that the government recognizes the opportunity to take the graceful way out.

@NoahRFeldman More stories by Noah Feldman

Amid the laudable moral support for the Dreamers after President Donald Trump's revocation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, liberals should keep in mind an important constitutional principle: Immigration is supposed to be the province of Congress, not the executive. The belief that the president has ultimate immigration power can lead to terrible results -- like Trump's travel ban against six majority-Muslim countries, also powered by the mistaken idea that immigration policy should be set by executive order.

The Framers of the Constitution thought about immigration, and wanted Congress in charge. Article I, Section 8, which enumerates Congress's authorities, confers the power "to establish a uniform rule of naturalization." The idea was to make sure the different states didn't try to establish their own rules. Behind that push lies the idea that deciding who can be in the country is a fundamentally legislative decision, which should reflect the beliefs of we the people who elect members of Congress.

QuickTake Q&A: How Trump's Move Puts Immigrants' Dreams at Risk

President Barack Obama's DACA program was and is morally appealing, for obvious reasons. It sought to allow people brought to the U.S. as children to stay in the only country many had ever known. But its mode of enactment -- executive fiat --

left a lot to be desired, constitutionally speaking.

The formal justification for DACA was that the president has the authority to execute the immigration laws that Congress passes, and that power inevitably requires the exercise of discretion to set priorities of enforcement. Like other presidents before him, Obama took the view that his enforcement discretion allowed him to make formal rules stating that certain people in the U.S. illegally would not in fact be deported -- and could even register for work permits.

Note that Obama could not and did not claim that he alone could legalize Dreamers' presence. He couldn't; only Congress can change the law.

DACA, in other words, wasn't really a permanent solution granting legal equality or status to Dreamers. It was more like a boon granted by the grace of the executive. And the executive, of course, could change its mind, as happened when Trump succeeded Obama.

The courts were poised to rule DACA unconstitutional on the ground that the president can't actually create his own immigration policy that conflicts with Congress. The proof of this comes from the legal challenge to the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents policy, which Obama adopted to extend to Dreamers' parents.

A federal appeals court froze that policy, known as DAPA, during the Obama administration, reasoning that the discretionary power to execute the laws doesn't extend so far as to transform immigration

policy. The U.S. Supreme Court was short-handed because Obama's nomination of Judge Merrick Garland was being blocked by Senate Republicans. So the justices divided 4-4 on the DAPA issue, leaving the court of appeals' freeze in place.

The addition of Justice Neil Gorsuch all but assured that if and when the issue returned to the court, the decision would go 5-4 against presidential authority. DACA and DAPA aren't meaningfully different with respect to discretionary authority. They rest on the same constitutional rationale.

Yes, in theory Justice Anthony Kennedy could change his vote; and (also in theory) we don't know the 4-4 lineup because the court doesn't announce who voted which way in a tie. But the justices know how they voted, and it would be exceedingly hard for any of them, including Kennedy, to flip on DACA.

A decision striking down DACA would have vindicated the principle of a limit on the executive's immigration powers. And although that might sound upsetting to liberals sympathetic to the Dreamers, it actually shouldn't be.

The case in point is Trump's travel ban. Like DACA, the travel ban purports to be an exercise of the president's discretionary powers. According to the Trump administration, the travel ban is authorized by the immigration law that formally allows the president to exclude would-be visitors on the basis of national security. This grant of authority is explicit in the statute. The president's discretion to enforce the law is by contrast only implicit in the executive's

constitutional power to execute the laws.

Trump's travel ban thus presumably reflects his belief -- no doubt shared by much of the public -- that immigration is up to the president. That's both wrong and dangerous.

Say what you like about this Congress, but it is highly unlikely that it would have passed a law so obviously discriminatory as Trump's travel ban. Had such a ban been introduced, many in Congress would have denounced it. There would have been a public debate.

Not so for the travel ban, issued by executive order after being drafted in secret and in haste.

That's a good proof of why the Framers were right to place immigration policy in the hands of Congress. Whatever choice we make as a country should be owned by the branch of government that deliberates and represents the will of the people.

The upshot is that eroding Congress's legislative authority over immigration has consequences. Trump's presidency is the best reminder liberals are ever going to get that the popularly elected president shouldn't be allowed to govern without Congress.

Executive overreach is bad government -- no matter which side does it. Congress should take responsibility for immigration, and pass a new version of DACA that would count as law, not presidential fiat.

NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE

7-9 minutes

Trump & DACA: Repeal Means Pause in Trend toward Executive Overreach

Despite being an (admittedly dyspeptic) opponent of Donald Trump's 2016 nomination, and a regular critic of his administration, I must acknowledge that the president has often endeavored to restore balance to our constitutional order. His court appointments have been outstanding, and his administration made the most of the Congressional Review Act, using that oft-overlooked law to undo many of the more burdensome regulations of his predecessor. And now comes another achievement, the repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

program, created by Barack Obama in 2012.

Yet the events surrounding DACA illustrate why our constitutional system has come under so much threat of late. And I fear that this victory will prove fleeting.

DACA is not just unconstitutional, but profoundly so. The Supreme Court has long had an anti-republican habit of masking political power grabs under the specious verbiage of constitutional hermeneutics -- reading novel rights or obligations into vague clauses in our governing charter that the Court, and it *alone*, has the authority to "discover." DACA is not like this. It is a manifest violation of

the separation of powers, a central feature of our system of government.

Worse, the Obama administration's public defense of DACA was deeply pernicious to the constitutional order. "Congress won't act, so the president must," we were told again and again. Yet Congress often fails to act, *by design*. By inviting a diversity of interests into Congress, the Constitution makes it more difficult for one faction to legislate on behalf of itself. Instead, interests will counteract each other, producing either gridlock or policy that is widely acceptable. Congressional gridlock is therefore a feature, not a bug of our system

— making Obama's argument for DACA dangerous indeed.

So, three cheers for Trump, for correcting Obama's overreach. But there has been a deeply troubling subplot to this story: Congressional leaders, on both sides, did not want the president to do away with DACA.

Democrats, obviously, have a partisan incentive to oppose the president at nearly every opportunity -- which is why they regularly complain that he is a would-be tyrant -- but still managed to gripe about his returning power to Congress. Minority parties often sacrifice intellectual consistency in their quest to regain power, so this

was not particularly worrisome. More problematic was the opposition from *Republican leaders in Congress* — who have a partisan incentive to support the president's move and, at least in theory, an institutional interest in reacquiring power that had been illegally seized. Yet they did not want Trump to unwind DACA.

In fact, the biggest proponent of Trump's decision was Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who, if anything, has an institutional incentive in preserving DACA and therefore in retaining the expansive powers it confers on his department.

All this must come as a surprise if one takes *The Federalist Papers* as a guide to how our government should function. Each branch is expected to be a jealous guardian of its own power. That is why the Founders not only separated the branches but gave them leverage over one another. "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition," Publius famously argued in *Federalist* 51. "The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place." The Founders were so worried about legislative encroachments on the other branches that they split Congress into two chambers.

Congressional hesitation to unwind DACA is part of a larger pattern that has persisted for the last 80 years: The legislature has consistently

delegated authority to the executive branch.

And yet, here we have the legislative branch desperate *not* to reacquire power that was illegally snatched from it. What explains this?

The Founders were not starry-eyed dreamers when it came to the prominence of civic virtue, or even to the basic decency of politicians. Heavily influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, especially the moral philosophy of David Hume, many of them expected politicians to behave only in their self-interests, narrowly understood. Hence the need for checks and balances, as an auxiliary precaution for republican government.

The predominant self-interest of members of Congress is *reelection*. It is the necessary condition for a career in politics. When you get into office, your primary goal is to stay in office. It follows, then, that congressional leadership did not want this power returned to it because it would do nothing to advance its members' reelection goals — which is another way of saying that their voters do not care about the proper scope of congressional authority, or about congressional defense of incursions by the other branches.

Viewed from this angle, congressional hesitation to unwind DACA becomes part of a larger pattern that has persisted for the

last 80 years: The legislature has consistently delegated authority to the executive branch. The only main difference is that Obama seized power that Congress initially did not want to give and that it later griped about having returned to it.

Congressional self-abnegation fits hand-in-glove with the rise of presidential governance, or the misapprehension by the public that the president, rather than the Congress, is the centerpiece of republican government. Constitutionally speaking, of course, he is not. This was a style of leadership that was employed fitfully and with mixed success — in peacetime, by Andrew Jackson, Teddy Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson — until the Great Depression. From that point forward, no president has ever thought himself bound strictly by the duties outlined in Article II — taking care that the laws be faithfully executed, managing diplomatic efforts, checking Congress with the veto pen, and commanding the armed forces. He has been, instead, the national *leader*, a sort of elective king.

"Give the people what they want," sneered Ray Davies of the Kinks in 1981's blistering power-pop tune of the same name. That is the essential feature of republican government — for better and for worse. The Constitution is just a way of organizing popular sovereignty; the underlying truth is

that the people ultimately are in charge. Madison lacked Davies's knack for turning a phrase, but the Father of the Constitution understood that, when push comes to shove, republican government "is maintained less by the distribution of its powers, than by the force of public opinion."

For nearly a century, the American people have preferred a powerful president over Congress, and the legislature has responded by actively ceding its authority to the executive and looking the other way when the president takes a little extra. Strangely enough, we have moved in the opposite direction from our British cousins, who over the past 200 years have empowered the Commons while reducing the Lords to a perfunctory role and transforming the Crown into a symbol of the national identity.

I cannot but think, then, that this victory against executive highhandedness will ultimately prove temporary. If the American people desire kingly government, that is what they will get — sooner or later. Good for Trump for refusing the title King Donald I. However, barring a revival of constitutional sentiments among the people, sooner or later some president will take back the vast powers implied by DACA, the people with cheer, and Congress will quietly breathe a sigh of relief.

Juan Williams: Trump's desperate DACA cynicism

THE HILL

Juan

Williams

"He's just like he is on TV...He's an a--hole, but he's our a--hole."

That's how Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.), recently described President Trump to a group of young Republicans, according to the San Diego Union-Tribune.

The disparaging assessment of Trump's character came days before the president gave his approval for ending Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

President Obama put that policy in place — in the absence of Congressional action on immigration reform — to allow undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children to register with the government and build a life without threat of deportation.

Now Trump has those young people and their families in emotional turmoil. Their fears are climbing as Trump ramps up deportations and falsely demonizes immigrants as stealing jobs and hurting the economy.

Having set off so much fright, Trump then promised that none of the young people would be deported until March. He tweeted: "Congress now has 6 months to legalize DACA (something the Obama Administration was unable to do). If they can't, I will revisit this issue!"

Essentially, he pinned the blame on Congress for his decision to go after politically defenseless young people.

If he was sincere, Trump could have asked Congress to act while leaving the Obama rules in place. That would have avoided the current waves of desperation among 800,000 young people trying to do their best in school, on the job and in the military.

But in this test of character, Trump chose to focus only on the political pay-off for himself in fulfilling a campaign pledge he made to appeal to his anti-immigrant political base.

Talk about reducing people to political pawns. This must be the kind of behavior that Hunter had in mind with his insulting description of the president's character.

But Trump was not done. Once a backlash started — with leaders of the Fortune 500 to Catholic bishops condemning his actions — Trump further displayed his lack of principles by saying he wants to sign a new DACA program into law. So now he believes the young people should be protected?

However, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders added the president will only sign a new plan as part of comprehensive immigration reform.

How cynical can Trump get?

As recently as July he dismissed the chances of Congress passing

any immigration reform: "Our country and political forces are not ready yet," he said.

He also knows Congress has failed to pass any signature legislation since he took office. So, what are the odds?

The big problem is that a GOP effort at immigration reform failed in 2006 and a bipartisan effort failed in 2013. In both cases, conservative talk radio attacked reform as "amnesty" for lawbreakers.

Already, Trump's call for total immigration reform is generating outrage and skepticism from right-wing talkers.

Conservative columnist Ann Coulter, once one of Trump's most enthusiastic supporters, lit into the president on Twitter.

"That's great. Sarah Huckabee Sanders says Trump wants COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM! Exactly what he used to denounce," Coulter tweeted. "Weird how Huckabee Sanders obsessively attacks congress. Trump's not going

to get out of betraying voters on the wall by blaming congress.”

While the right remains set against immigration reform, the president is hurting himself with mainstream voters.

A Politico/Morning Consult poll last week found that 58 percent of voters believe DACA kids should be allowed to stay and become eligible for citizenship. Eighteen percent said they should be allowed to stay and become “legal residents.”

According to the poll, support for allowing DACA kids to stay in the country is bipartisan: 84 percent of Democrats and 69 percent of Republicans want the young people here.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said as much in denouncing the president’s decision as “a heartbreaking moment in our history that shows the absence of mercy and goodwill, and a short-sighted vision for the future.”

Writing in the Daily Beast, Frank Sharry, the executive director of America’s Voice, a pro-immigration group, similarly branded Trump’s DACA decision a “national disgrace” on the order of the internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War and the refusal to admit Jewish refugees from the Holocaust.

“America is a noble idea, and on Tuesday, President Trump crushed it,” Sharry wrote.

I know how important that “noble idea” is to a child. I came to the U.S. as a four-year-old immigrant from Panama.

My mother took my sister, brother and me to Brooklyn to get an American education and compete in the American economy. We came to America on a banana boat. That’s no joke: We literally came as added freight on a boat carrying bananas bound for New York.

My sister graduated from Harvard; my brother has a law degree; and I’ve been able to write this column and best-selling books, and succeed in American media.

That’s why my heart aches for these children and their families. Their story is my story.

The DACA decision was announced before Trump accepted the first deal on the debt ceiling offered to him by Senate Democratic Leader (D-N.Y.) and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.).

Would it surprise anyone if Trump also turns away from Republicans and works with Democrats on a comprehensive immigration deal with amnesty for all undocumented immigrants?

To quote Hunter, “he’s an a--hole.” Though after this week, his most ardent supporters have reason to wonder if he is still *their* “a--hole.”

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

7-9 minutes

Republicans Immigration Surrender DREAM Act Traded for Border Security

A few days into negotiations over a DACA replacement, it seems as though Republicans might be allowing the Left to set the terms for debate over immigration. Echoing Nancy Pelosi, some Republicans have already begun to say that “border security” funding could be an appropriate trade for the DREAM Act. It’s clear why immigration maximalists would like to trade “border security” for the DREAM Act: It does little to turn off the magnets for illegal immigration (among them jobs and the hope of eventual legal status), and it can easily be gutted. But it’s not clear why conservatives — or, frankly, immigration moderates — should be happy with that trade. And it is certainly far from clear why Republicans should make “border security” their opening bid on a DACA fix.

Not all Republicans have been buffalooed into a DREAM-for-“border security” trade. Senator Tom Cotton (Arkansas) and Representative Lamar Smith (Texas) have called for a combination of E-Verify and the RAISE Act in exchange for the DREAM Act. Other senior Republicans have continued to insist on tying DREAM into a broader immigration package. But many — including in the upper reaches of the party’s congressional wing — seem to mention “border security” only in discussing things to trade for a DACA replacement. Some Republicans are trying to make a DACA replacement even more expansionist. According to *Politico*, Wisconsin senator Ron Johnson has considered adding

DACA legislation to his proposed state-based guest-worker program. The more Republicans insist solely on “border security” (not interior enforcement and legal-immigration reform), the more they undermine their ability to cut a deal on DACA that advances conservative priorities.

The DREAM Act is a substantial piece of legislation. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that more than 3 million people could be eligible under the Senate’s version of the DREAM Act, and about 1.5 million could end up getting a green card through that legislation. Thus, a population larger than that of Hawaii could end up becoming citizens. Moreover, under current immigration law, those who became citizens from the DREAM Act could then immediately sponsor their parents for permanent legal residency. This is not a small legalization. In fact, according to the Department of Homeland Security, 1.6 million illegal immigrants who had been in the country since before 1982 obtained permanent-residency status from the 1986 Reagan amnesty (another million or so gained legal status through the 1986 amnesty’s agricultural-worker provisions). Thus, the DREAM Act could give permanent legal status to as many people as the central program of the Reagan amnesty did.

The magnitude of the DREAM Act doesn’t necessarily tell us whether or not it should be passed, but it does indicate how much the center-Right would be giving up by agreeing to it. A few billion dollars for “border security” will not counteract the massive incentive for illegal immigration that the DREAM Act will create. For immigration

maximalists, inspiring more illegal immigration might be more a feature than a bug. For those who want a sustainable immigration system that honors the rule of law, a fig-leaf of “border security” is not a sufficient trade for the DREAM Act.

Moreover, passing the DREAM Act without making any substantial reforms to enforcement or legal immigration would be a massive strategic setback for those who want to reform the immigration system so that it encourages integration and opportunity. Unlike the Reagan amnesty, a fig-leaf DACA fix would secure almost no structural changes for enforcement, and the Reagan amnesty failed catastrophically at the goal of putting the American immigration system on a surer legal and civic footing. Giving maximalists so much in exchange for so little, a DACA-“border security” trade would be like sending the center-Right into the third quarter down 21–3 — and immigration moderates don’t exactly have the track record of a Tom Brady in terms of scoring successes. Instead, proponents of an integrationist immigration policy need every opportunity they can get.

Done right, a DACA fix could be training wheels for a bigger effort at immigration reform. Putting in place E-Verify would help codify an enforcement regime, and RAISE-lite (with targeted revisions of certain visa categories) would help reform the immigration system so that it prioritizes the nuclear family and jobs. Many Republicans have called for more guest-worker visas because of a supposed worker shortage, but if a shortage of skilled workers is a real problem, those Republicans would be better off

calling for a re-balancing of the current legal immigration system. Trading the DREAM Act for “border security” alone, however, makes it harder to make incremental, evidence-based reforms to our immigration system.

Done right, a DACA fix could be trainingwheels for a bigger effort at immigration reform.

President Trump has his own responsibility in this. If he signals that he’ll be willing to cut a DACA deal no matter what the price, he makes it easy for congressional Democrats to undermine their Republican counterparts in negotiations: “President Trump wants to sign the DREAM Act, so why are you making it difficult for him?” Intra-GOP skirmishing on immigration might delight the media and the scalp-hunters on the right, but it would do little to advance the platform the president ran on.

The president might also remember what happened to another prominent Republican — Marco Rubio — when he tried to cut a deal with Chuck Schumer on immigration. The Gang of Eight bill ended up giving immigration maximalists everything (legal status for millions of illegal immigrants, more guest-worker programs, Potemkin enforcement) while giving moderates almost nothing. Trump catapulted to the GOP nomination in part by railing against corrupt bargains on illegal immigration, so he faces unique political dangers if he signs a DREAM Act without making any substantive improvements to the immigration system. If the president lives up to his commitments in certain areas (such as judicial nominations and immigration), he could have room to

negotiate with Democrats on other issues. But failing to deliver on immigration could make him politically vulnerable.

So far in 2017, Republicans have managed to accomplish something Barack Obama never could: make

the Affordable Care Act popular. If Republicans pass the DREAM Act without winning any substantial reforms to the enforcement or legal-immigration systems, they will have done more to advance immigration maximalism — and create incentives for future illegal

immigration — than Democrats did during their 2009–10 apogee. They will have ended up ratifying, rather than correcting, Barack Obama's vision for immigration. They will have laid a few bricks for a wall not along the southern border but between the body politic and an

immigration system that better honors the principles of civic belonging, national security, and opportunity for all Americans.



Page : Trump says 'rest easy,' but DACA recipients need more than a promise

Clarence Page

5-6 minutes

Suddenly in Washington, deal-making is busting out all over, most significantly between President Donald Trump and his new BFPNF — Best Friends, Probably Not Forever — in Democratic leadership.

In Trump's telling, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi are now "Chuck" from Brooklyn and "Nancy" from San Francisco, not "clown" and "incompetent," their earlier tags in Trumpspeak.

Surprisingly, Trump was on his phone Thursday morning gushing to the two Democratic leaders about the televised news reactions to the fiscal agreement he reached with the two, much to the consternation of Trump's Republican allies who were blindsided by the deal.

"The press has been incredible," Trump told Pelosi, according to an unnamed source quoted by The New York Times. Even Fox News was positive, Trump waxed to Schumer, according to the Times.

That sounds like our reality-TV president. For all the rhetorical shots he takes at the "lying media" and "dishonest press," the former

host of "The Apprentice" still yearns for favorable reviews.

Later in the day, Trump was personally spreading his joy on TV, vowing to cut more bipartisan deals by harvesting votes on the Democratic side when he can't get a win from the Grand Old Party's votes alone.

Suddenly, a day after announcing he would rescind President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which shields from deportation young people who came to this country illegally as minors, Trump was hinting at more such deal-making. He could work to turn DACA into permanent law in exchange for something he wants — like, perhaps, Democratic support for his proposed "beautiful wall" on the Mexican border.

"Congress now has 6 months to legalize DACA (something the Obama Administration was unable to do)," Trump tweeted. "If they can't, I will revisit this issue!"

While many wondered what that "revisit" will mean, Trump basked in admiration of his statesmanlike pose. Still, Pelosi urged Trump to sweet reassurance to the nearly 800,000 "Dreamers," as Obama called the immigrants who received work permits and other protections under DACA.

The New York Times

Frances Robles, Lizette Alvarez and Vivian Yee

10-13 minutes

MIAMI — Ready or not, Florida found itself face to face with Hurricane Irma's galloping winds and rains on Sunday, as evacuees and holdouts alike marked uneasy time in homes and shelters from the Keys to the Panhandle, tap-tapping their nearly dead cellphones for news they were frantic to hear but helpless to change.

The hurricane rammed ashore at Cudjoe Key before whirling on the state's southwest and west coast on the first day of its sodden chug

north, buckling two giant construction cranes in Miami and rotating others like clock hands, snacking on trees and power lines, and interrupting millions of lives.

An apocalyptic forecast had already forced one of the largest evacuations in American history. Now it was time to find out what the storm would do — and whether the heavily populated cities of Naples, Fort Myers, St. Petersburg and Tampa were prepared.

"Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face," Mayor Bob Buckhorn of Tampa said at a Sunday news conference, paraphrasing the boxer Mike Tyson.

And Trump did. "For all of those (DACA) that are concerned about your status during the 6 month period," he tweeted early Thursday, "you have nothing to worry about — No action!"

Good. Considering Trump's flip-flops on this issue, among others, it was smart of Pelosi to get this promise in writing.

But as much as I dislike adding to the anxiety already being felt by these young immigrants, experience tells us that, when Donald Trump says "you have nothing to worry about," maybe you do.

Four years ago, as Trump was beginning to flirt with a presidential run, he met in Trump Tower with a delegation of a half-dozen young immigrants brought to the United States without documentation and happily declared afterward, "You convinced me."

But when Trump launched his presidential campaign two years later, he tagged Mexicans as mostly "rapists" and "killers" and promised a get-tough immigration agenda, including an immediate end to the DACA administrative program that he incorrectly called "amnesty."

Then after his election Trump softened his rhetoric, after ramping up immigration enforcement efforts by executive order. Young people living here illegally could "rest easy," he said, because they weren't

targets for deportation under his policy.

However, contrary to his promise that his crackdown would focus on "criminals" and "bad hombres," U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement revealed in May that the biggest spike in immigration arrests has actually been of those with no criminal records.

Yet, sadly and significantly, Alonso Guillen, a 31-year-old immigrant in the U.S. illegally, drowned in the Houston area trying to help rescue victims of Hurricane Harvey. Guillen quickly became a national symbol of young immigrants without legal status.

The young people who have qualified for DACA protection defy the scary stereotypes of "bad hombres" that Trump used to fire up his presidential campaign. Quite the opposite, they tend to be the sort of honest, ambitious, hardworking and outstanding students, soldiers and workers who always make important contributions to this country, the only country that most of them know. President Trump should help them stay so they can do even more. Then, even a Trump skeptic like me will give him good reviews for that. And I just put it in writing.

UNE - Irma Roars In, and All of Florida Shakes and Shudders

"Well, we're about to get punched in the face."

The storm hit south Florida on Sunday after leaving a path of destruction across the Caribbean.

Having flattened a string of Caribbean islands and strafed Puerto Rico and Cuba over the last week as a dangerous Category 4 and 5 storm, Irma was downgraded on Sunday afternoon to Category 2, according to the National Hurricane Center. By early Monday morning, the storm had again been downgraded to a Category 1.

The sea was Irma's ally in destruction. In Key Largo, it annexed backyard pools. In Miami,

it poured a salt river down Biscayne Boulevard, the city's main artery. In Naples and Tampa Bay, it pulled back from the shoreline, leaving waters so shallow that unwary dogs could splash around what remained. But that was only a prelude to a violent return: When the wind changed, scientists warned, the water would hurl itself right back to where it was, and then some.

At least four deaths were reported in Florida after the storm's arrival on Sunday, adding to a death toll of at least 27 from its Caribbean rampage. More than three million people in Florida were without power, officials said on Sunday night.

Officials along the Gulf Coast had believed they would be spared the worst of the assault until the storm's trajectory took an unfavorable westward bounce late in the week. After a Saturday spent hastily converting fortified buildings into shelters, they were hurrying the final preparations into place on Sunday.

We speak with two Miami residents, one who refused to evacuate and one who drove north, only to end up in Irma's path.

Curfews were declared in Collier County, which includes Naples; Lee County, which includes Fort Myers; and in Tampa, and officials said they would not be lifted until the storm cleared. Shortly before 5 p.m. Sunday, the Tampa police called officers off the streets as the city confronted consistent wind gusts of more than 40 m.p.h. The westbound lanes on two of the three bridges connecting Tampa with St. Petersburg were closed.

Lest any humans decide to take the weather into their own hands, the sheriff's office in Pasco County, north of Tampa Bay, was telling local residents not to shoot weapons at the hurricane.

"You won't make it turn around," the sheriff's office tweeted, "& it will have very dangerous side effects."

Mid-afternoon in Fort Myers, it was hard to tell which was worse, the wind or the rain.

The wind whipped the tops of palm trees around like pompoms in the hands of a cheerleader. At one Fort Myers hotel, the rain pelted the building with such force that it came into rooms around window frames, stains spreading ever wider on the carpet.

But the Keys, a collection of islands off Florida's southern tip, met Irma first.

Images showed entire houses underwater. The flooding in Key Largo had small

boats bobbing in the streets next to furniture and refrigerators like rubber toys in a bathtub. Shingles were kidnapped from roofs; swimming pools dissolved into the ocean.

"Still whiteout," John Huston, a resident who had stayed, wrote in a text message to The Associated Press around lunchtime on Sunday. "Send cold beer."

Local authorities were still waiting out the storm before determining the extent of the flooding and damage. But one of Irma's casualties was indisputable: The roof of the Key Largo building that local emergency operations officials were using after they fled their headquarters in Marathon had blown off.

On Key West, by contrast, one resident who was able to speak to a reporter by landline described streets pocked with shutters, windows and branches, but no flooding or ravaged houses. The resident, an 81-year-old artist named Richard Peter Matson who has lived in an old townhouse there since 1980, had decided to shelter in his home against all advice.

"If anything was going to happen," Mr. Matson said, "I wanted to be here to take care of it."

Those who did evacuate should not come back until local officials had had a chance to inspect the 42 bridges that connect the Keys to each other and to the mainland, said Cammy Clark, a county spokeswoman. As a precaution, officials were asking residents to boil water.

Irma was capricious. The residents of the Miami area, once projected to bear the worst of it, seemed at some points on Sunday to be suffering more from the fidgets than anything else.

As power vanished, their cellphones became their only tether to news,

family and friends. When their cellphone batteries died, they dashed out to their cars to recharge.

Yamile Castella and her husband, Ramon, both Miami natives, spent Sunday reading, listening to "Hamilton" and watching "Wonder Woman" until the wind gusts intensified enough to throw half an avocado tree at their house. All the while, Ms. Castella was juggling four chats on WhatsApp — a rowing group, a running group, and two family groups, everyone trading stories about the highest gusts, who was eating what, who was doing what.

"We feel like we're not alone," she said.

To the north, most could not yet afford to relax.

By Sunday afternoon, more than half of the 45 shelters in Hillsborough County, which contains Tampa, had filled, including a shelter for people with special medical needs that had sprung up on the floor of the Sun Dome arena at the University of South Florida. There were nearly 800 people there, including patients, volunteers, nurses and doctors, and they were out of cots and pillows. Mike Wagner, the shelter's manager, had to tell a woman and her family that there was no room.

"We just had to tell her, you have to go back home and hunker down," Mr. Wagner said. "It's a patient with five family members and a pet. It's a sad state of affairs, but you have to draw some limits."

The floor of the stadium, which is usually the home of the university's basketball and volleyball teams, was now a patchwork of cots — 435 of them — and medical devices. Patients were hooked into oxygen machines and tucked under plaid or striped blankets. There was a special section for hospice patients, and more cots lined the hallways.

Mr. Wagner's main worry was trying to ration precious time with the electrical outlets. It was becoming nearly impossible to accommodate new patients who needed electricity around the clock to power their medical equipment.

"We're physically going to have to unplug someone, we're telling them, you have to go back home," Mr. Wagner said. "I don't even know how that works for them. They'll have to find some place. But I can't unplug you, if you need oxygen, just to plug someone else in."

John Hawrsk, 67, was caring for his 96-year-old mother, whom he was keeping slightly sedated so she would stay calm.

"She gets kind of panicky, there's a little confusion," Mr. Hawrsk said. "Try to keep her eyes closed, try to get her to sleep as much as she can on her own."

North of Irma's swirl, in Orlando, searchers, canine handlers, doctors and communications experts had come from as far as Los Angeles to help.

Warn your families that Hurricane Irma could end communications home for days, Chuck Ruddell, a member of California Task Force 1, told his teammates. Accept that the team, which worked the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in Texas, might be sleeping at high schools and fairgrounds for weeks more. And prepare to make snap decisions about who to save first.

Speaking in shorthand, the men and women checked their eight boats, three tractor-trailers and other equipment. They scanned maps of Florida communities. They watched the news.

Then they, too, had nothing more to do but wait.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Arian Campo-Flores, Joseph De Avila and Ian Lovett

UNE - Irma Weakens to Tropical Storm After Lashing Florida

One of the most powerful hurricanes to cross the Atlantic weakened to a tropical storm Monday, a day after making landfall in Florida twice, delivering torrential rains and winds of more than 100 miles an hour and flooding streets with storm surges.

Irma made landfall in the Florida Keys Sunday morning as a Category 4 storm, before hitting

Marco Island as it headed north toward Tampa Bay. Though the storm weakened to a Category 2 by late afternoon and was downgraded to a tropical storm Monday morning, the National Weather Service said the extreme storm conditions would continue for much of central and western Florida. The storm was expected to move into southern Georgia Monday afternoon.

State officials didn't know the extent of the damage on Sunday, with the storm still making its way north and many of the hardest-hit areas inaccessible.

As Hurricane Irma closed in on Naples, Fla., Zandra Mattia huddled inside of a closet with her husband Peter. Ms. Mattia, 48 years old, who lives outside of the mandatory evacuation zone and about 15 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, was terrified of Irma's power.

"Everything is moving. Everything is breaking...The sounds are horrible," said Ms. Mattia, who worried her hair salon in downtown Naples would be destroyed by the storm surge.

It was the second Category 4 hurricane of the season to hit the

U.S., after Hurricane Harvey churned up the Texas coast last month, flooding Houston and causing at least 50 deaths. Lixion Avila, senior specialist with the National Hurricane Center, said it is extremely rare to have two Category 4 storms hit in one season.

Days before, Irma barreled into the Caribbean, killing at least 22 people and battering islands with winds in excess of 150 miles an hour. In Cuba, buildings collapsed and power lines fell in Irma's 130-mile-an-hour winds, and rain and seawater flooded cities, including

the colonial center of Havana, the country's capital. No deaths have yet been reported in Cuba, but communications were cut off in parts of the country.

Florida officials had been preparing for the worst hurricane damage since Andrew killed 61 in the U.S. in 1992 and caused nearly \$48 billion in economic damage in 2017 dollars, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—the costliest storm in U.S. history until Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

AIR Worldwide estimated the total exposure value from Hurricane Irma in coastal counties along the Gulf Coast up to Tampa at about \$1 trillion, with private-sector insured losses of \$20 billion to \$40 billion, well below the more than \$100 billion forecast by some firms Friday. At that time, some projections for the storm had it hitting Miami and the east coast of Florida directly. Instead, the storm shifted west along the Gulf Coast.

The AIR estimate includes wind and storm-surge damage to residential, commercial and industrial properties, automobiles, and some other coverages, but excludes federal flood-insurance flood losses. It also excludes losses to inland marine, marine cargo and hull and pleasure boats, among other things.

In Miami, at least two construction cranes collapsed, and the roof peeled off a two-story building. Storm surges flooded streets in the city's downtown, and Miami International Airport suffered "significant water damage," the airport's CEO said on Twitter. Tornadoes were also reported near Fort Lauderdale.

Multiple cities, including Miami and

Tampa, put overnight curfews into effect.

The Florida Keys, in Monroe County, were hit with up to 12 inches of rain, and a 10-foot storm surge, according to the National Weather Service. The county's only highway—U.S. Route 1—was flooded. Communication to the area was spotty, and friends and family members posted frantic messages on Facebook, saying they hadn't been able to reach their loved ones since midmorning. "Monroe needs a lot of support," Florida Gov. Rick Scott said.

As of Monday morning, about 5.9 million electricity customers in Florida had lost power, according to the state's disaster agency.

President Donald Trump approved a major disaster declaration for Florida, a state of 20.6 million people, on Sunday afternoon. He said the federal response to the storm, which he described as "some big monster," was going well and said he planned to head to Florida to assess the hurricane's damage "very soon."

Around the state, more than 6.5 million people were ordered to evacuate and the state reported 77,000 people were seeking refuge in 450 shelters. In the days leading up to Irma's arrival, evacuees streamed out of Florida creating traffic jams along the highways and a dearth of accommodation up through Georgia.

State officials said the storm's protracted path could complicate rescue efforts. Many of the emergency supplies are kept in the north, as far away as Alabama, and may not be available to those in need for days.

**The
Washington
Post**

UNE - Hurricane Irma: After thrashing South Florida, storm churns north past Tampa toward Georgia

KEY WEST, Fla. — Hurricane Irma pushed swelling seas toward the populous Tampa Bay area on Monday as the giant vortex of rain and wind lost some of its punch but still threatened danger as it continued up Florida's Gulf Coast, bringing storm surges and raging downpours.

Irma weakened Monday morning to a tropical storm as it moved about 100 miles north of Tampa, according to the National Hurricane Center, which said it was still producing some wind gusts near hurricane force.

Even as Irma was expected to continue losing force as the storm

headed inland — forecasters say Irma should be a tropical depression by Tuesday afternoon — it maintained a remarkable reach. Hurricane-force winds extended 60 miles from the center and tropical-storm-force winds reaching more than 400 miles.

The storm spent Sunday grinding along Florida's southern tip with devastating fury — flattening homes, flooding the Keys and causing more than 5 million power outages. But even as it diminished Monday to a Category 1 hurricane and then to a tropical storm, Irma was still far from through.

[What you need to know about Hurricane Irma and its path]

On Sunday, Gov. Scott warned residents of the Panhandle to be on alert. He said hurricane force winds will hit Tallahassee, the state capital.

The call to evacuate came later along communities in the state's west than it had along the eastern shore where Irma was first forecast to land. Many decided to see out the storm at home, though officials on the state's Gulf Coast said they didn't know when they would be able to assess the damage and help those in need.

Allison Wallrapp, 29, said her family would have evacuated from Tampa had they known the storm would take a westward turn toward the Gulf Coast. On Friday, she briefly considered driving north, but after hearing stories about gas shortages, overbooked hotels and clogged traffic, she decided to stay put. Her family moved sentimental belongings into the interior rooms of their home, which is located near the coastline, and were hunkering down in a condo owned by her fiancé's parents.

The Tampa native said she has witnessed many hurricane warnings over the years, but her hometown was always spared. "I've never been this worried," she said.

When mandatory evacuations were ordered Saturday morning, Lory Taraborelli-Elliott, from Bonita Springs, Fla., sprang into action to find shelter for her 74-year-old father who has stage-four bladder cancer.

Ms. Taraborelli-Elliott along with her husband and parents fled their home located about 6 miles from the Gulf of Mexico three hours after the evacuation call came in and went to Germain Arena, a

designated shelter in Estero, Fla. The place was teeming with evacuees and people fainted in the heat as they waited to get in, she said.

"Because my father is oxygen dependent and has bladder cancer that he's battling, that wasn't an option for him to sit outside for hours," Ms. Taraborelli-Elliott, 51, said.

Instead, they went to a friend's house in Naples, but the power went out Sunday afternoon, leaving her father with only a few hours of oxygen. "Eventually I'll have to call 911 and do the best we can," she said.

Budge Huskey, who waited out Irma's wrath at a friend's townhouse in Naples, worried more about what would come after: a huge storm surge that could demolish properties along a deep stretch of the coast—including the home he and his wife moved into only a week ago on Barefoot Beach.

The wind howled as 80-mile-an-hour gusts whipped through. Lights in the house flickered off and on. As he spoke, his cellphone emitted a piercing signal—an emergency alert that the center of the storm was approaching.

"We're in the thick of it right now," Mr. Huskey said.

He said the couple initially intended to remain in the house for the storm. But when forecasters predicted a storm surge of 10 to 15 feet, they decided to bail.

"The storm surge could go literally miles," he said. "We really don't know what we're going to be going home to."

The Tampa Bay region has dodged a direct hurricane hit for nearly a century. But Jason Penny, a spokesman for Tampa Fire Rescue, said "reality has settled in."

"Now we realize that it's our turn," he said on Sunday.

Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn said the city was spared "a punch in the face" as Irma swung farther to the west. But he told MSNBC's "Morning Joe" that emergency teams were deployed to keep people off the streets "when that surge comes."

Meanwhile, even as Irma's center pivoted around South Florida on Sunday, sparing the densely-populated area the direct hit many

had feared, its incredible reach meant that its impact still reverberated through that region and beyond.

Irma was everywhere. Irma was Florida's storm. In the east, the hurricane's spiraling rainbands were so wide that they caused tornadoes and flooding in Miami, on Florida's opposite coast. In the west, winds were so powerful that they bent the Gulf of Mexico itself to Irma's shape. In Tallahassee, the capital, forecasters warned that strong winds would continue into Monday afternoon. In Jacksonville, all the way in Florida's northeastern corner, the National Weather Service issued a flash flood emergency for the city as rain was expected to swell the St. Johns River.

In Naples, and in Tampa Bay, water actually disappeared from Gulf beaches, because Irma's counterclockwise winds were pulling it out to sea. But not for long.

"MOVE AWAY FROM THE WATER," the National Hurricane Center warned, as curious onlookers climbed out onto the mysteriously dry seabed, moving so fast that it left manatees forlornly stranded. Later, after Irma's eye had passed, the same forces drove the water back in powerful surges.

By the end of the day Sunday, Florida officials said there were shelters open in 64 of Florida's 67 counties — 573 shelters across the state, holding 155,000 people. More than 5.7 million customers were without power as of dawn Monday, about 58 percent of the state's customers, according to Florida emergency officials.

Irma's arrival as a Category 4 hurricane — the second-most powerful category, with sustained winds of at least 130 mph — made history. Hurricane Harvey also hit Texas as a Category 4 storm, which marked the first time on record that two storms that powerful had made landfall in the United States in a single year. Scientists say that climate change is now making such intense hurricanes more likely, since hurricanes draw strength from warmer ocean waters.

And Irma seems likely to make more history before she is finished.

As the storm headed for Georgia, the city of Atlanta — hundreds of miles from any coast, and more

than 600 miles north of the place where Irma first hit the mainland — was placed under its first-ever tropical-storm warning.

[Irma's wrath: Dramatic images from the hurricane]

Late Sunday, President Trump signed a disaster declaration that should speed federal funding to damaged areas in Florida. On the same day, a White House official — social media director Dan Scavino, Jr. — shared a photo of a flooded runway on Twitter. "Here is Miami International Airport," he wrote.

It was not. Officials at Miami International tweeted back to say that Scavino was wrong. It was unclear what airport was depicted in the video, which has circulated online for at least a few weeks.

With the storm still blasting Florida on Sunday, it was too early to count the damage fully. For those in the middle of the storm, anticipation of fear turned to fear itself.

"I'm terrified," said Darla Taliaferro, 40, who was staying at a Hampton Inn in Estero, on the Gulf Coast. As Irma hit the town, she had taken shelter at a hotel where her husband Jason, 35, is an employee. With them were their children, Ramielle, 9, and Jason Jr., 8, as well as her two parakeets, Desi and Luci.

In the middle of the storm, there was a knock on their door. They had to leave their hotel room. The winds were shifting, and that side of the hotel wasn't safe.

The instructions: leave valuables in the bathroom, and come to the lobby. Quickly.

"I want safety," Taliaferro said, noting that being asked to leave her 4th floor room frightened her a lot. "My heart went, 'Oh my God!' It's my first hurricane but I can't let the kids see how scared I am."

For residents of South Florida, Irma was a storm they'd spent the past week waiting for.

But it didn't arrive in the place they'd been waiting for it.

For days, as Irma battered Caribbean islands and fattened up on warm waters, it had seemed most likely to hit Miami and then target cities along the Atlantic Coast. Evacuations were issued there, sending people streaming

north and west. Some people fled across the state, mistakenly thinking the Tampa area would be spared.

Everyone watched the storm, and waited for the turn.

[Fear is in the water, spreading with new and viral efficiency]

At some point, meteorologists said, prevailing winds would knock into Irma like a giant pool ball, redirecting it to the north. But where, exactly, would that turn happen?

Overnight Saturday, they finally knew.

"Irma has made its long-awaited turn," reported the National Hurricane Center in its 5 a.m. advisory Sunday. Instead of aiming the storm's eye at Miami, the turn left Irma tracking further west, on a path up the state's Gulf Coast toward cities including Naples, Fort Myers and eventually Tampa and St. Petersburg.

"People have asked what can we do, the first thing I tell them is: pray," Gov. Rick Scott (R) said in a morning interview with Fox News. "Pray for everybody in Florida."

Packing 130 mile-an-hour winds, Hurricane Irma battered Florida on Sept. 10, knocking out power in more than one million homes and businesses. Packing 130 mile-an-hour winds, Hurricane Irma battered Florida on Sept. 10, knocking out power in more than one million homes and businesses. (Reuters)

Packing 130 mile-an-hour winds, Hurricane Irma battered Florida on Sept. 10, knocking out power in more than one million homes and businesses. (Reuters)

The storm hit Cudjoe Key at about 9:10 a.m. Key West — further south, at the end of the chain — endured hours of unrelenting rain and high winds, which seemed to peak at about 7 a.m. Though the hurricane felled many trees on the small island and caused some property damage, predictions of potentially catastrophic storm surges and flooding didn't materialize.

Low-lying areas of Key West, especially in the tourist-heavy streets near the Key West Bight, flooded on Sunday, with deep standing water along Caroline and Front streets. Some areas had three feet of water and were impassable

by car, but there were many areas of the island that saw no flooding at all. One apartment complex lost its roof.

Officials estimated that about 25 percent of Key West's residents stayed through the storm despite evacuation orders. Several people on the island said they felt like they got lucky because the storm wasn't as bad as expected, but they also now are in the dark: There was no power, water or cellphone service as of Sunday evening, meaning there was almost no way to communicate with the outside world.

It is unclear how long it will take for Key West to regain those essential services.

[Tales from Irma's path: Frayed nerves, shared panic, helping hands]

After it blasted the Keys, the storm moved into open water again, headed for Florida's mainland, making landfall in Marco Island on the west coast before slowly heading north. The storm itself moved Sunday at an excruciating 14 miles per hour, up the coast toward Tampa and St. Petersburg — a metropolitan area of 3 million people that had not seen a major hurricane since the 1920s.

In Miami on Monday morning, dawn brought some welcome light to after a blustery night. Power is out most everywhere. The storm had finally left after a stronger-than-expected blow that lasted all day Sunday and left this metropolis looking shredded.

Much of the damage may be superficial — all the billboards have had their fabric ripped away, but they are designed that way. Cranes have collapsed and debris littered the streets, but Miami did not appear to be a disaster zone.

Neither was it, at the moment, a city open for business. As the curfew lifted Monday morning, there were still signs Miami had not lumbered back to life.

Chico's, a Hialeah institution known for never, ever closing, remained shut tight behind hurricane shutters.

reported trouble finding enough workers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 225,000 construction job openings in June, up 30% in the last year and 125%

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Editorial : Trump's Hurricane Rebuilding Job - WSJ

The Editorial Board

4 minutes

President Trump knows the construction industry and can talk in great detail about laying concrete. So the urgent need for more construction workers following

Hurricanes Harvey and Irma ought to get his attention.

Even before the hurricanes, construction firms around the U.S.

reported trouble finding enough workers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 225,000 construction job openings in June, up 30% in the last year and 125%

since 2012. According to a survey this month by the Associated General Contractors of America, 86% of firms nationwide anticipate hiring workers in the next year.

The worker shortage is especially acute in fast-growing metro areas in the South such as Atlanta, Houston and Miami. In Texas, 69% of contractors said they struggled to fill positions. About 60% of contractors in the South are having trouble finding carpenters and concrete workers while half need more day laborers.

Older construction workers have left the workforce since the last housing boom. About a third moved to higher-paying industries such as energy and manufacturing. Fewer young men are pursuing the trades or a vocational education, and some

can't pass a drug test.

Big Labor and the restrictionist right say employers simply need to increase wages. But in Texas 57% of contractors reported increasing base pay while a quarter offered bonuses—and they're still struggling to recruit workers. Between 2013 and 2016, the base pay for a day laborer increased 30% in Houston. Carpenters there earn about \$25 an hour, 55% more than three years ago. Large contractors with government contracts can perhaps pay more. But small firms then get out-competed for workers.

Housing remodels are now taking longer because contractors and construction workers are busy on public works, which are costing taxpayers more. The hurricanes have exacerbated the shortage. Harvey destroyed about 30,000

homes in the Houston area. The National Association of Home Builders estimates that up to 20,000 workers will be needed to rebuild homes after Harvey—and many more to repair businesses, schools and infrastructure. Some rebuilding jobs simply won't get done if labor costs rise to make them unprofitable.

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, much of the clean-up and rebuilding was done by immigrants, many illegal. That saved money and sped up the recovery. Undocumented workers make up 29% of construction workers in Louisiana, 23% Texas and 15% in Florida, according to the Pew Research Center.

All employers must complete an employment eligibility verification form, and those who hire

undocumented workers risk losing workers in immigration raids. But the Department of Homeland Security is now demanding that federal contractors use E-Verify to check whether workers are legal, and this deters some workers who could help.

The Bush Administration temporarily waived worker-ID requirements after Katrina, and President Trump should do the same. Congress also ought to authorize more guest-worker visas for construction as part of the Irma relief bill, and any undocumented worker who assists with rebuilding should receive one. Consider this a down payment on solving the economy's larger labor shortage.

The New York Times

Krugman : Conspiracies, Corruption and Climate - The New York

Paul Krugman

5-7 minutes

After the devastation wreaked by Harvey on Houston — devastation that was right in line with meteorologists' predictions — you might have expected everyone to take heed when the same experts warned about the danger posed by Hurricane Irma. But you would have been wrong.

On Tuesday, Rush Limbaugh accused weather scientists of inventing Irma's threat for political and financial reasons: "There is a desire to advance this climate change agenda, and hurricanes are one of the fastest and best ways to do it," he declared, adding that "fear and panic" help sell batteries, bottled water, and TV advertising.

He evacuated his Palm Beach mansion soon afterward.

In a way, we should be grateful to Limbaugh for at least raising the subject of climate change and its relationship to hurricanes, if only because it's a topic the Trump administration is trying desperately to avoid. For example, Scott Pruitt, the pollution- and polluter-friendly head of the Environmental Protection Agency, says that now is not the time to bring up the subject — that doing so is "insensitive" to the people of Florida. Needless to say, for people like Pruitt there will

never be a good time to talk about climate.

So what should we learn from Limbaugh's outburst? Well, he's a terrible person — but we knew that already. The important point is that he's not an outlier. True, there weren't many other influential people specifically rejecting warnings about Irma, but denying science while attacking scientists as politically motivated and venal is standard operating procedure on the American right. When Donald Trump declared climate change a "hoax," he was just being an ordinary Republican.

And thanks to Trump's electoral victory, know-nothing, anti-science conservatives are now running the U.S. government. When you read news analyses claiming that Trump's deal with Democrats to keep the government running for a few months has somehow made him a moderate independent, remember that's it not just Pruitt: Almost every senior figure in the Trump administration dealing with the environment or energy is both an establishment Republican and a denier of climate change and of scientific evidence in general.

And almost all climate change denial involves Limbaugh-type conspiracy theorizing.

There is, after all, an overwhelming scientific consensus that human activities are warming the planet. When conservative politicians and

pundits challenge that consensus, they do so not on the basis of careful consideration of the evidence — come on, who are we kidding? — but by impugning the motives of thousands of scientists around the world. All of these scientists, they insist, motivated by peer pressure and financial rewards, are falsifying data and suppressing contrary views.

This is crazy talk. But it's utterly mainstream on the modern right, among pundits — even anti-Trump pundits — and politicians alike.

Why are U.S. conservatives so willing to disbelieve science and buy into tinfoil-hat conspiracy theories about scientists? Part of the answer is that they're engaged in projection: That's the way things work in their world.

Some disillusioned Republicans like to talk about a golden age of conservative thought, somewhere in the past. That golden age never existed; still, there was a time when some conservative intellectuals had interesting, independent ideas. But those days are long past: Today's right-wing intellectual universe, such as it is, is dominated by hired guns who are essentially propagandists rather than researchers.

And right-wing politicians harass and persecute actual researchers whose conclusions they don't like — an effort that has been vastly empowered now that Trump is in power. The Trump administration is

disorganized on many fronts, but it is systematically purging climate science and climate scientists wherever it can.

So as I said, when people like Limbaugh imagine that liberals are engaged in a conspiracy to promote false ideas about climate and suppress the truth, it makes sense to them partly because that's what their friends do.

But it also makes sense to them because conservatives have grown increasingly hostile to science in general. Surveys show a steady decline in conservatives' trust in science since the 1970s, which is clearly politically motivated — it's not as if science has stopped working.

It's true that scientists have returned the favor, losing trust in conservatives: more than 80 percent of them now lean Democratic. But how can you expect scientists to support a party whose presidential candidates won't even concede that the theory of evolution is right?

The bottom line is that we are now ruled by people who are completely alienated not just from the scientific community, but from the scientific idea — the notion that objective assessment of evidence is the way to understand the world. And this willful ignorance is deeply frightening. Indeed, it may end up destroying civilization.



Gabriel : Irma and Harvey will slam U.S. economy. Rebuilding can't fix that.

Jon Gabriel, The Arizona Republic Opinion

There's no economic silver lining to these hurricanes. Experts who say recovery will boost U.S. growth are overlooking their costs.

Ever since Hurricane Harvey slammed into Texas two weeks ago, we've seen countless images of heroic rescues, flooded interstates and damaged buildings.

As awful as the human toll was, it was not as bad as many of us feared. But it will take months to repair the homes, businesses and infrastructure of Houston and the surrounding area. The same will be true in Florida after Hurricane Irma.

The economic impact could be felt for years, but many economists and financial experts think there's a silver lining.

The *Los Angeles Times* crowed that Harvey's destruction is expected to boost auto sales. CNBC reported that Harvey "could be a slight negative for U.S. growth in the third quarter, but

economists say it may ultimately provide a tiny boost to the national economy because of the rebuilding in the Houston area."

Even Goldman Sachs is looking at the bright side, noting that there could be an increase in economic activity, "reflecting a boost from rebuilding efforts and a catchup in economic activity displaced during the hurricane."

Economically speaking, it's great news that all this damage in Texas and Florida needs to be fixed, right? Not only does this mean big bucks for cleanup crews, but think of all the money that street sweepers, construction workers and Home Depots will rake in.

And what about all those windows broken by the high winds? This will be the Golden Age of Texas Glaziers!

Not so fast.

A long time ago, a French guy named Frédéric Bastiat shattered this kind of nonsense, calling it "the broken window fallacy." In his essay "That Which Is Seen, and That

Which Is Not Seen," Bastiat showed that destruction never boosts the economy.

He imagined a boy broke a window. (Something I excelled at as a kid — sorry, north Phoenix.) Now his dad needs to pay to replace it. Amateur economists in the neighborhood tell the dad that's a tough break, but note how great it is for the local glassmaker. Why, he would go out of business if annoying kids (such as yours truly) never put a baseball through a window.

In fact, the economic growth would be even better if they sent me around to smash the windows of every house on my street.

True, the glaziers would make a few extra bucks whenever I moved into a neighborhood. That's the economic impact that is seen.

But the impact that isn't seen is the fact my long-suffering dad can't spend that money on a new guitar, a dinner out, or counseling for his petty vandal of a son.

Moreover, replacing something that has already been purchased is a

maintenance cost, not a purchase of truly new goods, and maintenance doesn't stimulate production.

This idea can be broadened to all sorts of government activity. It doesn't grow the economy to start a war, level a neighborhood for a giant arena, or tear up a rundown street to build a light rail.

After the fact, there might be an "improvement" for that immediate area, but it doesn't account for all the economic activity lost in the process.

The only economic good to come from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma would be a remedial course in basic common sense. Instead of looking for disasters to fix our economy, economists and politicians should stop the unnatural disasters they inflict on American consumers and job creators every single day.

By eliminating red tape, silly regulations and unnecessary taxes, each of us will be free to actually grow our economy instead of passing around the dwindling dollars we already have.



Flam : Another Way Climate Change Might Make Hurricanes Worse

by Faye Flam @fayeflam More stories by Faye Flam

like many exciting ideas in science, it's still not universally accepted. Some are waiting for more evidence.

For people who've looked into the slowing of wind circulation, however, Hurricane Harvey was a case in point. Part of the reason it was so destructive was because it got slowed down over Houston. The storm was caught between two high-pressure blocking systems shortly after it made landfall in Texas, so instead of rolling over the region, it got stuck for several days, dumping 50 inches of rain over an enormous area — a total of 19 trillion gallons. The longer it lingered, the more rain fell; ultimately, some parts of the state saw a year's worth of rainfall in less than a week.

Charles Greene, an atmospheric scientist at Cornell University, believes that warming in the Arctic led to a slowing down of a high-altitude, circulating wind known as the jet stream, which he argues contributed to Harvey's lingering destruction. If that turns out to be the case, it portends more such events to come. He suspects recent droughts in the western United States may have been exacerbated by the same phenomenon, as a

more sluggish jet stream allowed masses of dry air to get locked into place.

Why would global warming affect winds and storms? As Greene explains, warming isn't happening in a uniform way. The Arctic is warming faster than the earth's temperate zones, and so there's less of a difference than there used to be between Arctic and mid-latitude temperatures. "These temperature differences are what drive atmospheric winds," he said, which include the jet stream and a more northerly circulation pattern called the polar vortex. The polar vortex normally confines frigid air to the Arctic, and when it weakens, Arctic air can swing south and create unusually cold weather at lower latitudes.

The Arctic is warming faster than the rest of the planet because there's a positive feedback loop at work. As reflective sea ice melts, it exposes dark ocean underneath, he said. That means more of the sun's energy gets absorbed into the oceans, driving yet more warming in a positive feedback system. In the fall, some of the ocean's heat is released back into the atmosphere. That change in Arctic temperature alters the polar vortex, slowing and

weakening it. That has coincided with an increase in the number of tropical cyclones and nor'easters.

In his view, the warming Arctic is also causing the jet stream to slow, and thereby allowing the formation of more "blocks" of high pressure to lock storms such as Harvey in place. He acknowledges, however that there isn't enough evidence yet to link cause and effect, or rule out natural variability.

Kevin Trenberth, climate scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, says Greene and his colleagues have more work to do to demonstrate the links between Arctic melting, wind patterns and extreme weather. But there are already well-established links between global warming and storms.

Trenberth's work focuses on the oceans, which are heating up along with the atmosphere. While the surface of the ocean has been slowly warming since the mid-20th century, the 1990s brought something new: Water started to warm up 700 to 2,000 meters below the surface. The increase is small, he said, but the total energy pent up under the surface is enormous. Normally, big storms churn up cold

water from the depths, and this allows their energy to peter out. Now that there's warmer water below the surface, there's extra heat available, he said, and that can cause a storm to intensify and last longer.

And that's not the only way global warming can lead to more destructive storms. It's well

understood that warmer air holds more moisture, which allows Harvey and other storms to pack more precipitation. Warmer oceans also likely added fuel to this storm, and will continue to do so over the course of the century. The water in the Gulf of Mexico is 2 to 4 degrees warmer than it has been historically this time of year, said Greene. Warmer water allows storms to

intensify fast, as Harvey did by going from Category 2 to Category 4 without hours. Now, Hurricane Irma seems to be doing the same thing as it heads toward Florida.

The arguments among scientists are for the most part not about *whether* global warming is contributing to extreme weather, but which consequences of global

warming will wreak the most havoc. In his talk, physicist Geoffrey West explained that the kind of disorder associated with global warming is the price we pay for our ordered civilization. There's no reason to be ashamed that it's happened -- or to deny it. Better to look forward and realize it's still possible to mitigate the damage, and to adapt.



Lawrence : Trump shows GOP how it's done: Scrap absolutism, deal with reality

Jill Lawrence, USA TODAY Opinion

President Trump wrote a book on deals, and so did I. Mine is shorter and didn't sell *quite* as many copies, but it was a deep dig into how political agreements are born. The process — slow, plodding, painstaking, strategic, and did I mention slow? — is nothing like what went on with Trump, Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer. Nothing at all.

As a citizen, I'm thrilled by the lightning round between the Republican president and his two Democratic amigos. It feels strange but wonderful to get hurricane aid, keep the government in business and increase the U.S. borrowing limit (sparing the world a financial crisis) — all before we even began to type our traditional angst-ridden headlines about polarization, paralysis and brinksmanship.

As a liberal, I'm also pretty psyched. If Pelosi (the House Democratic leader) and Schumer (her Senate counterpart) are even half the geniuses Republicans seem to think they are, Democrats may be well positioned to help protect undocumented young immigrants in a program Trump just canceled, and to keep a lid on the deliverables to rich people who are anticipating huge tax cuts.

If I were a centrist Republican, I'd be intrigued by this hint of bipartisanship. Could it be that the GOP fever is finally breaking, five long years after Barack Obama predicted it would? If so, all it has

taken is Obama's exit from the stage, absolute Republican power, and a president like Trump.

It turns out that a lot of what Obama did wasn't so god-awful. The problem was who did it (him) and in some cases how he did it — executive actions or, heaven forbid, party-line votes. Quick, pass the smelling salts.

The latest of many examples is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA. In the absence of congressional action on a new immigration law, Obama unilaterally started a permit system so people brought here illegally as children could work and study without fear of deportation. The conservative backlash was ferocious.

But now that Trump has canceled it, with a six-month grace period for Congress to "do your job," as he put it, a growing number of Republicans — including Trump and House Speaker Paul Ryan — are looking for an escape hatch. Whose idea was it, anyway, to destroy the lives of some 800,000 young people who are working, studying and have never broken the law? Who are engines of our economy, or could be, if we let them stay? It turns out it's not popular to kick the "dreamers" out of America.

Turns out as well that repealing the Affordable Care Act, aka Obamacare, is not popular either — especially when the Congressional Budget Office has found that every variation on a replacement would

cost people more, take away consumer protections, and insure far fewer — up to 24 million fewer in one case. Those protesting repeal at town meetings included conservatives and Trump voters as well as liberal Democrats. Those seeking a bipartisan compromise to stabilize markets and improve the law include more than a few Republican senators and governors. Those trying to get Congress to abandon repeal and move on include ... Trump. At least as of Friday.

It wasn't popular to pull America out of the Paris climate agreement, as Trump has done. It wouldn't be popular to weaken fuel efficiency standards developed by the Obama administration, with consumers or even apparently with the auto industry.

And it won't be popular if, as expected, the tax "reform" push by Trump and congressional Republicans turns out to be mostly about tax cuts for the rich. Three-quarters of Americans say Trump should not lower taxes on the wealthy and close to that many said a year ago that taxes should be raised on the wealthy.

Buoyed by gerrymandering and cultural shifts, Republicans have had years of success winning elections at every level. They have mistaken that as popular support for free-market health care, trickle-down economics, extensive deregulation and callous social policies. Will months of failure on

Obamacare repeal, capped perhaps by a groundswell of support for DACA, finally drive the message home?

The aggressively conservative House Freedom Caucus has been like the tail wagging the GOP and aspiring to wag the whole country. But its three dozen hard-core conservatives don't represent anything close to a majority of Americans. Even within the House, they may be outnumbered by the moderate centrists of the Tuesday Group, estimated to have as many as 50 members.

Ronna McDaniel, chairman of the Republican National Committee, says it's going to be hard for the GOP to win the 2018 elections if "we haven't accomplished the things that we ran on." Rep. Mark Meadows, chairman of the Freedom Caucus, predicts "rebellion against everybody" if the GOP doesn't repeal Obamacare, cut taxes and build a wall on the U.S.-Mexican border.

Yet rebellion seems inevitable, either from angrily ideological primary voters or more practical, middle-of-the-road general-election voters. Both Meadows and McDaniel have it backwards. They should, and yes, I'm really going to say this, take a tip from Trump: Look at today's political and fiscal realities, step away from their absolutism, and deal with the world as it is.



UNE - Muted backlash to Trump's bipartisanship signals warning for GOP

By Michael Scherer

Republicans who dared to cut deals with Democrats have long had to fear retribution from conservative activists like Rick Manning, president of Americans for Limited Government. He had railed against a 2015 debt-ceiling compromise as "absurd," and as recently as March

called for President Trump to use the vote to "create real reforms" to cut spending.

But when Trump shocked the nation last week, handing Democrats a major victory by accepting their terms for a clean three-month suspension of the borrowing limit, Manning says he felt no ill will for the president. Instead, he blamed

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) for forcing Trump to work with Democrats.

"He gave them the opportunity to legislate and they failed, so of course he's got to knock over the table," Manning said. "He said now you have to compete for my signature and in competing you

have got to give me what I want. So, yeah, he changed the game."

The game has certainly changed. The old rules of GOP politics held that any Republican who stepped out of line to seek compromise with Democrats risked immediate attack for ideological heresy, or worse, squishiness and weakness. But Trump's call for a "much stronger

coming together” with Democrats last week earned him little direct public criticism from Republican lawmakers or activists, who are wary of his power among the base. Instead, party leaders across Washington turned the focus of their ire on the continued dysfunction among Republicans.

That line was echoed from the White House, which has sought to cast Trump’s embrace of Democrats as an effort to disrupt politics as usual. “This is simple. In the real world, progress is measured by how much you produce, not how much you pontificate,” said Kellyanne Conway, a senior White House adviser. “It turns out the swamp includes some people on Capitol Hill and not just on K Street.”

At the core of Trump’s decision is a calculation that many Republicans, with more traditional ideological goals, ignore at their own peril. The president has never seen himself as a party standard-bearer, but as the leader for a growing share of the electorate furious at the haplessness of the political system. While his prescriptions have tended to be conservative, his disruptive methods are more often the primary selling point, along with his promise to deliver for what he calls “the forgotten men and women.”

“His nomination was the hostile takeover of the Republican Party,” said Roger Stone, a former longtime political adviser who helped guide Trump’s short-lived bid for the 2000 Reform Party nomination. “He is a threat to them. He has just demonstrated that he is entirely capable of outflanking and outmaneuvering them.”



Dionne : Trump has spent his whole presidency making Democrats stronger

Be wary of anyone who purports to understand the deep meaning of President Trump’s decision to side with the Democrats on short-term budget issues. Nobody knows what he’s up to, and this probably includes Trump himself.

Nonetheless, his recent foray into bipartisanship provides the occasion to explore the path he chose not to take at the beginning of his administration. He had the opportunity to put Democrats in a tight spot. Instead, he has spent his energies since Jan. 20 strengthening the hand of his opponents and weakening his own party.

If Trump had opened his presidency by detailing a major infrastructure

Trump has tied his fortunes to a growth in the share of voters more focused on shaking up the system than in prescribing specific ideas for its replacement. The 2009 tea party rebellion in the Republican Party, which began as a demand for less government spending, seamlessly morphed into broad support for Trump’s 2016 campaign, despite his promises to resist cuts to government entitlement programs and his disinterest in lowering federal deficits.

“There is an element of the core base in both the Democratic and Republican Party that is more nonideological and anti-establishment than any other aspect of their political view,” said Josh Holmes, a former chief of staff to McConnell who helped lead the Republican effort to defeat tea party challengers in the 2014 elections. “Taken to its logical conclusion, that means that they will support anybody regardless of their ideology that is intent on opposing the powers that be.”

The trend could have significant implications not only for the coming legislative negotiations but for the midterm elections next year. Republican lawmakers are bracing for the possibility that Trump will involve himself in primary elections to challenge incumbent Republican senators in Arizona and Nevada.

A special primary election this month in Alabama has demonstrated the popular appeal among voters for candidates who will go to Washington to smash the existing ways. Former state Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore, who is running an iconoclastic campaign against the “silk stocking

plan, Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and his colleagues would have had no choice but to cooperate, as Schumer himself signaled at the time. If Trump had also lived up to the promises of his campaign by proposing to make Obamacare better and not simply pushing for repeal, he might have fostered a similar spirit of bipartisan engagement.

He could have linked these Democratic-friendly ideas with an early call for tax cuts as part of tax reform, which would have made Republicans happy, as has his ongoing work to eviscerate Obama-era business regulations.

All this might have added to the deficit in a big way, but Trump has always lived on debt. This course

Washington elitists,” has been leading incumbent Sen. Luther Strange in most recent polls, about two weeks before the runoff. Though Trump has officially endorsed Strange, he has yet to commit to campaigning in Alabama. Meanwhile, Trump’s recent tweets criticizing McConnell — “Get back to work,” the president demanded — have helped carry Moore’s anti-incumbent message.

Trump’s 2016 campaign pollster, John McLaughlin, who continues to consult with the White House, conducted an online poll for conservative groups late last month that found 68 percent of likely Republican voters in 2018 thought it was time to replace McConnell and Ryan in Congress. In a separate question, 49 percent of all likely voters polled, including 46 percent of Republicans, said the same Republican leadership was “supporting the swamp” that Trump had promised to drain.

“Among these likely voters, they are more supportive of the president because he is trying to get things done,” McLaughlin said. “They are definitely sending a warning message to the Republican majority that they want to get things done.”

Trump’s support with the Republican Party has fallen somewhat since his inauguration, but remains about 70 percent in most surveys. Among people who backed Trump in the primary, the support is even stronger. That stands in marked contrast to Trump’s overall approval rating among American adults, which hovers around 40 percent, according to polling averages. A poll by Fox News at the end of last

month found that 56 percent of voters thought Trump was “tearing the country apart,” while the same percentage said he did not respect racial minorities. In the same survey, more than half of voters answered “not at all” when asked if Trump was honest, compassionate or a moral leader.

But for Trump, his base support has always mattered more. And it has continued to complicate the efforts of the self-styled intellectuals of the conservative movement who want to continue to frame political fights along an ideological axis. Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska was one of several Republicans who rushed to the microphones after Trump cut a deal with Democrats to try to reclaim his language. “What we’re doing in this body today is not draining the swamp,” he announced on the Senate floor, before the vote on Trump’s deal with Democrats. “What we’re doing is running a whole bunch of hoses to the edge of the swamp, turning them on to the highest possible volume flow, and then turning our backs.”

It was a statement that would make sense for voters who define “the swamp” as a government with more progressive priorities. But the president believes his adopted party has moved on to different goals. “The people of the United States want to see a coming together, at least to an extent, with different parties,” Trump said Thursday at the White House. His bet is that as long as he can demonstrate disruption of the established order, the Republican electorate will be willing to come along for the ride.

would have been seen by some critics as philosophically muddled and by some conservatives as betrayal. But you can imagine that the prevailing wisdom in Washington would have praised him for breaking through “stale” political categories and “rising above” the old partisan fights. He could also have given himself more bargaining room by putting everyone, Democrats as well as Republicans, in play.

President Trump’s decision to back Democrats’ plans for raising the debt ceiling and permanently removing Congress’s debt ceiling requirement is frustrating Republicans, and especially conservatives. President Trump’s decision to back Democrats’ plans for raising the debt ceiling and

permanently removing Congress’s debt ceiling requirement frustrate the GOP. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

President Trump’s decision to back Democrats’ plans for raising the debt ceiling and permanently removing Congress’s debt ceiling requirement is frustrating Republicans, and especially conservatives. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

It could be that Trump’s latest move is a reach for this lost chance, although it seemed to be more impulse than strategy. It was also sudden. No one on either side was prepared for Trump’s embrace of Schumer and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi’s (D-Calif.) suggestion to pass hurricane relief now and to set up December as the

time for serious haggling. Democrats are likely to have more leverage then.

Being who he is, Trump might have wanted to take a slap at his putative allies, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.), both of whom he seems to dislike intensely. And perhaps he was looking for a few days of good headlines. Pelosi reported he reveled in the great media coverage he received, as good an indicator as any that this is a guy who operates day to day.

Trump's problem with moving from a relatively small policy gesture to an entirely new approach is that the immediate past cannot be erased.

He is a far weaker figure today than he was when he was inaugurated. His poll numbers are terrible, the Russia story has ballooned in importance, and Democrats are in no mood to throw him any lifelines. His words and actions on race and deportations have erected new moral barriers to any pragmatic turn toward working with him. "All he's done in eight months," said a senior Senate Democratic aide, "is make the price of cooperation a lot higher."

In the meantime, he has filled his Cabinet largely with conservative loyalists, further complicating any triangulation strategy involving Democrats. One member of his inner circle who might be best positioned to work with Democrats,

Gary Cohn, his senior economic adviser, is apparently so on the outs that there are reports he may soon be gone. Trump might have run against GOP orthodoxy in the primaries, but so much of what he has done so far would have been in any right-wing Republican's playbook.

He is still somewhat distinctive in his nativism, but this hardly bodes well for cooperation with progressives and moderates. And oddly enough, the departure of nationalist-in-chief Stephen K. Bannon removed one voice in his circle advocating positions on infrastructure, trade and taxes that had at least something in common with Democratic views.

Democrats will certainly try to press the temporary advantage they seem to have on behalf of immigrants endangered by Trump's moves against the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. They'll also push for Obamacare funding, an end to the debt ceiling and a variety of budget concessions.

We should have learned long ago that looking for coherence from this president is a fool's errand. He may have happened on a wiser political strategy too late to do himself much good but just in time to hurt his already ailing party even more.

**NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE**

Donald Trump & Democrats Deal – Conservative Win

9-11 minutes

I awoke this morning after a decent night's sleep, although many of my fellow free-market conservatives tossed and turned over President Donald J. Trump's "deal with the Dems."

The Right's insomnia over this matter seems excessive and misdirected.

Trump on Wednesday agreed to the proposal of House minority leader Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) and Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) to increase the national-debt limit for three months, and attach that to emergency aid for victims of Hurricane Harvey. But just days earlier, conservatives had been wringing their hands in fear that Schumer would turn the debt ceiling into the Democrats' newest set of brass knuckles.

If not for the high-profile urgency of, in essence, stapling the debt limit to Harvey assistance, the pressing need to re-charge Uncle Sam's credit card would have given Schumer a fresh way to beat up Republicans. Absent Harvey, Schumer and his band of toughs would have kidnapped the debt limit in exchange for something else, perhaps "DACA or death!" Instead, the debt-limit increase slid through, behind Harvey's shield, with no last-minute hostage drama.

Trump rejected the offer of House speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wisc.) and Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) to extend the debt limit for 18 months, past the 2018 mid-term elections. This would have removed federal borrowing from the list of issues on which the GOP could have run next year. Obama hiked the national debt from \$10.6 trillion to \$19.9 trillion — a

staggering 87.8 percent. That mess, and how to escape it, would have been a worthy GOP issue. Ryan and McConnell largely would have obviated that opportunity.

Ryan and McConnell's 18-month proposal also would have deprived Republicans of a priceless "must pass" vehicle to which they could append items that Senate Democrats dislike. The GOP similarly handed *Obama* multiple long-term debt-limit extensions that prevented Republicans from sending him short-term debt-limit measures that he would have had to sign, notwithstanding amendments that rankled him. Republicans should not deploy the debt limit every month, in order to corner Schumer and Senate Democrats. But mothballing this weapon until spring 2019 smacks of unilateral disarmament.

From all reports, Ryan and McConnell were ready to drop-kick the debt-limit 18 months down the road, in return for . . . nothing. Even worse, as conservatives correctly complain, they did not tie the debt-limit boost to any structural reforms, such as a cap on federal spending as a share of GDP, adoption of the brilliant Penny Plan (which would balance the budget by cutting total spending by 1 percent every year for eight years), a private-sector audit of every federal department and sub-cabinet agency, or even converting Washington's books from cash-basis to accrual accounting. Ryan and McConnell promised 18 months of borrowing and spending on autopilot. Trump properly rejected such fiscal brain death.

Now, in three months, fiscal conservatives can and should append reformist language to the next debt-limit increase. Ryan/McConnell would have denied

them that opportunity until nearly two Easters hence.

As it is, Schumer & Co. still can cause Trump and the GOP tremendous heartburn on the budget, as this fiscal year ends on September 30. But at least their debt-limit bomb has been defused, for now. Republicans will have enough of a challenge battling Democrats on an overall spending plan without having to hear Schumer's debt-limit IED ticking in the background.

Trump's deal with Schumer and Pelosi should make it easier to focus on tax reform. The good news is that the president has been stumping for tax reduction and tax simplification, from Springfield, Mo., to Bismarck, N.D.

"We're going to be switching from a worldwide tax system that encourages companies to keep their funds offshore to a territorial system that encourages companies to bring their profits back home to America, where that money belongs," Trump said Wednesday, before several oil-storage tanks, at Bismarck's Endeavor Refinery. (Take that, global warmists!) "But we'll also dramatically reduce the tax rate for America's small businesses, which have created more than 60 percent of new private-sector jobs in the recent past." Trump also said: "Tax relief is on the way for millions of sole proprietors, LLCs, and partnerships who report their income on their personal tax returns."

Trump said this soon after bringing to the stage several officeholders, including Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D., N.D.). With the feckless McConnell unable to control his admittedly narrow majority, Trump only can benefit from finding Democrats who will vote for any

part of the conservative agenda on which he ran. (And, yes, despite the moans of Never Trumpniks, aside from free trade, Trump campaigned and won on the most conservative platform that Americans have seen since Ronald Reagan. And Trump is implementing it, far more than anyone credits him. Case in point: Thursday's announced rollback of Obama's due-process-crushing Title IX "guidance letter" on campus sexual harassment.)

Securing the support of Heitkamp and other non-crazy Democrats on tax reform and other vital measures might show Republican senators Susan Collins of Maine, John McCain of Arizona, and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska that they have less ability to torpedo Trump, especially on issues such as repealing and replacing Obamacare, on which those very same GOP turncoats competed for and scored their seats.

The worst news facing Republicans is that the Senate parliamentarian ruled September 1 that the reconciliation window to repeal and replace Obama's hideous health-care legacy slams shut at month's end. So Senator Lindsay Graham (R., S.C.) has until September 30 to find 51 votes for his plan. It would send much of Obamacare's budget to the 50 states, where governors and state legislators could undo this catastrophe as they see fit. In fact, Graham — and any other senator(s) with repeal-and-replacement ideas — must get them through the Senate, and then back to the House. It can pass that final measure, as is, and forward it to President Trump. Otherwise, House and Senate conferees must craft compromise language and return it to both chambers for final passage. All before October 1.

These difficult steps must be taken in the next 20 days. And, among those, the Senate will meet for only 13 days, and the House for just eight. In fact, in its latest and most infuriating exercise in sloth, the Republican House will be *back on vacation* the entire week of September 18. Even worse, in order to prepare for more time off, Ryan plans to gavel the House out on Thursday night, September 14!

The real villains in the Oval Office Wednesday were not Trump or even Pelosi and Schumer. Ryan and McConnell dismissed the federal government's entire legislative branch for nearly a month and a half of beach-blanket bingo.

"The biggest problem was we didn't stay here in August and put together a debt-ceiling plan, one that actually addressed the underlying \$20 trillion debt burden that we face as a country," Representative Jim Jordan (R., Ohio) lamented Friday morning on *Fox & Friends*. "We took the longest August-recess break in a non-election year, the longest break we have taken in over a decade. That's why the House Freedom Caucus called for, nine weeks ago, back in July — we said, 'Stay in August. Let's figure out the debt ceiling. Let's put together a tax-reform plan, and let's figure out how we're going to repeal Obamacare.' Instead, we went home for almost six weeks."

The Right's insomnia over Trump's deal with the Democrats seems excessive and misdirected.

Rather than keep their promises and answer the burning questions that face the nation, Ryan and McConnell evacuated Capitol Hill and sent their troops to the shore to build sandcastles. "To hell with the debt ceiling, the budget, tax cuts, health care, judicial nominations, and sub-cabinet confirmations — surf's up!"

For decades, Washington Republicans have been breathtakingly weak. They are scared of the Old Guard media and, despite enjoying putative control of the House, the Senate, and now the

White House, they have become terrified of their own shadows. What's new is that Washington Republicans have become lazy. Louis Armstrong once sang of his native New Orleans, "It's sleepy time down South." That tune has become the anthem of Ryan and McConnell's relentlessly drowsy Republican Congress.

Perhaps President Trump's deal with the Democrats — which gave him momentum this week and did nothing to hinder his major priorities — will serve as an introductory supply of Five-Hour Energy Drink. Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell should chug a few of those daily, keep their caucuses at work, and do their damn jobs already.

POLITICO Trump's deal with Democrats bolsters Ryan — for now

By RACHAEL
BADE and KYLE

CHENEY

7-8 minutes

Donald Trump's deal with Democrats last week — the latest setback for House Republicans in a year filled with disappointment — has opened a new rift within the GOP Conference over whether their president or their speaker is to blame.

Some House conservatives have begun questioning Paul Ryan's leadership after Republicans were forced to swallow a vote to increase the debt ceiling without corresponding spending cuts. Freedom Caucus leaders, already upset that Congress wasted months on the failed bid to repeal Obamacare, cornered Ryan (R-Wis.) last Wednesday to tell him he needed to change his approach.

Some of them believe Ryan should have done more to sell Trump on a conservative alternative to the Democrats' offer.

"When you fail to prepare, you typically don't get the best outcome and you don't have the best choices at decision-making time — and that's exactly what played out," Freedom Caucus leader Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) said. "We've been very clear that we should have put together a debt ceiling plan."

Yet that appears to be the minority view within the conference. Trump's surprise partnership with Democrats may have bolstered, at least temporarily, Ryan's standing among rank-and-file Republicans. Many lawmakers rallied behind the speaker and directed their anger at the White House over the debt deal. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and budget director Mick Mulvaney

were booed when they came to Capitol Hill to plead with Republicans to support the deal.

"There's a lot of disappointment in the decision that the president made, and the way our leadership was treated — that's a sore spot," said Rep. Hal Rogers (R-Ky.).

Added Rep. Ryan Costello (R-Pa.): "The leadership is doing the best that they possibly can in a very unpredictable environment. ... We're one-third of the government."

The dissension is cresting just as Republicans turn to tax reform — arguably a taller task than repealing Obamacare — and face a crush of year-end deadlines. Navigating that schedule on the heels of Trump's defiance of GOP leaders will make for an excruciating next few months for the speaker.

While most Republicans say Ryan's hold on his post is secure, it's unclear how long he can maintain his grip in the age of Trump. The GOP's right flank is starting to agitate against Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). And the speaker is caught in an often-impossible position between a fractious conference and an unpredictable president.

For now, most Republicans say this isn't a repeat of John Boehner's ill-fated speakership. Boehner stepped down amid an uprising by the right in 2015.

Ryan appeared to receive a boost from a pair of Washington Post stories last week suggesting Freedom Caucus leaders were conspiring with allies at Breitbart News to find a replacement for Ryan. Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) denied the reports.

"If you think that you can do a better job, man up and put your name on

the ballot and say that you're running and challenge the speaker — rather than just being an agitator," said Rep. Tom Rooney (R-Fla.), a Ryan ally. "I get so tired of these guys that play Monday-morning quarterback with Paul."

In a statement for this story, Ryan spokeswoman AshLee Strong said: "The speaker and this conference are concerned only about one thing: working together to advance our agenda."

Still, discontentment inside the GOP Conference is building.

Even before Trump struck his deal with Pelosi and Schumer, conservatives were seething over news that House leaders intended to attach a long-term "clean" debt ceiling increase to a relief package for Hurricane Harvey victims.

"That'd be a sign of poor leadership if they did that," said Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.), a Freedom Caucus member. "Because they're passing a garbage bill and playing politics with people's lives — and that's not the way we ought to legislate."

It wasn't just Freedom Caucus members who were stung by the exclusion of spending cuts from the debt ceiling measure. A number of House deputy whips told POLITICO they also didn't want to vote for a "clean" debt ceiling increase; two of them suggested that such a vote could jeopardize Ryan's job security.

Republican Study Committee Chairman Mark Walker (R-N.C.) has also begun openly discussing his desire to see Ryan take a harder line against the Senate; House lawmakers have long been frustrated that the more centrist chamber dictates the terms of Republican legislation. Asked Friday whether he felt Ryan was

listening to that suggestion, Walker said, "We're heading in the wrong direction."

Still, though "there are more and more conversations that people are frustrated," Walker said he isn't contemplating a change in leadership. He called Ryan "one of the greatest human beings you'll ever meet."

There "has been some talk of, 'Is he the guy?'" Walker said. "He's still the guy."

The night that Jordan and Meadows pulled Ryan into a room off the House floor to vent their anger, The Washington Post reported that they'd met with Breitbart chief Steve Bannon and were considering alternatives to Ryan. But Ryan still appears to have the confidence of a healthy majority of the conference.

"We're talking about a minority, hopefully that's going to be isolated more and more," Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) said of the Ryan dissenters.

Even some Freedom Caucus members expressed discomfort with the criticism of Ryan's speakership. In an interview off the floor Thursday, Rep. Joe Barton (R-Texas) said he was "not unhappy with Paul" and that "he's got a tough job." Ryan "has the confidence of almost everybody in the conference," Barton added.

"Listen, it's ridiculous to even have this conversation," he said. "Paul Ryan is going to be speaker until he doesn't want to be speaker or until the Democrats take over the House."

Asked about Meadows and Jordan, Barton said: "Those are my friends. ... They're good people. Their heart is in the right place. But none of them wants to be speaker, to my knowledge, and even if they did, the

time to do that is after the next general election.”

Its unclear, however, for how long most of the conference will blame Trump or the Senate instead of their

own leaders. On Friday, Meadows, while refuting suggestions he is fomenting opposition to Ryan, declined to vouch for the speaker's effectiveness.

“I think that, obviously, results speak for themselves,” he said. “That’s what we’re waiting on.”

**The
New York
Times**

Why Ryan, Undercut by Trump, May Actually Emerge Stronger

Sheryl Gay
Stolberg

Donald Trump's populist, economic nationalist agenda to be implemented.”

WASHINGTON — Paul D. Ryan rode to power two years ago like a hero on a white horse, a reluctant candidate for House speaker elected to heal wounds left by his predecessor, who could not tame the incessant infighting between hard-line conservatives and establishment Republicans.

In one of his first real tests, Mr. Ryan discovered last week that those old wounds can reopen fast. But in President Trump, his mercurial partner in the White House, the speaker deftly found a foil to deflect some of the anger that had felled the man he succeeded, John A. Boehner.

President Trump's fiscal deal with Democratic leaders in Congress — which passed the House with more than a third of Republicans voting against it — infuriated House conservatives, who struck first at Mr. Ryan, but ultimately turned their ire on the Trump White House. By week's end, the men feeling the lash were Mr. Trump's Treasury secretary and budget director. If anything, Mr. Ryan may have emerged stronger.

“It was thrown at him,” said Representative Mark Sanford, Republican of South Carolina and a member of the hard-line House Freedom Caucus, referring to the fiscal deal. “He didn't create it; he's reacting to it. I think he laid out a course that was acceptable to the conference as a whole, and to conservatives as well, and he had the rug pulled out from underneath him.”

Mr. Ryan is certainly not out of the woods. Stephen K. Bannon, Mr. Trump's former chief strategist, is publicly sniping at him, openly declaring war on Republican leaders on Capitol Hill.

“The Republican establishment is trying to nullify the 2016 election,” Mr. Bannon said in an interview with CBS's “60 Minutes” that was to air on Sunday night. He singled out Senator Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader, and Mr. Ryan by name, saying, “They do not want

The coming push to rewrite the tax code will present the speaker with his biggest challenge yet. The first major rewrite of the tax code in 30 years, an ambitious and difficult task at any time, has emerged as a must-pass measure for Mr. Ryan, its biggest champion. The failure of Republicans to repeal the Affordable Care Act, followed by the passage of a Democrat-approved fiscal and hurricane-relief package, has only amplified the pressure on Republicans to show their constituents they can govern.

“Some of us feel that we got jammed when you couple Harvey disaster aid and the debt limit,” said one outspoken conservative, Representative Dave Brat, Republican of Virginia. He added, “The leadership just needs to give us right now a tax plan.”

Representative Mark Meadows, the North Carolina Republican and Freedom Caucus chairman, agreed, warning in an interview that failure on the tax plan would be “extremely damaging for the speaker and for all members of the G.O.P. conference, as well as the president.”

Mr. Ryan declined to be interviewed. But his allies on Capitol Hill say that, despite the conservative pushback and raucous week, the speaker emerged with a stronger hand. By week's end, tempers among even some of the angriest members of the Freedom Caucus had cooled, and Mr. Meadows insisted that the rumors of a coup in the offing were false.

“I wouldn't want his job for anything,” he said. “I have a hard enough time keeping 40 members of the Freedom Caucus together.”

Some moderates said that in cutting a deal with Democrats, Mr. Trump may have done the speaker a favor, demonstrating to hard-line conservatives that they cannot always have their way.

“In some ways it liberated Paul,” said Representative Peter T. King, Republican of New York. “The president showed he's willing to negotiate with everybody.”

Though a number of Republicans defected, the fiscal package passed with a majority of Republican votes, which Mr. King called “a good vote of confidence for Paul Ryan.”

Mr. Ryan, 47, a former chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee who was Mitt Romney's running mate in 2012, was the consensus choice of his colleagues to become speaker when Mr. Boehner was pushed out of the job in 2015. Worn down by his unruly caucus, Mr. Boehner turned the reins over to a younger man credentialed with both the Republican establishment and the Tea Party wing, which he helped bring to power in the Republican rout of 2010.

But unity proved easier for Mr. Ryan when Republicans had a common Democratic foe, President Barack Obama, in the White House. Under Mr. Trump, Mr. Ryan has a harder task: proving that he and his fellow Republicans can govern while not always having a reliable partner in the executive branch.

“It's always been a tough job,” said John Feehery, a Republican strategist who was a top aide to J. Dennis Hastert when Mr. Hastert was speaker. “It's herding cats, and in this day and age, I think it's especially difficult with President Trump, because he is unpredictable. And I think Ryan is coming to grips with how difficult it is to develop a governing coalition.”

After spending the August recess traveling the country to promote his long-sought goal of rewriting the tax code, Mr. Ryan returned to the Capitol last week and promptly rejected a plan by Democratic congressional leaders to tie a three-month increase in the nation's statutory borrowing limit to a package of hurricane relief. On Twitter, he called it “ridiculous and disgraceful.”

But on Wednesday, at a White House meeting with House and Senate leaders of both parties, Mr. Trump wrapped his arms around the Democrats' idea, sidelining Mr. Ryan and Mr. McConnell.

Later that day, members of the Freedom Caucus met with Mr. Ryan to complain bitterly that he had

walked into the White House without a coherent plan, and had ignored their proposal to pair raising the debt ceiling with other conservative priorities, such as spending cuts or easing regulations on business.

“I think lack of preparation typically means you don't get the best results, and lack of preparation usually leaves few choices, and they're not good choices,” said Representative Jim Jordan, Republican of Ohio and a member of the Freedom Caucus.

On Friday morning, an hour before a scheduled vote on the debt limit and hurricane-relief package, the White House sent Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and the president's budget director, Mick Mulvaney — a former member of the Freedom Caucus — to Capitol Hill to sell the plan in a closed-door meeting with Republicans.

Mr. Ryan said little, according to people who were in the room, stepping aside while the White House took the heat. At least one Trump supporter — Representative Lee Zeldin of New York — defended Mr. Ryan.

“The speaker was unanimously elected to represent us,” one lawmaker in the room recalled Mr. Zeldin saying. “When the president does an end run around the speaker, he does an end run around us.” A spokeswoman for Mr. Zeldin confirmed that was “the gist” of his remarks.

As the meeting broke up, some conservatives seemed to feel almost sorry for the speaker. And some of the more unruly voices of the Republican conference were reassessing their uncompromising tone.

“You don't take a Pollyanna view that the way things have always been done are going to be changing, just because you get a new speaker,” Mr. Meadows, the Freedom Caucus leader, said. “But to Speaker Ryan's credit, he stays engaged in spite of being bloodied, even by some of his own colleagues.”

Hunt : Don't Expect Trump and Congress to Do Anything

@AlHuntDC
More stories by

Albert R. Hunt

7-9 minutes

As a presidential deal-maker, Donald Trump is, in Texas parlance, all hat and no cattle. It's a big reason that, aside from disaster relief, not much is likely to get done this month or this year.

To the shock of fellow Republicans, Trump gave Democrats all they wanted to get a temporary extension of the debt ceiling and government funding and the first installment of huge assistance for hurricane victims. His claim that this augurs well for "much stronger coming together" isn't serious.

Trump cut this small deal to punish House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, whom he blames for this year's dismal legislative record, while simultaneously bragging he has gotten more done than any than any president since Franklin D. Roosevelt. The next day Trump gloated about the GOP leaders' discomfort and the media reviews.

To many congressional Republicans, this was another indication that the president doesn't care about the party, and that his word is transactional, as are his principles. It wasn't too long ago that Trump praised House Republicans, at a White House ceremony, for passing an

Obamacare replacement. He had little idea what was in it, and when the blowback came, he assailed the bill as "mean."

A sworn enemy of personal responsibility, Trump blames Ryan for passing a health-care bill, which he'd embraced, that couldn't get a majority in the other chamber. He blames McConnell for delivering, with little help from the White House, only 49 of 52 Republican senators. He also faulted them for not linking an increase in the debt limit with a popular veterans' bill. Whatever your view of the Kentucky senator, he'll forget more about legislative strategy than Trump, the faux deal-maker, ever will know.

Some small deals might be made. And, conceivably, a bigger one would eliminate the anachronistic debt-ceiling measure altogether. But that will be tough to achieve, and polarized politics make more substantive bipartisan accords almost impossible.

Republicans, while feeling some heat from the Trump base, know he can't be trusted and will be reluctant to go out on a limb, which the president is just as likely to chop off. Democrats already are devising ads against lawmakers who voted for the Obamacare replacement, citing how "mean" the president said it was.

Then there's the Trump-inspired chatter about more deals with Democrats: a massive infrastructure

measure and a compromise on liberalized immigration, coupled with Trump's demand to build a wall along the Mexican border. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer thinks he knows how to manipulate this president.

But the ability of Schumer or most other Democrats to make deals with Trump is severely limited by the revulsion much of their party's base feels toward the president. Congressional Democrats trust him even less than Republicans do.

There's another problem with this Trump-Democratic scenario: Republicans hold the majority in Congress. They control the agenda and the calendar.

Republicans are now juggling with four distinct internal blocs: traditional conservatives, represented by the leadership; the take-no-prisoners right-wing lawmakers; a small band of moderates who, on a few issues like health care, make the difference; and the Trump party, led by a president with a reverence for self and no institutional loyalty.

That is not an environment where Republican congressional leaders will facilitate measures favored by Democrats.

Two of the biggest tests, starting this month, will be taxes and health care. Senate Republican leaders have to decide whether they want to try again with a new Obamacare

repeal-and-replace plan or go along with bipartisan modifications that Republican Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Democrat Patty Murray of Washington are crafting. These would continue the Affordable Health Care Act's cost-sharing subsidies, while giving states more flexibility.

The challenge? The replacement is as deeply flawed as earlier versions, while the bipartisan initiative will infuriate the right-wing base. Republicans have to choose which route in the next three weeks. They also face the need to extend the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Tax reform won't be easier. Conceivably, a number of Democrats might support a modest bill with rate cuts offset by closing tax loopholes or preferences. But that's unacceptable to most Republicans, who want much bigger cuts.

Other issues will surface, and one sure bet is that the administration and Congress will provide funds for the costliest-ever disaster cleanups. By the end of December, the bottom line of the first year of the Trump revolution might be higher spending with limited (if any) tax cuts, and Obamacare left largely intact.

THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.

Editorial : Trial Lawyers and Breitbart Unite

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

Sept. 10, 2017 4:16 p.m. ET

The Trump era is producing strange alliances. Witness how trial lawyers are lining up behind Breitbart-backed Roy Moore in Alabama's Senate GOP primary runoff later this month.

President Trump and Mitch McConnell have both endorsed Luther Strange, Alabama's former Attorney General who was appointed temporarily to fill Jeff Sessions's seat. But former White House aide Steve Bannon's Breitbart team is trying to oust Mr. Strange to stick it to Mr. McConnell, whom they blame for the failure to kill ObamaCare, among other GOP crackups. Never mind that John McCain killed reform, and Mr. Strange voted for every repeal bill put up for a vote.

Mr. Moore, a former state Supreme Court chief justice, is a favorite among evangelicals. In 2003 he was removed from the bench after defying a federal court order to remove the Ten Commandments from the state Supreme Court. While voters returned him to the state's high court in 2012, he was removed again for flouting the Supreme Court's *Obergefell* ruling that legalized same-sex marriage.

Some Republicans like Sarah Palin admire Mr. Moore's defiance even if it evinces contempt for the Constitution and rule of law. Trial lawyers value his disregard for judicial precedent and arbitration, which limits plaintiffs' ability to sue in court.

In 2001 Mr. Moore argued in a dissenting opinion that the Federal Arbitration Act doesn't preclude plaintiffs from trying disputes in state courts even though the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled otherwise. He opined that federal courts have misconstrued the law. Alabama-

based plaintiff attorney Jere Beasley of Beasley Allen called Mr. Moore's dissent "the strongest thing I've read against arbitration."

Beasley Allen spearheaded nationwide asbestos litigation and the recent wave of torts against talcum powder, including the \$417 million awarded by a California jury last month against Johnson & Johnson. Mr. Strange's predecessor also employed Beasley Allen as outside counsel on the state lawsuit against BP for the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill. The law firm was set to receive \$140 million of the \$2 billion settlement until Mr. Strange in 2011 scuttled the agreement. "I'm not going to give any law firm 15% to 20% of the money due the people of the state of Alabama," Mr. Strange said.

Plaintiff attorneys ranked among Mr. Moore's biggest patrons in 2012, making up about 20% of his haul, according to local news reports. Mr. Beasley and his partner, Greg Allen, both contributed \$5,000 to Mr.

Moore's campaign in July. According to Alabama Local News, Mr. Beasley sent three emails to his firm's employees encouraging them to vote for Mr. Moore in the Aug. 15 primary and Sept. 26 runoff because the election is "important to our firm and our clients."

Mr. Moore is the only candidate "who is supportive on issues that are good for consumers and victims of corporate wrongdoing and abuse," Mr. Beasley wrote. "The request is made in the best interest of people in Alabama who may need the courts to remain open, independent and fair."

By that he means receptive to jackpot judgments that enrich lawyers, if not their clients. Washington's "blue slip" tradition lets Senators veto potential judicial nominees from their states, and trial lawyers hope Mr. Moore will block judges who have upheld arbitration agreements. He could also help Senate Democrats block tort

reforms that have passed the House this year.

Trial lawyers have a history of co-opting

Republicans in the South, so their support for Mr. Moore isn't surprising. But the Breitbart-trial bar alliance does speak volumes about

the faux conservatism of certain self-styled populists.

**The
Washington
Post**

By Ashley Parker

5-6 minutes

Former White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon was interviewed on "60 Minutes." Here's what he said Republican leadership and the Russia investigation. Former White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon was interviewed on "60 Minutes." Here's what he said Republican leadership and the Russia investigation. (Amber Ferguson/The Washington Post)

Former White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon was interviewed on "60 Minutes." Here's what he said Republican leadership and the Russia investigation. (Amber Ferguson/The Washington Post)

Stephen K. Bannon — President Trump's former chief strategist who left the White House in August — declared war Sunday against the Republican congressional leadership, called on Gary Cohn, Trump's top economic adviser, to resign, and outlined his views on issues ranging from immigration to trade.

Bannon, in an interview on CBS's "60 Minutes," accused Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) of "trying to nullify the 2016 election." It was Bannon's first television interview since leaving the White House and returning as executive chairman to Breitbart News, the conservative website he

previously led.

He blamed them for failing to repeal and replace former president Barack Obama's signature health-care law and made clear that he would use his Breitbart perch to hold Republicans accountable for not helping Trump push through his agenda.

"They're not going to help you unless they're put on notice," he told CBS's Charlie Rose. "They're going to be held accountable if they do not support the president of the United States. Right now there's no accountability."

Stressing absolute loyalty to Trump, Bannon criticized members of the administration who, he said, had leaked to the news media their displeasure with the way Trump handled the white-supremacist-fueled violence in Charlottesville, which left one dead and more injured.

The Post's Dan Balz says the firing of chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon simultaneously changes everything and nothing for the Trump administration. The Post's Dan Balz says the firing of chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon simultaneously changes everything and nothing for the Trump administration. (Bastien Inzaurrealde, Jhaan Elker/The Washington Post)

The Post's Dan Balz says the firing of chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon simultaneously changes everything and nothing for the Trump administration. (Bastien

Inzaurrealde, Jhaan Elker/The Washington Post)

"You can tell him, 'Hey, maybe you can do it a better way.' But if you're going to break, then resign. If you're going to break with him, resign," he said. "If you find it unacceptable, you should resign."

He explicitly mentioned Cohn, Trump's director of the National Economic Council who had criticized Trump's response in an interview with the Financial Times, and said he "absolutely" thought Cohn should have resigned.

Bannon joined the Trump campaign in August 2016 and emerged as the president's ideological id, channeling his populist and nationalist impulses. Though he made many enemies in the West Wing, including the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, and clashed with John F. Kelly, Trump's second chief of staff, Bannon remains close to Trump.

Recalling a particularly low moment in the campaign — the emergence of the "Access Hollywood" tape that captured Trump bragging about groping women — Bannon dismissed it as "just locker room talk," but he said the moment served as an important "litmus test" for loyalty to Trump.

At the time, Reince Priebus, Trump's first chief of staff, urged the then-candidate to either drop out of the race or face a historic loss. And, Bannon said, Gov. Chris Christie (R-N.J.), who served as a campaign

adviser overseeing Trump's transition plan, lost a likely spot in the president's Cabinet because of his response to the video.

"I told him: 'The plane leaves at 11 o'clock in the morning. If you're on the plane, you're on the team,'" Bannon said, referring to Christie. "Didn't make the plane."

On China, Bannon reiterated his calls for the United States to take a tougher stance over trade and appropriating U.S. technology. "Donald Trump, for 30 years, has singled out China as the biggest single problem we have on the world stage," he said. "The elites in this country have got us in a situation. We're at not economic war with China; China is at economic war with us."

And he also seemed to criticize the president's recent decision to rescind protections for "dreamers" — those 690,000 undocumented immigrants brought to the country as young children — while giving Congress six months to devise a legislative solution. The move, he said, could cost Republicans the House in the 2018 election.

"If this goes all the way down to its logical conclusion, in February and March, it will be a civil war inside the Republican Party that will be every bit as vitriolic as 2013," Bannon said. "And to me, doing that in the springboard of primary season for 2018 is extremely unwise."

POLITICO Bannon plotting primaries against slate of GOP incumbents

By ALEX
ISENSTADT

8-10 minutes

President Donald Trump's closest allies are planning a slate of primary challenges against Republican senators, potentially undermining the party's prospects in 2018 and further inflaming tensions between GOP leaders and the White House.

The effort is being led by Steve Bannon, Trump's bomb-throwing former chief strategist, who is launching an all-out war against Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the Republican establishment. Bannon has begun holding private meetings with insurgent challengers, vowing his

support. He's coordinating with conservative mega-donor Robert Mercer, who is prepared to pour millions of dollars into attacks on GOP incumbents. Bannon has also installed a confidant at an outside group that is expected to target Republican lawmakers and push the Trump agenda.

Story Continued Below

The activity has alarmed senior Republicans, who worry it will drain millions of dollars from the party's coffers to take on Democrats in the general election. McConnell has repeatedly expressed concern to the White House about the danger primaries pose to his members, stressing that it could imperil his narrow four-seat majority, according

to three people with direct knowledge of the discussions.

"The issue is: Do you invest your time and energy in attacking people who are carrying this president's water in Congress to the benefit of people who are trying to impeach him? That seems like an incredibly short-sighted strategy," said Josh Holmes, a former McConnell chief of staff.

Bannon is paying little heed to those warnings. On Thursday, he huddled with Danny Tarkanian, an attorney who is challenging Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.), at the Capitol Hill townhouse that serves as a base of operations for Breitbart News, the conservative website that Bannon oversees.

Bannon made it clear during the 30-minute meeting that Tarkanian had his full backing in the race against Heller, according to one person familiar with the conversation. Heller refused to endorse Trump during the 2016 campaign.

Leading the target list is Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake, an outspoken critic of the president who recently published a book lamenting the rise of Trump. Bannon is intent on unseating Flake, and David Bossie, the president's 2016 deputy campaign manager and the president of the influential conservative group Citizens United, has embarked on an effort to recruit several potential primary challengers, including former Rep. Matt Salmon. The former congressman, however, has

expressed reluctance to enter the contest.

The anti-incumbent effort could dramatically reshape the 2018 primary landscape if it materializes. It would pit a group of pro-Trump primary challengers against sitting lawmakers who are perceived as more mainstream.

Two other senators could come under attack. Behind the scenes, Bannon has proposed the possibility of targeting Tennessee Sen. Bob Corker, and those close to the former Trump chief strategist are talking about the prospect of a challenge to Mississippi Sen. Roger Wicker.

Corker had long been considered a Trump ally and had been in the mix to become secretary of state, but has since angered the president's supporters with recent comments in which he questioned Trump's competence. Shortly after Bannon left the White House and returned to Breitbart last month, the site published a promoting a potential Corker challenger, state Sen. Mark Green. The site has the possibility that state Sen. Chris McDaniel, a tea party favorite, will take on Wicker.

Bannon is firing his opening shot in the Alabama Senate special election, squaring off against McConnell in a race the Senate leader and his allies have spent millions of dollars to win.

While Bannon is behind controversial former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore,

McConnell has gone all in for Sen. Luther Strange, who was appointed early this year to temporarily fill the seat after Jeff Sessions became attorney general. Speaking to prominent GOP activists at a Conservative Action Project meeting and on a Judicial Watch conference call recently, Bannon portrayed the Sept. 26 primary as a defining battle between the conservative base and GOP establishment.

Trump endorsed Strange before the first round of voting in mid-August but has since done little to promote him. Recent polling has shown Moore with a significant lead.

A Strange loss would be an embarrassment for McConnell and open the floodgates for other GOP primary challenges, Bannon has argued. On Thursday, Bannon and Bossie met separately with Moore in Washington.

It's not the first time Bannon has gone after the GOP establishment in Senate primaries. During the 2014 midterms, Breitbart, under Bannon's leadership, promoted several insurgent challengers, including physician Milton Wolf in Kansas and former state Rep. Joe Carr in Tennessee. None of the Breitbart-backed candidates won, but the effort sapped the party leadership of millions of dollars.

This time around, Bannon is almost certain to rely on funding from Mercer, a reclusive hedge fund manager who has long funded his political projects. After exiting the White House, Bannon left

Washington for Long Island, New York, where he spent five days meeting with the billionaire.

Mercer, who was one of Trump's top donors during the 2016 campaign, has expressed a desire to go after sitting GOP lawmakers, according to three people with direct knowledge of his thinking. He has already donated \$300,000 to an anti-Flake super PAC and has indicated that he's interested in giving more to unseat the senator.

Bannon has taken preliminary steps to establish a political structure that could be used in 2018 races. It was recently announced that his political adviser, Andrew Surabian, was leaving the White House to take a job at Great America Alliance, a pro-Trump outside group.

"I don't think anyone should be surprised at primary challenges in GOP Senate races, especially against those senators that have appeared to be less than helpful to the Trump agenda. And I think those primary challengers will be well funded," said Ned Ryun, a conservative strategist who has written for Breitbart. "It's a natural reaction by the base to what they've perceived as a perhaps intentional inability to pass any Trump agenda items."

GOP leaders are racing to protect their lawmakers. Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) recently organized a pair of fundraisers in his home state to jointly benefit Heller and Flake — they were canceled after Hurricane Harvey but are expected to be

rescheduled. One was set to be at the Dallas home of billionaire Robert Rowling, who owns Omni Hotels and Gold's Gym. It offered a reception and photo op and asked for contributions up to \$44,700, according to an invitation.

Heller has taken steps to repair his relationship with the White House. After Trump delivered a speech before the American Legion in Reno in which he called for national unity, the senator called the president and complimented him on his remarks, according to one person familiar with the exchange. After initially attacking the Trump-led effort to repeal Obamacare, Heller ultimately backed legislation to reverse the law.

There are indications the offensive has paid off. On Friday evening, Las Vegas casino mogul Steve Wynn, Trump's handpicked Republican National Committee finance chairman, gave Heller a full-throated during a speech at a Nevada Republican Party fundraising dinner.

But Tarkanian is plowing ahead. He said that Trump supporters in Nevada felt betrayed by Heller and have been flocking to his campaign.

"I got in the race with the hope that there would be enthusiasm for my candidacy, and it's far exceeded my hope," Tarkanian said. "There's a lot of frustration with Dean Heller."

The New York Times **Bannon Calls Comey Firing the Biggest Mistake in 'Modern Political History'**

Noah Weiland

WASHINGTON — In his first extended interview since he left the White House last month, Stephen K. Bannon was unsparing in his criticism: calling out top Republicans, West Wing staff, the "pearl-clutching mainstream media," special counsel investigators and the Roman Catholic Church.

He even singled out President Trump, labeling his firing of James B. Comey, the former F.B.I. director, the biggest mistake in "modern political history."

Pressed by the interviewer, Charlie Rose, Mr. Bannon said that had Mr. Comey not been fired, the Justice Department investigation into possible links between the Trump campaign and Russia's election interference would not have been

handed over to the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III.

"We would not have the Mueller investigation and the breadth that clearly Mr. Mueller is going for," Mr. Bannon said. Mr. Mueller is said to be investigating whether Mr. Trump obstructed justice in firing Mr. Comey.

The assertion, made in an online-only segment of a wide-ranging "60 Minutes" interview that aired on Sunday night, was perhaps the most extraordinary of many criticisms made by Mr. Bannon as he sets out to reclaim his mantle as Mr. Trump's most prominent outside supporter from his perch as the head of Breitbart News, the far-right website.

Despite his complaint about Mr. Comey's firing, Mr. Bannon said he planned to be the president's "wingman outside for the entire time" he is in office.

"Our purpose is to support Donald Trump," he said. "I cannot take the fight to who we have to take the fight to when I'm an adviser to the president as a federal government employee."

Mr. Bannon left the White House on Aug. 18 after a year first as Mr. Trump's campaign chief and then as his chief strategist in the West Wing. He returned the same day to his previous role as chairman of Breitbart.

Among those Mr. Bannon plans to take on? Speaker Paul D. Ryan of Wisconsin and Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, two Republicans Mr. Bannon accused of "trying to nullify the 2016 election."

"They do not want Donald Trump's populist, economic nationalist agenda to be implemented," Mr. Bannon said. "It's obvious as night follows day." He cited as an

example a request that Mr. McConnell once made of Mr. Trump to stop talking about "draining the swamp."

Mr. Bannon predicted deep division within the Republican Party over Mr. Trump's recent move to end the program that provided temporary relief from deportation for hundreds of thousands of young people in the United States illegally. The president set a March end date for the program and asked Congress to come up with a solution in the meantime, a task that Mr. Bannon said could split Republicans and cost them their House majority in the 2018 midterm elections.

"If this goes all the way down to its logical conclusion, in February and March it will be a civil war inside the Republican Party," he said.

When Mr. Rose asked whether Mr. Bannon's opposition to the immigration program was true to his

Catholic faith, Mr. Bannon took aim at church leaders and claimed they relied on illegal immigration to fill pews. "The bishops have been terrible about this," he said. "You know why? Because unable to really to come to grips with the problems in the church, they need illegal aliens. They need illegal aliens to fill the churches."

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, the archbishop of New York, called Mr. Bannon's comments "preposterous and rather insulting."

In the interview from his Washington home, Mr. Bannon reacted defensively when asked whether his clout in the White House had diminished by the time he left. "I had the same influence on the president I had on Day 1," he said.

His departure was hastened by Mr. Trump's growing weariness with the image Mr. Bannon cultivated as the architect of the president's populist agenda.

Mr. Bannon, who is often critical of those he sees as Washington careerists hostile to Mr. Trump, has

become famous for his polemics that critics see as reflections of the president's impulses.

"The media image, I think, is pretty accurate," he said. "I'm a street fighter. That's what I am."

Mr. Bannon also condemned top officials in the George W. Bush administration, calling them "idiots" friendly to what he termed China's anti-American economic agenda. He singled out Condoleezza Rice and Colin L. Powell, former secretaries of state, and Brent Scowcroft, an adviser to Mr. Bush and his father, as those most worthy of his scorn, criticizing them for China's 2001 entry into the World Trade Organization.

"They've gotten us in this situation, and they question a good man like Donald Trump," he said. "I hold these people in contempt, total and complete contempt."

He also called the special counsel a "waste of time." "It's a total and complete farce," he said. "Russian collusion is a farce."

But he declined to answer when Mr. Rose asked whether Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and a White House senior adviser, was responsible for the dismissal of Mr. Comey.

Mr. Bannon seemed eager to pursue anyone who has crossed Mr. Trump. He said he was the president's only defender after the racially tinged violence in Charlottesville, Va., last month, when Mr. Trump was widely condemned for statements that likened white supremacists to people protesting them.

"I was the only guy that said, 'He's talking about something, taking it up to a higher level,'" Mr. Bannon said, then echoed Mr. Trump's language in the days after the Charlottesville violence. "Where does this end? Does it end — does it end in taking down the Washington Monument?"

Yet Mr. Bannon accused neo-Nazis of "getting a free ride off Donald Trump" for their role in white supremacist rallies.

"The left-wing media makes them up as some huge part of Donald

Trump's coalition," he said. "It's a small group. It's a vicious group. They add no value. And all they do is show up."

Mr. Bannon told Mr. Rose that he did not "need the affirmation of the mainstream media." Neither does Mr. Trump, Mr. Bannon said.

"I don't think he needs The Washington Post, and The New York Times, and CBS News," he said. "And I don't believe he thinks that they're looking out what's in his best interest, O.K.?"

Mr. Bannon also attacked Gary D. Cohn, Mr. Trump's top economic adviser, who publicly criticized the president's comments about Charlottesville. "If you don't like what he's doing and you don't agree with it, you have an obligation to resign," Mr. Bannon said. "You can tell him, 'Hey, maybe you can do it a better way.' But if you're going to break, then resign."

Republican 'criticism' of Trump doesn't go far enough



Neil Baron, opinion

6-7 minutes

Alexander Pope coined the expression "damning with faint praise." A new expression, "praising with faint damnation," can be used to describe the Republicans' tepid responses to Donald Trump about the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville and his recent pardon of Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who housed Latino prisoners in 110 degree "tent cities" and boasted that they were "concentration camps."

Sure, Republicans criticized Trump's Charlottesville remarks and his pardon of Arpaio. But they studiously avoided confronting a much more serious problem: the consequences of our president's character.

Republican criticisms have been laboriously faint. Paul Ryan Trump's remarks on Charlottesville were "morally ambiguous," that he "messed up in his comments" and "could have done better." Rep. Will Hurd said he was "absolutely not" proud of Trump's handling of the situation. Gary Cohn, the president's chief economic adviser said the administration "can and must do better." Rex Tillerson "Trump speaks for himself."

These comments implied that Trump is capable of doing better. But, as The Economist opined, "he does not have the character to change." No Republican acknowledged that the seminal problem is our president's contempt for our government institutions and the core value that motivated America's Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal..." In other words, the real problem is his character.

The hypocrisy was glaring when Sarah Huckabee

claimed that continuing DACA would destroy the rule of law and "throw away everything that gives these people a reason to want to come to our country..." One must ask, did the pardoning of Arpaio "give ... people a reason to want to come to our country?"

George Washington amplified our nation's dedication to equality in a letter to the Touro Synagogue. He promised that those who fled religious tyranny would find religious tolerance in America, "For happily the Government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance ..."

Trump's contempt for our government is evident in his confidence that Congress will continue to give him free reign. One example: his massive conflicts of interests, which caused the director of the Office of Government Ethics

to resign. And his apparent disregard for the truth is rampant.

Republicans claimed Trump was clear in his denunciations of the white supremacists, the KKK and neo-Nazis. But, his belated condemnations would not prevent those groups from basking in his support because his pivot was made under pressure from Republicans, business leaders and demonstrators.

White supremacist Richard Spencer, who attended the Charlottesville rally, said of Trump's belated condemnation, "I don't take him seriously ... It sounded so hollow." Peter Brimelow, founder of vdare.com, dismissed Trump's condemnations as "boring boilerplate."

Poor character has consequences. Among them is poor credibility. Seventy-three percent of those polled by CNN trust only some or none of White House statements. This hurts the ability to govern. It enfeebles negotiations because one never knows if Trump means what he says or if he'd renege on a commitment.

The hostility Trump has created between himself and Congressional Republicans has stifled the legislative process and undermined Americans' confidence in their government. It's no surprise that Gallup finds that 79 percent disapprove of the job Congress is

doing while Trump's 35 percent approval rating is the lowest in history.

Our international image has suffered. Across 37 countries, only 22 percent had confidence in Trump in foreign affairs, and 74 percent had no confidence in him at all, according to Pew. Worse, Trump's poor image has dragged down the image of the United States.

After his May trip to Berlin, European officials referred to Trump as "clownish" and "a laughingstock." One seasoned German diplomat worried, "Trump could send a tweet in the middle of the night pissing off Kim Jong Un. And the next morning we wake up to a world on the brink of war." Another said, he "(thinks) the world started when he took office."

The Economist summed it up this way: "Donald Trump has no grasp of what it means to be president." If Trump had a strong character, he would care enough about his country to admit that he's not qualified to be its leader and would step down. But he seems to care mostly about himself.

Still, the Republicans have not acknowledged this problem. Sadly, they are complicit because they fear losing votes from Trump's base. One must ask, "is it really worth the votes?" Or is it that our values just don't matter anymore? Have we become that jaded?

Goldberg :Editor's Note: The Autocratic Element

Jeffrey Goldberg

Like many people, I've lately been preoccupied by the mayhem-makers of the radical right, and by those in power who abet their work. But even as Nazis were invading Charlottesville, Virginia, in August, I found myself worrying about a more subtle, but still substantially pernicious, manifestation of democratic decay. This is the apparently deathless attempt by certain rightist Republicans to bring Hillary Clinton to "justice," a cause rationalized this way by one such Republican, a freshman congressman from Florida named Matt Gaetz: "Just because Hillary Clinton lost the election doesn't mean we should forget or forgive conduct that is likely criminal."

Let us lay aside the question of whether the charges of criminality leveled against Clinton are specious (they certainly seem to be) and focus instead on the novelty of Gaetz's mission. The idea he is endorsing—if not on behalf of Donald Trump, then in the spirit of Donald Trump—is that the political party that wins power is duty-bound to hound to the point of actual prosecution the losing party.

This is un-American, and I mean that in a very specific way. I've spent much of my reporting career covering countries that are not ruled by law, and that do not venerate the democratic norms of restraint, moderation, forgiveness, and compromise. It is common for

autocratic rulers, even those who took office through ostensibly democratic elections, to persecute the individuals and parties that they have vanquished, for reasons ranging from paranoia to simple vindictiveness. America, though, has been different. It is not uncommon in the U.S. for the losers to challenge the victories of the winners, and this is as it should be. But it is a dangerous innovation to use the instruments of state power to harass powerless, defeated political foes. The fractures that this sort of behavior causes are not easily healed.

On matters concerning the possible disintegration of democratic norms, I turn to the most urgent and acute text on the subject, "How to Build an Autocracy," an *Atlantic* cover story by David Frum published earlier this year. Frum, a senior writer for the magazine (and a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush), made the argument in this groundbreaking article that if autocracy came to America, it would be not in the form of a coup but in the steady, gradual erosion of democratic norms. Frum's eloquent writing and ruthlessly sharp analysis for *The Atlantic* has made him an indispensably important—perhaps even the leading—conservative critic of President Trump.

David Frum, whose March 2017 cover story explained "How to

Build an Autocracy," says he underestimated how needy Donald Trump is. (Joshua Blanchard / Getty)

I recently asked Frum about the attempt by many Republicans to pursue criminal charges against the losing candidate in last year's presidential contest. He called this pursuit "sinister," but then pointed me to something he considered even more pernicious: the quest to punish former National-Security Adviser Susan Rice for "unmasking" people associated with Trump's campaign whose communications with foreign officials were captured during U.S. intelligence collection.

"Rice was protecting the country from possible subversion, and they're pursuing her for this," Frum said. "It is not merely that they are trying to use the mechanisms of the law to attack political opponents; it is that they are trying to use the power of the state to conceal through diversion an attempt by an autocratic government to steal an American election.

"The autocratic element here is the abuse of power, but not only the abuse of power. This represents the reversal of truth."

I asked Frum to analyze his March cover story. Did he overplay or understate any of the threats? "The thing I got most wrong is that I did not anticipate the sheer chaos and dysfunction and slovenliness of the Trump operation," he said. "I didn't

sufficiently anticipate how distracted Trump could be by things that are not essential. My model was that he was greedy first and authoritarian second. What I did not see is that he is needy first, greedy second, and authoritarian third. We'd be in a lot worse shape if he were a more meticulous, serious-minded person."

The Trump presidency is still young, but we thought it would be worthwhile to ask several writers to assess its first several months. Eliot A. Cohen, who served in the State Department under George W. Bush, examines how Trump has affected America's global standing; Jack Goldsmith, who served as a high official in the Bush Justice Department, investigates the possible damage Trump has done to American institutions. And our national correspondent Ta-Nehisi Coates refracts the Trump presidency through the prism of race.

As ever, our goal is to pursue the truth—empirical, verifiable truth—wherever it takes us. So I want to thank you, our readers and subscribers, for making our journalism possible. We need you now more than ever.

Blow : Soul Survival in Trump's Hell

Charles M. Blow

may curtail the first, I am still struggling to maintain optimism and perseverance.

I don't think that this is even a matter of fatigue, but rather of the capacity of rage and the length of mourning. Hopelessness is a very human response when the feeling of persecution intersects with the feeling of powerlessness.

Sure, the vast majority of America that doesn't agree with Trump isn't completely powerless. People across the country are registering to not only vote but also to run for office. They are pressuring their legislators. They are linking arms in solidarity and raising their voices in protest. They are saying that this administration and this man are abominations and they will not sit silently by, thereby giving passive approval or grudging acceptance.

I see these people. I applaud these people. I try my best to encourage

these people. But I also know that the power of the resistance is limited, and the best way to achieve real change and a real reversal of the damage that's been done won't come until the polls open in the next round of elections. The real change will come when those who felt compelled to stand on principle and not participate in an election in which they felt they were being forced to choose between "the lesser of two evils" realize the staggering magnitude of the gap between those "two evils."

By the way, the lesser-of-two-evils argument is poppycock. The choice people faced in November was the difference between dim light and absolute darkness. There really was no comparison. The false parity was a media concoction and a Russian propaganda weapon.

Also, people have to stop thinking that because they see some corruption in the system, they can

live outside that system by not participating in it in any way, including electorally. No, every minute of every day you are in the system; the safety or menace you feel is the system. The streets you drive on are part of the system. The deductions from your paycheck are part of the system. By not voting you don't buck the system, but succumb to it; you don't show your strength, but expose your weakness.

Furthermore, we have to deal with racialized voter disenfranchisement. Many people didn't vote because they couldn't. The systematic conservative attack, state by state, on voting access is a national scandal that receives far less attention than it deserves.

But I have faith that more Americans will overcome the barriers to participation that have been erected to nullify their votes.

You could stay in hell for a little while if you knew that you were going to get out.

My mother always told me that when I was going through something tough and dispiriting. It was her way of saying that trouble doesn't last forever, that even in your darkest place, hold fast to the hope and the light, that though today you are in the valley, tomorrow you shall scale the peak.

Well, Mama, this is hell. Indeed, Donald Trump's America is the Ninth Circle.

And while I know that a president is limited to two terms, and I highly doubt that Trump could be re-elected to a second term and think that Robert Mueller's investigation

I have faith that America is learning a lesson about the folly of throwing a monkey wrench into the machine in an attempt to break it.

I have faith that America has learned that elections have consequences and that the power of the presidency in the hands of a pariah is an awesomely dangerous thing.

I have faith that America has learned that there are not easy remedies to decisions made behind a curtain and in a fit of pique.

But I will not know if that faith is well placed until I know the results of the next election.

Until then, it is hard to witness successive hurricanes wreak havoc on Americans and realize that the science behind recognizing the global warming that contributes to more extreme weather events is not believed by America's ruling party.

It is hard to witness a president so obsessed with the obliteration of the legacy of his predecessor that he is attempting to undo that legacy with every stroke of his pen.

It is hard to witness a bully attack traditionally marginalized communities, one after the other.

It is hard to witness a family of corruption besmirching the presidency, the country and America's standing in the world.

It is hard to witness the dismantling of basic norms, the dismissal of propriety and the devaluation of truth and honesty.

It is like being injured and having the offender repeatedly pound the wound before it can properly heal.

Like many Americans, I try my best to do the small affirming things in my family and in my community that express my love and reaffirm my values. I spend a bit more time in museums and give a bit more space for the activities that celebrate the creative imagination and that express the long tumultuous span of the human condition. I try to nourish my soul so that it will survive, because I know that the fight is not finished.

We are in hell. We have to remember that one day we will get out.