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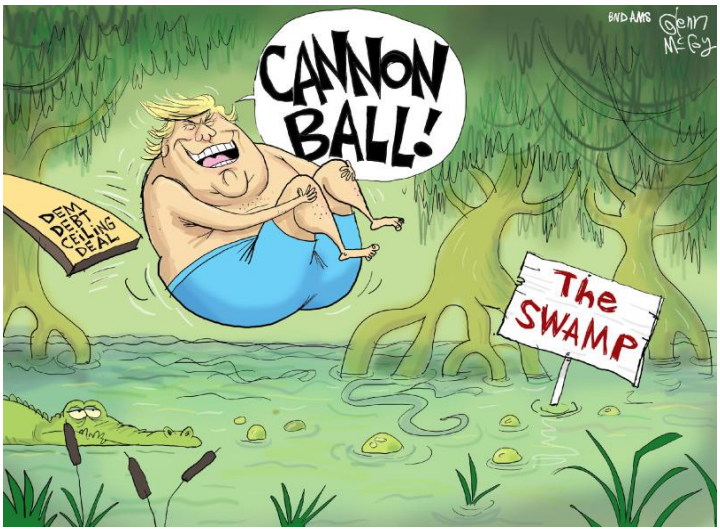

FRANCE - EUROPE

FT : France braced for protests against Macron's labour reform plans

Harriet Agnew

Emmanuel Macron faces the biggest challenge of his four-month presidency on Tuesday as France's second-largest trade union leads a day of strikes today in protest at the government's labour market reforms.

The hardline CGT union has announced 180 protests and 4,000 strikes across the country and is calling on civil servants, rail and transport workers, and students to observe the stoppage. Protests are set to take place in cities including Paris, Marseille, Lyon and Nantes, and a march is planned through the capital starting at 2pm local time.

The protests represent an early challenge to Mr Macron's determination to liberalise France's jobs market, which he says should help to make France more attractive to foreign investors, coax businesses to hire more workers and reduce an unemployment rate of more than 9 per cent.

The protests come as Mr Macron's approval ratings drop sharply and critics express outrage after he described those who oppose his labour reforms as "lazy". During a visit to Greece last week, he said he would "not yield anything, either to the lazy, the cynics or the extremes".

Polls suggest that more than half of the French are unhappy with the 39-year-old centrist president and that two-thirds are sceptical of the labour market reforms. Philippe Martinez, the leader of the CGT, has called the bulk of the labour laws "serious social regressions" that "give full powers to employers". He told Le Parisien daily newspaper on Saturday: "We will fight until the end to make sure these decrees don't pass."

Mr Macron will not see Tuesday's protests. He is travelling to St Martin in the Caribbean, which was devastated by hurricane Irma, to show that France is committed to supporting relief efforts for the Dutch-French island.

The labour reform measures are set to be adopted by parliament, where Mr Macron's party has a substantial majority, later this month. Businesses with fewer than 50 workers — 95 per cent of French companies — will be able to negotiate specific deals directly with employees and without union representatives on areas such as working hours, pay and overtime. Larger companies will be able to negotiate ad hoc agreements with unions instead of having to abide by more rigid sector-wide rules.

The CGT has condemned the measures as a "declaration of war" that spelt "the end of the work contract". However, divisions have emerged with other unions that have shown themselves more willing to compromise.

The CFDT, France's largest trade union confederation, said the proposals did not "live up to our expectations" but said it will not join the strikes. Neither will Force Ouvrière, another large union.

The CGT led violent street protests and strikes in the oil sector last year when President François Hollande sought to pass a less ambitious jobs bill. However, at this stage of Mr Macron's presidency his large majority in parliament puts him in a stronger position than his predecessor.

French President Macron heads to Caribbean island flattened by Irma

By Ben Westcott

*(CNN)*The Caribbean islands struck first by Hurricane Irma face a daunting cleanup in the wake of the monster storm, amid reports of looting and shortages of food and fuel.

The tiny island of St. Martin/St. Maarten, home to 70,000 people, was one of the first areas lashed by powerful wind and rain, leaving four dead and causing widespread destruction.

So far, the entire death toll from the natural disaster throughout the Caribbean has reached 36.

Calls for emergency aid to the island chain began almost as soon as the storm had passed and days later European assistance has begun to flow.

French President Emmanuel Macron will fly into St Martin on Tuesday to survey the damage in the French colony, as authorities seek to deliver supplies of food and water.

King Willem-Alexander visited the Dutch side of the island, St Maarten, on Monday as part of a tour of the region. Soon after arriving, he said: "We're doing our best to help everybody who needs assistance so have faith in relief efforts."

Earlier, the Dutch military evacuated residents from the island, including children, back to the Netherlands.

St Martin/St Maarten is just one of several small islands flattened by the storm.

Neighboring islands, including the US Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, were all heavily affected by Hurricane Irma.

Earlier, Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne estimated around 95% of the buildings on the island had been damaged, if not destroyed.

Days after the storm, reports were emerging from St. Martin of food and fuel shortages, as well as a lack of clean water.

Evacuees arriving in the United States spoke of their horror as the hurricane passed overhead and the difficult clean up which has followed.

"The problem now is there's no supplies," one woman told CNN at San Juan airport in Puerto Rico, where evacuees were being taken.

"(We're missing) gas for vehicles, diesel gas for generators, diesel gas for all the trucks and front loaders needed to clear the rubble."

The woman, who didn't give her name before being rushed away by officials, said she was flying with her children back to the US to stay with her sister while her husband looked after their house in St. Martin.

"The biggest problem right now is the lack of communications. People just don't know what's happening," she said.

Newlywed Frances Bradley-Villier said all that was left in St. Martin was "devastation."

"I've never experienced a hurricane before in my life ... I can't even come up with the right words to explain the emotion, the anxiety, just not knowing, the fear," she said.

Her husband Dominique Vilier told CNN there had been looting and robbing in the wake of the hurricane, which has left them without food and water.

"It's very terrible right now ... I actually had two persons try to break into my house at night the day before yesterday and I had to scare them off," he said.

As Macron heads to St. Martin, French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb announced France was currently working on delivering water to affected neighborhoods across the island.

He added food supplies were also being provided by 1,500 helpers on the ground in the West Indies, which will increase to 2,000 over the coming days.

UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said Monday 700 troops and 50 police had been deployed to parts of the Caribbean, while the HMS Ocean would soon head to the region loaded with emergency supplies.

"We are continuing to deliver aid, including food and water, to where it is needed ... (Some) aid has arrived in the region with much more on the way," he said in a statement.

Johnson added an effort was underway to restore access to wireless internet and electricity across the region.

UK philanthropist Richard Branson is working in the British Virgin Islands to provide supplies and relief to the local population.

The European Union has also committed to providing $2.4 million for emergency relief.

NPR : Brexit Leaves French Fishermen On The Hook

Joanna Kakissis

France's busiest port, Boulougne-sur-Mer, sits just across the English Channel from Britain, in the Calais region.

Seagulls glide above scores of brightly painted boats docking to unload the catch of the day — mainly sole but also cod, roussette, crab and scallops.

It's all sold at a bustling seaside market where Marie-Laure Fontaine sells seafood from a fishing boat called Providence.

"Sole and cod and turbot, we get these all from British waters," Fontaine says. "And this is a worry."

Up to 80 percent of fish caught by fishermen here comes from British waters, which are about a two-hour boat ride away.

French fishermen have been nervous since Britain voted to leave the European Union last year. That's because when the divorce is final, the U.K. will also leave what's called the Common Fisheries Policy.

"After that, the U.K. will be an independent coastal state, like Norway or the Faroe Islands or Iceland," says Barrie Deas, chief executive of the U.K.'s National Federation Fishermen's Organisations. "The U.K. will determine its own fishing quotas and access arrangements. So I think it's realistic for the French to be worried."

And Jeremy Devogel, a 31-year-old fisherman from Boulogne-sur-Mer, is really worried.

He nets 70 percent of his catch in English waters.

"I've fished for 10 years and recently bought a bigger boat specifically to work in English waters and in rough seas," he says. "I'm more than 300,000 euros ($357,000) in debt."

He frowns as he lowers metal crates, just emptied of ray and sole, onto his new boat for the next day's catch

"On a scale of 1 to 10, my level of worry is a 10," he says.

Devogel waves hello to Stephane Pinto, 52, vice president of the regional fishing committee and owner of a fishing company.

"Eighty percent of our fish come from the British side, so that makes up 80 percent of our revenue as well," Pinto says. "Take that away, and the regional economy takes a big hit."

Pinto and his crew load the day's catch — mainly sole and roussette, a type of dogfish — onto a truck that they drive to a cavernous dock. There, they sort the fish by type and size into yard-long containers packed with ice.

The fish are sold at dawn the next morning. Restaurant owner Laurent Wacogne makes sure to get the freshest ones for his restaurant, La Plage.

"My philosophy is to follow the sea," he says. "It's very important to buy the fish in Boulogne. Most of that fish — the sole, the turbot, scallops, whitefish — that's all from British waters. But it is still local. Sea bass from Greece is nice, and it's available, but it's not local."

If the stock of local fish was drastically reduced after Brexit, he says, then he could go out of business.

Deas of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation says he understands French concerns but "fish is a zero-sum game. The more they get, the less we get, and vice versa."

The east cost of England, he says, has seen a huge reduction of fishing fleets partly because of the Common Fisheries policy.

"EU fleets catch about four times as much in U.K. waters as U.K. vessels catch in EU waters," Deas says. "The most extreme example is eastern Channel cod, where the U.K. share of that cod quota was 9 percent and the French share is 84 percent."

But the British could find it tougher to sell their fish to the EU if there's what's called a "hard Brexit," where the U.K. gives up full access to the single market and full access of the customs union, says Christophe Collin, technical manager of Armement Bigouden, a fishing company in Le Guilvinec, western France.

"If this Brexit is a hard Brexit, we think that the European community will tax quite a lot the English product, the English fish," he says.

Le Guilvinec is one of several fishing villages in Brittany, France's main fishing region. The village is a popular tourist destination, and its seafood restaurants feature monkfish and lobster fished from English waters.

Soazig Palmer Le Gall, who runs Armement Bigouden, says about half of Breton boats fish in English waters.

"Unfortunately, fishing is a small activity compared to other economic sectors in France," she says. "So there's no plan B at the moment. The only we can do is inform our political representatives that if there is no agreement between Britain and the EU, then it will be a disaster for us."

She and others in the French fishing industry worry that, after Brexit, they will be left fighting to catch fewer fish, crowded into a narrower band of sea.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

U.K.’s May Wins Vote on Brexit Bill but Debate Over How to Exit EU Rages On

Jenny Gross

LONDON—British Prime Minister Theresa May won a key vote on Brexit legislation early Tuesday, but she faces tough battles ahead in getting Parliament to support her vision for how the U.K. should exit the European Union after more than four decades.

Lawmakers voted 326-290 in favor of a bill designed to transpose more than 10,000 EU laws on to the U.K. statute book. The bill would come into effect on March 29, 2019, the day the U.K. is scheduled to leave the bloc and aims to prevent a legal vacuum once Britain leaves the EU.

However, critics argue the bill hands too much power to the prime minister and her cabinet because it allows them to alter laws without parliamentary approval.

The bill’s difficult journey through the early stages of parliamentary scrutiny—normally a formality—signals further hurdles along the line for Mrs. May, who lost her party’s majority in an election gamble earlier this summer. While negotiations with the EU over Britain’s departure have reached an impasse over issues such as how much the U.K. owes the bloc as part of its divorce, a bigger issue for Mrs. May could be getting a divided Parliament and country behind her negotiating aims.

Mrs. May said the bill gives “certainty and clarity” ahead of Brexit. “Although there is more to do, this decision means we can move on with negotiations with solid foundations and we continue to encourage MPs from all parts of the U.K. to work together in support of this vital piece of legislation,” she said.

The vote on the bill is just one step in a longer legislative process. While some lawmakers who supported staying in the EU say they will vote in favor of the bill, they will seek to attach amendments at a later stage that restrict the government’s authority to make substantial changes to U.K. law without parliamentary approval, such as watering down to laws protecting workers’ rights or environmental standards.

Keir Starmer, the opposition Labour Party’s Brexit spokesman, said in an interview with The Wall Street Journal that the government’s attempt to weaken the role of lawmakers in the Brexit process had set the stage for a lengthy standoff between Mrs. May’s cabinet and the rest of Parliament.

“This is only the beginning of quite a turbulent two years,” Mr. Starmer said ahead of the vote. “There are a number of shared concerns across the house about the nature of this bill.” He said after the vote that Labour would seek to remove the worst aspects of the bill as it passes through Parliament, but its flaws are so fundamental that it was hard to see how the bill could be made fit for purpose.

Brexit Secretary David Davis warned the U.K. would descend into chaos if the bill isn’t approved.

“The British people did not vote for confusion and neither should Parliament,” Mr. Davis said ahead of the vote.

Mr. Starmer said Labour isn’t voting against Brexit, but against the principle that ministers should have the power to modify elements of EU law once they are incorporated into U.K. law. These powers are known as Henry VIII clauses, after a 16th-

century statute that gave the king power to legislate by proclamation.

"Even if you're a Labour MP that campaigned and voted for leaving the EU, you still think it's right that Parliament has a say over what the withdrawal looks like," Mr. Starmer said. "Whether we're leaving is a closed question, but how we're leaving isn't."

The Labour Party has increased pressure on the Conservatives to pursue a closer relationship with the EU than Mrs. May has outlined. Mr. Starmer said the U.K. shouldn't rule out staying in the EU's customs union indefinitely if trade deals forged outside it won't make Britain better off.

The bill's scope highlights the complexity of leaving the EU, a process that has absorbed most of Parliament's time. A report by the think tank Institute for Government published Monday said introducing customs checks after Brexit could cost more than £4 billion ($5.3 billion) a year and that the task would require changes across more than 30 government departments and local authorities.

The New York Times

Merkel Suggests Germany Should Join North Korea Talks

Steven Erlanger

BRUSSELS — In what the Germans themselves are calling a "sleep campaign," Chancellor Angela Merkel, seeking a fourth term in office in elections on Sept. 24, has moved to highlight her international status by calling for a new round of negotiations with North Korea — including Germany.

Already hailed by some in the era of President Trump as the main defender of the West and its values, Ms. Merkel has stepped forward to suggest a diplomatic alternative to the aggressive language being exchanged between Washington and North Korea.

As ever, she made her point by responding to a question. "If we were asked to join talks, I would say yes immediately," Ms. Merkel said in an interview with the Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung published on Sunday.

She made a parallel to the multilateral talks with Iran over its nuclear program. Those talks were begun by the Europeans and later expanded to include the permanent five member states of the United Nations Security Council, plus Germany, and chaired by the European Union's foreign policy chief.

In the end, the Iran talks became predominantly a negotiation between the United States and Iran. But they were supported and confirmed by the others, which gave Washington cover for sensitive talks with Tehran.

Ms. Merkel called that negotiation period "a long but important time of diplomacy" that ultimately had a "good end" last year, referring to when the deal was put in place.

"I could imagine such a format being used to end the North Korea conflict," she said. "Europe and especially Germany should be prepared to play a very active part in that."

President Trump has called the Iran deal "the worst deal ever," and during the presidential campaign he said his "number one priority" if elected would be "to dismantle the disastrous deal."

In office, Mr. Trump has talked about not recertifying Iran's compliance. But the other signatories, like Ms. Merkel, regard the deal as a breakthrough, halting Iranian progress toward a nuclear weapon for at least a decade.

Many experts think the Iran parallel is a false one, in any case, since "Iran had a nuclear program but always pretended it was not for military use and didn't have a bomb, while North Korea already has the bomb," said Volker Perthes, the director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin and an expert on Iran.

The real comparison, he said in an interview, is Germany's willingness to push for and take part in a new multilateral negotiating format with North Korea in contrast to military threats and bluster. "It's about multilateralism, nonproliferation and international participation," Mr. Perthes said.

Ms. Merkel said she believed that the only way to deal with North Korea's nuclear program effectively is to come to a diplomatic solution, adding, "A new arms race starting in the region would not be in anyone's interests."

North Korea has always said that its nuclear weapons program is not negotiable.

Europe should stand united in trying to bring about a diplomatic solution and "do everything that can be done in terms of sanctions," Ms. Merkel said.

She has already spoken about North Korea to leaders including President Xi Jinping of China and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, and is also expected to talk to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

In general, Europe has little economic leverage with North Korea, which is isolated and highly dependent on one country, China, for its economic life. But China, like the United States, may find it easier to deal with North Korea in a diplomatic context involving other countries as well.

The Washington Post

German election: How a striking family history shaped Angela Merkel

By Isaac Stanley-Becker and Luisa Beck

TEMPLIN, Germany — Soon after Germany reunified in 1990, a Lutheran pastor in the formerly communist east wondered whether capitalism could be reconciled with Christianity.

"Germany and even its churches are dominated by economic thinking," the pastor anxiously observed in 1991. "But the Bible's message calls on us to judge political and economic systems from the perspective of their victims." Concerned for impoverished people and the devastation of the natural environment, he warned of "suffocating in our waste and exhaust."

The pastor, Horst Kasner, was not well known. Today, however, his daughter is perhaps the most powerful woman in the world. She is Angela Merkel, seeking a fourth term as Germany's chancellor in elections this month. Victory would guarantee her a remarkable 16-year tenure, marked by her unyielding defense of the global liberal order.

Merkel's father rarely appeared at her political events, and his story seldom is told by the reserved chancellor. But a visit to the site of the seminary he oversaw, interviews with people who knew him and a review of his private notes and public lectures archived in Berlin offer insight into the world in which Merkel, 63, was raised.

This was a world of faith-based idealism bounded by state repression.

In 1954, the year Merkel was born, her father moved the family across the Iron Curtain — east into the German Democratic Republic (GDR), against the tide of hundreds of thousands fleeing into West Germany. In 1957, the Kasner family settled on the edge of Templin, this small city in the Brandenburg countryside, where rivers wind through farmland. The pastor's mission was to build a distinctly East German Protestantism but to separate state and church — rendering, as the scriptures taught, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

"I never felt that the GDR was my natural home," Merkel said in 1991, the year after she was first elected to the German Parliament as a member of the Christian Democratic Union representing a constituency on the Baltic coast. "But I always made use of the opportunities that it provided."

In interviews, Merkel has stressed her close relationship with her mother, Herlind Kasner, saying her father was busy studying theology and teaching seminars on topics such as "God — our father — our mother — our friend." The pastor required Merkel and her two younger siblings to be "orderly and perfect," she recalled. On her 30th birthday, when he saw her modest lodgings in Berlin, where she was a researcher at the Academy of Sciences, her father remarked, "You haven't gotten very far in life," according to the German news outlet Die Welt.

Horst Kasner died in 2011, six years after his daughter became the first German chancellor from the east — and the first woman to hold the office. Her start in politics came soon after the Berlin Wall fell, when she joined a party called Democratic Awakening that would quickly merge with the Christian Democrats. Her mother, who had been barred from working as a teacher in East Germany, joined the Social Democrats, her brother the Greens.

Her father's political convictions are harder to pinpoint. The seminary relocated after the wall came down, and in the 1990s, Kasner spent much of his time rebuilding an 18th-century church on the edge of Templin, called "Little Church in the Green."

Officials in the West German Lutheran Church called him "Red Kasner" because of his exodus to the east. Allegedly, his status as a pastor with western roots brought special benefits in the GDR, including access to dissident texts and two cars for his family's use. One view holds that he continued to believe in socialism after the GDR's dissolution; another, that he found scriptural basis for communist principles but grew disillusioned with the policies imposed by the Soviet satellite state.

"He sympathized with really old ideas of socialism described in scripture, ideas about sharing with your neighbor, and thought they could be realized here," said Jobst Reifenstein, who worked with Merkel's father at Waldhof, the ecclesiastical center — and residence for disabled people — where Kasner came to train ministers on the outskirts of Templin. Founded in 1852 as a school for unruly boys, Waldhof remains a home for the disabled, although the seminary Kasner led for more than three decades is gone.

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)

At Waldhof, Merkel lived with her family in rooms on an upper floor of a drab stucco house that they shared with seminary students. She excelled in school and spent time in the gardens of Waldhof and among its disabled population.

As the Cold War intensified, church leaders in the east feared impressment into the service of the totalitarian state. At first, the Protestant church — which counted 80 percent of the eastern population as members — thought it could be a "fortress, protected from the state," said Detlef Pollack, a scholar of religious studies at the University of Munster. But the introduction of a secular equivalent of Confirmation toward the end of the 1950s, just as Kasner was arriving in Templin, shook loose the church's hold on young people. "The government had won the power struggle," Pollack said.

Tensions simmered in the following decade, Pollack said, but by the 1970s, church leaders accepted that "the main goal was building up socialism."

Merkel's father embraced this goal because he was committed to socialist ideals, said Reifenstein, a former head of Waldhof. Kasner took part in the Soviet-influenced Christian Peace Conference based in Prague as well as the Weissenseer working group that defined the Protestant church as the "church in socialism." But Reifenstein said Kasner came to oppose the East German state as it obliterated free discussion within the church and pursued stricter models of economic planning. In 1989, he said, as unrest mounted across Eastern Europe, the pastor joined in anti-government protests occupying GDR security offices.

"He was socialist, but he knew that many things went wrong," said Jacqueline Boysen, a German journalist and biographer of Merkel.

Even as an adherent of socialism, Boysen said, Kasner engaged with its critics, introducing Merkel to the work of the Russian dissident Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn. The pastor came under the suspicion of the secret police, who tried to get him to work as an informer. They would later try to recruit Merkel.

The chancellor's first campaign appearance this summer was at a former Stasi prison, where she called on Germans to be a "force for freedom."

"We can only shape a good future if we accept the past," she said.

In handwritten notes from the 1970s, Kasner meditated on "the meaning of life," citing philosophers such as Epicurus and Karl Marx. "A person hasn't been given his purpose by nature, but needs to go on a quest to find it and realize it," he wrote. "If he resigns from this task, he stops being human."

Merkel, too, has a reputation for being cerebral, even enigmatic, Boysen said: "There's always the comparison to the sphinx who keeps her secret."

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Three years ago, Merkel returned to the church in Templin where she had been confirmed — and where her father sometimes preached — to speak about her faith.

She addressed the religious dilemmas involved in controversial political decisions, such as arming Kurdish rebels or succoring refugees.

"God created every human being," she said. "We should strive for perfection. But we can make mistakes."

Prosaic responsibilities also draw her back to Templin, where her mother still lives. Sometimes residents see the chancellor shopping for groceries. Mostly they leave her alone.

The New York Times

Protest in Catalonia Adds to Pressure Before Independence Vote

Raphael Minder

BARCELONA, Spain — Hundreds of thousands of Catalans took over the center of Barcelona on Monday to mark their national day and raise the pressure on the Spanish government in Madrid before an independence referendum planned for Oct. 1.

The referendum has been declared illegal by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and suspended by the Spanish judiciary as a violation of Spain's constitution. But separatist leaders in the Catalan regional government have vowed to go ahead with it, even if they risk prosecution for civil disobedience.

Since 2012, the Diada, or Catalan national day, has been turned into the annual show of force of independence-minded Catalans.

On Monday, the protesters filled two streets of Barcelona to form a "plus" sign, representing citizens joining forces. Some demonstrators said the cross symbolized the mark they will put on their ballots in favor of independence, assuming the referendum goes ahead.

The national day marks a historic defeat for Catalans, the 1714 capture of Barcelona by the troops of Philip V of Spain. "Philip V repressed Catalonia, and three centuries later here we are, getting denied the right to vote in the Spain of Philip VI," said Oriol Cabré, a retired industrial engineer, referring to the current king.

Many demonstrators insisted that they would also step up their protests if the result of the vote did not then become binding — as their separatist leaders have promised it would be.

"Civil disobedience is sadly sometimes the only way," said Manel Angurem, an international trade consultant who drove for about an hour with his wife and three children to Barcelona to attend the demonstration. "If it weren't for civil disobedience in the United States, black people wouldn't have managed to get a seat on the same bus as white people."

Still, as in previous years, Monday's protest was a festive and peaceful occasion, with some participants even forming the traditional Catalan castells, or human towers.

Catalans feel strongly about their distinct language, history and culture. But such feelings have become entwined in recent years with other issues, including how much tax revenue Catalonia should redistribute to poorer parts of Spain.

In addition to history, many of the participants cited pocketbook issues in wanting independence, after a financial crisis that helped fuel separatism in Catalonia.

"If we look after our own wealth rather than hand it over to Madrid, I'm sure independence will also bring us better economic conditions," said Laura Solsona, who has a beauty salon in the town of Sabadell and had painted "Yes" on her forehead and a Catalan flag on her cheek.

Carles Puigdemont, the leader of Catalonia, assured the region's voters that the independence referendum would take place, despite efforts by the Madrid government and Spanish courts to block it.

Catalan citizens "will vote, as they have always done in complete normality," Mr. Puigdemont said. A referendum, he argued, would not escalate the secessionist conflict because "the ballot boxes don't divide, they unite."

The demonstrators held a minute's silence in honor of the victims of the terrorist attacks last month in Catalonia that killed 16 people, most of them mowed down by a van driver on Barcelona's most famous promenade. Few in the crowds on Monday seemed concerned about security.

"We've always shown respect, and we now hope that we can convince others to respect our right to vote and become another normal European state," said Jesús Ribera,

a trade union official, who had a sticker on his sleeve showing Catalonia as a future member state of the European Union.

"I can assure you that all the people here today will be standing in front of the polling stations on Oct. 1, even if they are kept closed and Madrid also manages to seize the ballot papers and boxes."

As the political clock ticks toward the Oct. 1 deadline for the referendum, the tension between Madrid and Barcelona is rising. Prime Minister Rajoy is even weighing whether to take emergency measures to stop the vote, a step many fear would deepen the standoff.

Even the crowd estimates were disputed on Monday. Local police put the number at about one million, while representatives from the central government in Barcelona estimated it at between 300,000 and 350,000.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Catalans Rally for Secession as Polls Show Fervor Ebbs

Jeannette Neumann

TARRAGONA, Spain—Hundreds of thousands of Catalans raised pro-independence flags and chanted during the region's annual celebration of its history on Monday in Barcelona, but their leaders face waning support for Catalonia's secession from Spain.

Concerns about derailing Spain's robust economic recovery, fatigue over the yearslong independence campaign and the messiness of Britain's exit from the European Union have taken some wind out of the sails of the secession movement, polls suggest, in what may be the latest example of ebbing antiestablishment sentiment in the EU.

Last week, Catalonia's parliament decreed a referendum to secede from Spain to be held on Oct. 1. The government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has branded the vote illegal, saying it violates Spain's constitution and vowing to block it. In the case of a "yes" vote, Catalonia would declare independence 48 hours later, under the bill's provisions, and the region's political leadership promise to persist with the vote.

With that date looming, this year's annual celebration of Catalonia's history and culture was billed by organizers and authorities as a show of strength for the referendum. Supporters on Monday showcased the regional tradition of building human towers, or castells, and chanted "We will vote."

But it isn't clear the fervor on show was a true reflection of sentiment in the region. As in previous years, there were widely disparate estimates of turnout on the day. Barcelona's municipal police said around one million people took part in Monday's rally, about a 10% increase from their estimate last year. Local representatives of the central government in Madrid, on the other hand, said there were around 350,000 participants, a decline from 2016.

Next month's planned ballot is the fruit of a fervor for independence that peaked during Spain's deep economic crisis, the severity of which aggravated many Catalans' historic frustrations with Madrid.

There was "the feeling among many ordinary citizens that the costs of the crisis were unevenly shared," said Manuel de la Rocha, an economist at left-leaning think tank Fundación Alternativas. Around the same time, a Spanish court turned down parts of an agreement between Madrid and Barcelona governments that gave the region greater autonomy. That pact had been approved by Catalans in a referendum, and the court's ruling stoked local anger at the national government.

Tensions also grew after the conservative Popular Party—avowed opponents of Catalan independence—won a majority in parliamentary elections in 2011 and implemented austerity measures unpopular with many in Catalonia.

Now Spain is on track to record its third year of 3%-plus growth. Catalonia, which accounts for one-fifth of Spain's economic output and is powered by construction, tourism and chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing, is growing even faster. Unemployment among the region's 7.5 million inhabitants is several percentage points below the national rate of 17%.

"When things begin to improve a bit, people begin to think, 'I'm a bit better. I've got more to lose, so I'm not going to take as many risks,'" said Jordi Argelaguet, head of Catalonia's polling agency. Its surveys show support for an independent Catalonia has fallen to 35% in June from a peak of 49% in autumn 2013.

Rubén Sánchez López, who opened a souvenir shop about a month ago near Tarragona's Roman ruins, was initially intrigued by separatists' claims that Catalonia would be better off outside Spain. But he became disenchanted as he felt more crucial economic concerns were being ignored, and would now prefer that Catalan leaders focus on matters like Spain's high youth unemployment rate.

If Catalonia secedes, "we'd be the same or even worse off," the 23-year-old said. "So why do it?"

Pro-EU sentiment in Catalonia and the confusion sown by Brexit have also damped enthusiasm for secession. Catalonia's leaders say the region would seek EU membership as an independent state, but opposition from Madrid and other member states to such a move would make it highly unlikely.

The waning of independence fever in Catalonia parallels the course of secessionist sentiment in areas such as Scotland and northern Italy. At the same time, nationalist and populist parties in France, Germany and the Netherlands have fared worse than expected in recent elections.

Independence fatigue is also setting in among some Catalans. Three years ago, the Catalan government held a nonbinding and informal vote on self-government. The "yes" vote won, but turnout was low. Months of fanfare paved the way for the ballot.

"Politically, it's hard to keep people constantly activated," said Kiko Llaneras, a pollster with Spanish think tank Politikon.

Many investors assume Catalonia will remain part of Spain. This summer, private-equity firm BC Partner bought a majority stake in bridal-wear company Pronovias, while Gas Natural sold a €1.5-billion stake in its Spanish gas distribution assets to foreign funds. Both companies are based in Barcelona and benefit from an ease of doing business within Spain and the EU.

Spanish bond spreads have widened with the surge in tensions between Madrid and Barcelona in recent days, but are narrower than six months ago.

Nonetheless, pro-independence sentiment could surge again if Madrid succeeds in blocking the vote. Half of Catalans want the chance to vote on full autonomy, regardless of what Madrid says. If the Oct. referendum is held, polls suggest a pro-independence outcome, since many opposed to secession have said they won't participate.

Meanwhile, pollsters estimate that around one-quarter to one-third Catalans are hard-core independence supporters.

"Even a booming economy I don't think is going to bring those people back within the fold," said Andrew Dowling, a specialist on Catalan and Spanish history at Cardiff University.

Anna Llovera, a 28-year-old professor of Catalan, one of the region's official languages, remains committed to the dream of independence. "I'm Catalan," she said in Tarragona. "I'm not Spanish."

The New York Times

Ruling Conservative-Led Bloc Wins Norway's National Elections

Henrik Pryser Libell

OSLO — The coalition led by the center-right Conservative Party won the final round of Norway's national elections on Monday, in what was seen as a referendum on taxes, immigration, energy policy and European integration.

With some 95 percent of the votes counted, Prime Minister Erna Solberg declared victory late Monday night. "We campaigned on new ideas and better solutions, and we have shown that those ideas work, she said. "We get four more years, because we have delivered results."

Ms. Solberg, 56, and her main coalition partner, the anti-tax, anti-immigration Progress Party, will control 89 seats in the unicameral, 169-seat Parliament, assuming they have the continued support of two smaller centrist parties. Jonas Gahr Store, the leader of the Labor Party and Ms. Solbert's chief opponent, called the results "a huge disappointment" in a concession speech. "We will learn and evaluate," he added. "We are coming back to set the agenda for this country."

Norway, Western Europe's top oil and gas producer — with a $1 trillion sovereign wealth fund and a reputation as one of the world's happiest nations — has been spared some of the polarization and discord that have afflicted major liberal democracies. Its politics, though, did shift rightward in the last

national elections, in 2013, when the Conservative Party came to power, after eight years of control by Labor.

In Norway, which has multiple parties and proportional voting, it is effectively impossible for any party to secure an outright majority.

Before the election, the Green Party, which advocates curbing Arctic oil exploration, seemed to have be gaining popularity and there was speculation that it could provide the edge to a Labor-led government. But the Greens won just one seat in Parliament, which is what they had before.

"From a comparative perspective," Harald Baldersheim, a professor emeritus of political science at the University of Oslo, said before the race was decided, "Norwegian politics has never been — and is not — very polarized. Both blocs are gravitating toward the center. In this sense, not much is at stake."

The next government, Mr. Baldersheim said, will face pressure over Norway's relationship with the European Union. Norway is not a member of the bloc, but, along with Iceland and Liechtenstein, it is part of the European Economic Area and the European internal market, and is governed by the same basic rules that guarantee the movement of goods, services, capital and people.

As in Britain, which historically has had close ties to Norway, relations with Europe are a touchy subject, as is immigration. Norway's population of 5.3 million is still fairly homogeneous, but it is becoming increasingly diverse.

The right-wing Progress Party, founded in 1973, is more moderate than its counterparts in Scandinavia: the far-right Sweden Democrats and the Danish People's Party, which are largely considered outside the mainstream. Unlike those parties, the Progress Party has been part of day-to-day governance, controlling major portfolios like finance, transportation and oil.

"The four years of coalition government has tamed the Progress Party and made it harmless," Mr. Baldersheim said.

Svein Tore Marthinsen, an independent political commentator, said that the Progress Party had prompted a more restrictive stance on migration and asylum, as well as some tax cuts and some increased spending on infrastructure, but that the party had not carried out its promise to reduce bureaucracy.

In any event, the New Parliament will include more women than ever before. On Tuesday night, the Norwegian news agency NTB estimated that 70 of the 169 seats would go to women, meaning that female representation in Parliament for the first time would pass 40 percent.

Mr. Gahr Store, 57, unusual for a Labor politician, is the heir to a fortune, in fireplace manufacturing. He has been criticized in the press for investing in overseas venture capital funds that do not abide by rules as strict as those followed by the sovereign wealth fund, which is commonly called the Oil Fund. Mr. Gahr Store, who has served as foreign minister and health minister, has also faced accusations in the news media of not paying full taxes on improvements to a country home that he made in 2011.

Ms. Solberg ran a gaffe-free campaign, but faced pressure about provocative comments made by her hard-line integration and immigration minister, Sylvi Listhaug of the Progress Party, who recently caused a furor by saying that some immigrant-heavy areas of Sweden had become "no-go zones."

Both candidates were active on social media. Mr. Gahr Store's campaign posted footage of him voting on Facebook. Ms. Solberg used the platform to post a message thanking the Norwegian people "for letting me be your prime minister the last four years."

On YouTube, as part of a campaign to stimulate youth engagement, the candidates were challenged to do impromptu sketches. (Ms. Solberg drew a school and a treasure chest to reflect her commitment to educational improvements and lower taxes; Mr. Gahr Store drew figures and a map that he said depicted his commitment to lowering climate emissions.)

A third candidate, Trygve Slagsvold Vedum, the leader of the center-right Agrarian Party received attention for his resistance to the government's plan to consolidate local governments. Mr. Slagsvold Vedum also called for Norway to renegotiate its economic arrangements with the European Union. He barnstormed the country during the campaign and handed out 10,000 cups of coffee, by his estimate, while being trailed by chefs and musicians.

His party won 18 seats, up from 10.

Voter turnout in Norway is typically high; in the 2013 elections, it exceeded 78 percent.

INTERNATIONAL

The Washington Post

Israel is courting Syrian 'hearts and minds' to keep Hezbollah away (UNE)

YONATAN, Golan Heights — It is 4:30 a.m. and pitch dark when the sick Syrian children and their mothers begin to cross into Israel.

There's a 1-year-old girl with a squint, and a 2-year-old with a birth defect that prevents him from walking. The family of a slight 12-year-old is concerned that she is not growing. One child has a rash, another a rattling cough.

They emerge from the darkness into the yellow glare of the security lights on the Israeli side of the fence in the occupied Golan Heights, where they are searched before being allowed through. There are 19 children in total, a smaller group than most that appear roughly every week.

The children are allowed in as part of Israel's "Good Neighbors" program, which began treating injured Syrian fighters and civilians in the early days of their country's civil war but has expanded into a more complex operation that also sends fuel, food and supplies into Syria.

Israeli officials stress the humanitarian aspect of the program, but it has another aim: to create a friendly zone just inside Syria to serve as a bulwark against Israel's archenemy, the Shiite movement Hezbollah.

Israel has watched anxiously as President Bashar al-Assad has taken the upper hand in Syria's war with the aid of Hezbollah and Iran, its main backer, which are building their presence across the border.

But for the moment at least, Sunni rebel groups control most of the Syrian side of the 45-mile boundary between the two countries. Israel hopes to keep it that way.

Israeli military officers denied giving direct assistance to any of the Sunni groups along the border fence that oppose Hezbollah and the Syrian regime, or even coordinating humanitarian aid with them. But a former senior intelligence officer with the Israel Defense Forces said Israel has provided support to about a dozen groups, and may have given financial assistance "here and there."

"First of all, it had to do with morals. People were injured on the other side of the border, coming to our fence — they were going to die," said Brig. Gen. Eli Ben-Meir, who served as the head of the research and analysis division in the IDF's intelligence corps until last year. "Then it led to a lot of other things."

It was in 2013, Israeli military officials say, when the first group of injured Syrians approached the Israeli fence on the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau that Israel partially captured from Syria in 1967 and later annexed, a move not recognized internationally.

Israel has now treated more than 3,000 wounded Syrians, military officials say, though a Syrian medic on the other side of the border said

the number traveling for care appeared to be higher.

As fighting has died down along the border, Israel has started offering medical care for more-routine ailments. More than 600 Syrian children have been bused to Israeli hospitals for treatment in the past year.

[For the first time, Israel describes the aid work it carries out in Syria]

Israel has transferred 360 tons of food, nearly 120,000 gallons of gasoline, 90 pallets of drugs, and 50 tons of clothing as well as generators, water piping and building materials, the IDF says.

"There was an understanding that if we weren't there, somebody else would influence them," Ben-Meir said. The humanitarian motivation was "huge," he added. "But the more it got bigger and expanded, the more it had to do with winning these hearts and minds."

Closer ties also mean richer intelligence. Officially, Israel has maintained a neutral position in Syria's war, but it has intervened to protect its interests. Throughout the conflict, assassinations and airstrikes in Syria have been attributed to Israel, though the government rarely publicly acknowledges them.

In the latest strike, on Thursday, Syria accused Israel of bombing a military facility linked to rocket production for Hezbollah.

The program is reminiscent of the early days of Israel's "Good Fence" program in Lebanon as civil war broke out there in 1975. The defense minister at the time, Shimon Peres, stressed the purely humanitarian nature of the project to establish a "good neighborhood" as Israel treated Lebanese refugees and sent assistance to the country's south with "no strings attached."

But then Israel was also trying to prevent encroachment by Palestinian guerrillas, and threw its support behind the South Lebanon Army.

"It's easy to assume that we are doing it because someone you give a favor to, you get one back," said Maj. Sergey Kutikov, head of the Good Neighbors medical department, as he walked toward the border to meet the patients. The IDF members leave their military vehicles behind, so as not to attract attention. "But the reason in my mind is really to give humanitarian aid."

Unlike Syria's other neighbors, Israel does not take in refugees, though it recently agreed to accept 100 Syrian orphans. Israel has been in a state of war with its northern neighbor for nearly 70 years.

"They always look stressed when they cross," Kutikov said. "They don't know what to expect."

As the sky began to lighten, the families boarded a bus to make the nearly hour-long journey to a hospital on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. The Syrians are given priority over other patients, staff members said. The top specialists were summoned. A clown entertained the children.

"The regime left us nothing," said a Syrian doctor who crossed with the group. He said two rockets landed in his operating room a year ago. He began coming two months ago, despite being afraid of the consequences of people finding out. "I did it for the sake of the children," he said. "We've seen a lot, we've seen death."

While most of the area along the fence is controlled by Sunni rebel groups, a small section is held by the Assad regime, and another is controlled by Islamic State militants.

Kutikov said there is no contact with rebel groups across the border. Ben-Meir said it isn't necessary.

"Usually, the guys involved in agriculture, in feeding the population, in taking care of the health situation, are the same guys that are responsible for defending them and fighting against the -regime," Ben-Meir said.

One rebel group, Fursan al-Golan, receives about $5,000 a month from Israel, according to a Wall Street Journal report.

A cease-fire in the area is largely holding. But both Israel and the communities on the border are concerned that it is probably only a matter of time before Assad tries to take back the territory.

A medic across the border, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for security reasons, said that Israel was creating "tyrants" by supporting certain groups but that most people would rather turn to Israel than to the regime.

After their checkups, the children stay for the day and travel back the following night. Some are kept longer if they need urgent care.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

"I was reluctant at the beginning to come to Israel," said the mother who was hoping Israeli doctors could fix her daughter's squint. "We can only get treatment in regime-controlled areas, but it's too dangerous. I have family who are martyrs and prisoners, and my brother and father are wanted."

One 7-year-old girl was on her third trip to Israel for problems stemming from an airstrike three years ago that killed her twin brother. Her mother said a local commander told them to go to Israel.

"At first I was afraid, but then I saw that the treatment was superb," the 36-year-old woman said. "We were told they are the enemy, but in reality, they are friends."

Heba Habib in Stockholm and Sufian Taha in the Golan Heights contributed to this report.

The Case Against the Iranian Nuclear Deal Is One Big Lie

S. Walt

Imagine we were back in 1948. Suppose Joseph Stalin offered to halt the Soviet Union's efforts to develop its own atomic bomb for up to 15 years. As part of the deal, suppose he agreed to let inspectors from the United Nations enter the USSR and monitor all of its nuclear facilities. Suppose he'd even said these U.N. officials could also inspect other Soviet facilities, provided they had valid reasons to suspect proscribed activities were occurring there. To sweeten the offer even more, imagine Stalin said he would also give up a substantial portion of the enriched uranium the USSR had already accumulated, leaving it well short of the amount needed to make a bomb. What did he want in exchange? Just some economic concessions to help rebuild the war-ravaged Soviet economy.

In making this offer, suppose Stalin insisted on retaining the capacity to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes (such as power reactors or medical uses). And let's also suppose he made it clear he wasn't going to withdraw the Red Army from Eastern Europe or stop trying to spread communism in other parts of the world. The Cold War would go on, in short, but the Soviet Union would not be a nuclear weapons state for as long as the agreement remained in force.

It is hard to believe the paranoid Soviet dictator would ever make such an offer, of course. But if he had, do you think Harry Truman, George C. Marshall, and Dean Acheson would have embraced it? You bet they would. And had that deal been in place in 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles would have moved heaven and earth to keep it in force. The reason is obvious: this deal would have kept the USSR from getting atomic weapons until the early 1960s (at least) and made it far less likely that Moscow would surprise us with a sudden demonstration test (as it did in 1949). At a minimum, this arrangement would have extended the warning time surrounding any future Soviet effort to break out and race to the bomb.

To be sure, the counterfactual scenario sketched above is almost unimaginable. Nonetheless, it reminds us how bizarre, short-sighted, and unrealistic the renewed campaign against the Iran nuclear deal is. For in fact, Iran agreed to essentially the same terms I sketched above, thereby removing the possibility of becoming an active nuclear weapons state for at least 15 years. Yet even though this deal is very much to America's advantage — and to the benefit our main regional allies — the same critics continue to snipe at it.

The latest round in their campaign was U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley's disingenuous and falsehood-filled speech at the American Enterprise Institute last week. The speech is useful in one sense: it provides a handy summary of just about every creative and mendacious argument that die-hard opponents of the JCPOA have been cooking up since the agreement was signed. Unfortunately, it is neither an accurate guide to the agreement, to its current status, nor more importantly, to U.S. interests.

Among other things, Haley claimed — falsely — that the deal "gave Iran what it wanted up-front, in exchange for temporary promises to deliver what we want." The truth is about 180 degrees from this claim: Iran gave up enriched uranium, destroyed 13,000 centrifuges, dismantled the Arak reactor, let the U.N. install monitoring devices, implemented the NPT Additional Protocol, and a host of other measures — all before the United

States or anyone else began lifting sanctions.

She also claimed Iran was guilty of "multiple violations," a lie belied by the fact that the U.S. government and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have repeatedly certified Iran was in compliance. Iran did exceed the negotiated 130-ton limit on heavy water twice (by less than ton each time), and quickly rectified the matter when this was pointed out. She repeated the usual talking neoconservative talking points about Iran's "destabilizing" regional activities — which were never part of the agreement and in fact are a reason to be glad the agreement prevents Iran from getting the bomb — and raises the bogeyman of supposed "undeclared sites" that the IAEA hasn't looked at yet.

In her twisted logic, there's no way to know if Iran is complying until we've inspected every laboratory, military base, mosque, hotel room, maternity ward, and goat-herder's shack in the entire country.

In her twisted logic, there's no way to know if Iran is complying until we've inspected every laboratory, military base, mosque, hotel room, maternity ward, and goat-herder's shack in the entire country.

It is easier to make up false charges than to get at the truth, which makes fact-checking the deal's critics an endless and exhausting enterprise. For additional debunking's of Haley's speech, see Paul Pillar here, Emma Ashford's podcast here, and the Diplomacy Works website here.

When facts and logic fail them, opponents of the JCPOA resurrect the myth of a "better deal." Having failed to stop Obama's original negotiation, they now claim decertifying the deal is the first step to persuading Iran and the other members of JCPOA to agree to major revisions or new restrictions. As I've written before, this is a vain, even laughable, hope. Contrary to unreliable sources like *Bloomberg* reporter Eli Lake, the other signatories remain strongly committed to the agreement and want it to remain intact, even if they would also like Iran to modify some of its other behavior in other ways. More importantly, this view incorrectly assumes the United States has unlimited leverage over Iran, and that getting tough now will magically produce a better deal. That take-it-or-leave-it approach was tried from 2000 to 2012, however, while Iran went from having zero centrifuges to more than 12,000. It was only when the United States showed a willingness to accommodate some of Iran's "red lines" that it actually got them to reverse course. That same logic remains true today.

Details aside, the central realities of the deal remain clear and stark, and no amount of dubious lawyering can alter them. There are, in fact, only three realistic outcomes here. The first option is to keep the JCPOA in force (and ideally, engage Iran in constructive dialogue on the areas where we differ and the areas where our interests may align). As long as the signatories continue to abide by its provisions — and Iran is, despite Haley's insinuations — then Tehran will not have the bomb and the United States and its allies will be safer.

The second option is letting the JCPOA collapses, thereby removing the constraints on Iran's nuclear program and leaving it is free to develop a bomb if it wishes. Bear in mind that if the United States kills the JCPOA and hawks keep talking about regime change, then Tehran's hardliners will be strengthened and Iran's incentive to have some sort of deterrent will increase, thereby making Iran's entry into the nuclear club more likely. So option 2 means a nuclear-armed Iran.

But if you don't like that outcome, there's always option three: preventive war. Yes, just what the United States and the countries of the Middle East really need right now — another war. It's not enough that we're still fighting the Islamic State, Syria is still riven with conflict, and Yemen is collapsing amid extremism, disease, and a Saudi aerial bombing campaign. It's a perfect time to start a war with Iran too, thereby inviting Iranian retaliation either directly or via its regional proxies such as Hezbollah.

Of course, it won't surprise you that the people who keep trying to dismantle the JCPOA are mostly the same people who've repeatedly called for military action against Iran.

Of course, it won't surprise you that the people who keep trying to dismantle the JCPOA are mostly the same people who've repeatedly called for military action against Iran. And guess what? They are for the most part the same strategic geniuses that told you toppling Saddam Hussein would be easy and cheap and would transform the Middle East into a sea of shiny pro-American democracies. It is frankly a bit astonishing that such people are still taken seriously (and let's not forget they've been consistently wrong about a lot more than that), but nobody ever said the U.S. political system was good at holding people accountable these days.

Yet there may be a silver lining in the Haley gambit and the rest of this deceitful campaign. As with Trump's DACA "decision" (i.e., having his attorney general announce an end to the program and then giving Congress six months to find an alternative), Haley's speech stopped short of saying the United States should walk away from the deal. Indeed, she seemed to be mostly laying out a rationale for declaring Iran was not in compliance. This step is something President Donald Trump really, really wants to do (no matter what his senior foreign-policy advisors tell him), which in effect means punting the whole issue over to Congress.

Remember: the need to "certify" Iranian compliance is not part of the JCPOA itself. It was a requirement Congress imposed back when the deal was approved under President Barack Obama. Declaring Iran to be non-compliant (irrespective of what the facts may be), simply kicks the issue down the Mall to Capitol Hill. And that's where it gets interesting: at that point, would Congress actually take responsibility for torpedoing the deal?

I'm not sure they would. For the past 20 years or more, senators and representatives have been able to score a lot of cheap political points by sponsoring anti-Iranian resolutions, sanctions, and other legislation — mostly intended to show how tough they are and to appease the constant pressure they get from the Israel lobby (and one suspects, the Saudi lobby as well). That's much easier to do, however, when their actions have no real consequences. Directly ending the JCPOA would mean Congress would own a policy that could either lead to Iran actually getting the bomb or to a situation where the United States had to go to war to prevent it. Does anyone in Congress really want to take full responsibility for either of those outcomes, and in the full glare of public scrutiny? Ironically, Congressional reticence could end up leaving the JCPOA intact.

In the abstract, I'd probably prefer it if more people in Congress were knowledgeable, principled, realistic, and open-minded about foreign affairs, and more willing to stand up to the executive branch on big international issues. But in this case, and given the constellation of forces at play, I'd settle for self-interested and spineless.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Islamic State Ambush in Egypt's Sinai Leaves at Least 18 Dead

Dahlia Kholaif

CAIRO—Islamic State militants armed with guns and a vehicle bomb attacked Egyptian police forces in the Sinai Peninsula, killing at least 18 civilians and policemen, the interior ministry said, the deadliest assault in months in the restive region.

The roadside bomb blew up after intercepting a group of police vehicles west of the city of Al Arish, an interior ministry statement said, and an ensuing gunbattle erupted between security forces and the militants. The hourslong clash left three militants dead, according to state newspaper Al-Ahram. Ambulances had difficulty reaching the injured as it wore on, the paper said.

Five people were wounded, an interior ministry spokesperson said. He didn't say how many of the dead were police.

Islamic State claimed Monday's assault through its official Amaq news agency, saying its fighters had ambushed the outskirts of Al Arish, a hotbed of activity for Egypt's growing insurgency.

It marks the bloodiest day in Sinai—home of a militancy led by Islamic State's powerful Egyptian affiliate—since July 7, when 23 soldiers were killed and wounded in attacks orchestrated by the group.

The resurgent violence came the same day as Egypt's army chief of staff, Lt. General Mahmoud Hegazy, met in the capital, Cairo, with Lt. General Joseph Votel, commander of the U.S. Central Command.

It also underscores Islamic State's fallback on guerrilla-style warfare, including suicide bombings, as it suffers crippling battlefield losses in its Syrian and Iraqi strongholds. All but defeated in Iraq, it now faces an assault from U.S.-backed Syrian forces on its de facto capital, Raqqa.

Egypt has for several years battled its increasingly ferocious Islamic State-led homegrown insurgency, which regularly targets military and government installations in Sinai, killing thousands of police and security forces.

The extremists have in recent months also begun carrying out a campaign of violence against Egypt's Coptic Christian minority,

targeting civilians and houses of worship across the country.

The violence has sharpened criticism among Egyptians of President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, the former army chief who swept to power in a 2013 military coup promising to serve as a regional bulwark against terror.

Despite the endorsement of new U.S. President Donald Trump, who has lauded Mr. Sisi's counterterrorism efforts, the failure to eradicate the Sinai militancy is piling pressure on the Egyptian leader ahead of a presidential race scheduled to be held next year.

Islamic State accuses Copts of supporting the coup led by Mr. Sisi against Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood official who was Egypt's first democratically elected president. Since coming under attack in January, thousands of Christians have fled their homes in Sinai.

Since coming to power, Mr. Sisi has staged a sweeping crackdown on his political opponents, including many members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

From the War on al Qaeda to a Humanitarian Catastrophe: How the U.S. Got Dragged Into Yemen

Dan De Luce

In January, the World Food Program devised a plan to deliver equipment that would help alleviate the mounting humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen. Four cranes, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, were ready to be shipped to a Yemeni port to replace equipment destroyed by Saudi jets in August 2015. Yet eight months later, U.S. officials have failed to convince their Saudi counterparts to allow the cranes, which are needed to unload shipping containers, to be installed.

The Saudi refusal comes amid the worst outbreak of cholera in the modern era, afflicting more than 600,000 Yemenis while millions more teeter on the brink of starvation. With U.S.-made bombs, intelligence, and refueling aircraft, the 30-month Saudi-led air campaign has failed to crush the Houthi rebellion and killed or wounded thousands of civilians.

Washington's assistance to Persian Gulf countries waging war against Houthi rebels in Yemen was envisioned as an inexpensive way to show support for an ally. But the armed intervention led by Riyadh has turned into a quagmire and has left thousands of dead and injured civilians in its wake.

Interviews with current and former U.S. government officials paint a picture of a counterproductive war effort that threatens to introduce more instability in the Middle East while also aggravating the U.S.-Saudi alliance.

In the meantime, the civilian death toll and humanitarian suffering in Yemen has prompted growing criticism of the Gulf coalition on both sides of the aisle in Congress. In June, the Trump administration notified Congress that it would resume selling precision-guided munitions to Riyadh, tossing aside a ban that former President Barack Obama imposed in 2016 in reaction to errant Saudi airstrikes. Members of Congress reacted by introducing a measure to block any American arms sales absent Saudi guarantees on human rights. The measure was only narrowly defeated.

The unlikely partnership between the world's most powerful democracy and the world's last absolute monarchy has always been plagued by contradictions and strains. But it has survived based on a pragmatic trade-off, according to Bruce Riedel, a retired CIA officer and author of a new book on the alliance, *Kings and Presidents*. That bargain calls for U.S. security guarantees for Riyadh and Saudi guarantees of affordable oil for the global economy, Riedel said.

The United States has chosen to overlook Saudi Arabia's missteps in Yemen — and not for the first time, Reidel told Foreign Policy. "For administration after administration, Yemen just doesn't matter that much. And it's more important to them to have good relations with the Sauds, and the Yemenis get sacrificed on this," he said.

Rescuing Hadi

The United States has had one foot in Yemen since the 9/11 attacks, hunting down al Qaeda militants in the tribal hinterlands for more than a decade before Saudi Arabia launched its war on Houthi rebels.

Yet the U.S. war on al Qaeda grew even more complicated in March 2015, when the first Saudi jets streaked across the Yemeni sky targeting Houthi Shiite rebels, who had taken control of the capital of Sanaa in September 2014. The Saudi government feared a pro-Iranian regime gaining a foothold on its southern border. And they rallied Gulf governments in a bid to reinstall Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who was elected president as the sole candidate in the 2012 election.

By backing the Saudis, Washington was taking part in two wars in Yemen: a Gulf-led coalition intent on unseating the Houthis and a continuing counterterrorism effort targeting al Qaeda. In an ironic twist, the Houthis were also battling al Qaeda.

The Obama administration in the early days backed the Saudi effort, setting up a "joint planning cell" to help coordinate the air campaign, which also included aircraft from Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain.

"There was a fundamental agreement that we as an international community should continue to support the legitimate government," said Gerald Feierstein, the former ambassador to Yemen and top State Department official under Obama. "The Saudis wanted to intervene, and we agreed with them. Before that, we had urged the Saudis to be more aggressive in support of Hadi, trying to strengthen Hadi's hand vis-à-vis the Houthis."

For the Obama administration, supporting the coalition war effort was a way of repairing strained ties with the Saudis, who strongly opposed the July 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, which curbed Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for the easing of Western sanctions.

Gulf allies were fearful that Washington and Tehran were pulling closer together, potentially tipping the power balance in the region. Those concerns made officials in Washington more willing to support the Yemen campaign to reassure friends that the old alliances remained firm.

But the campaign didn't go as U.S. policymakers had envisioned. While American advisors in Saudi Arabia were providing guidance, civilian casualties continued to mount as the Saudis repeatedly targeted residential areas. Frustrated by the inability or unwillingness of the Saudi military to be more discerning in their targeting, by June 2016, the United States had pulled most advisors assigned to the operations center. American personnel are no longer involved in coordinating airstrikes, a U.S. defense official told FP.

"It's almost like we're holding seminars at the headquarters level" with the Saudi air force, one U.S. military officer with knowledge of the operation told FP. "We're not doing intelligence sharing or targeting.… We're really not playing that game at all."

Other U.S. contributions continue, however. The United States is still providing information to help track the source of Houthi rockets coming over Yemen's border toward Saudi Arabia, which have forced the evacuation of some towns near the frontier. American tanker aircraft continue to refuel Saudi and allied jets operating over Yemen, although U.S. Central Command will no longer provide the exact numbers.

Since the campaign began, more than 5,100 civilians have been killed and 8,700 others wounded in airstrikes and fighting on the ground, according to recent U.N. figures. Just last month, the Saudi-led coalition admitted to striking an apartment building in Sanaa, killing 16 civilians. The coalition called it a "technical mistake."

In October 2016, the Saudis also admitted to having bombed a funeral in Sanaa, killing at least 155 people and injuring another 600, but refused to offer an explanation. A confidential U.N. report obtained by FP estimated that the Saudi-led air coalition was responsible for 683 child casualties since 2015, with Houthi rebels killing or injuring another 414.

Incidents like these led to long internal debates in the Obama White House over Yemen that were never fully resolved, a second former Defense Department official said. "The Obama administration was driven by people who wanted to do more, the people who didn't want to do anything, and the people trying to minimize risk," the former official told FP. "If you had to pick one of those three, category three is what happened."

Minimizing risk meant providing targeting intelligence to Saudi Arabia in the hope of minimizing civilian casualties. While the Obama administration grew "very frustrated" with how the Saudi-led forces were carrying out the war, the former official said, they still believed U.S. support had some positive impact. "It's always hard to prove a

negative, but I think we had some success in improving Saudi efforts to minimize civilian casualties on the margins," the official said.

Yet the Saudis' flagrant disregard for mounting civilian casualties in Yemen tested U.S. patience. Despite the early support among many in the Obama administration for the Saudi-led effort, the flattened markets and dead civilians led the national security team to conclude that the quixotic campaign had little prospect for success, former officials said.

"Americans are very pragmatic people, as I often told the Saudis. If you can show that what you're doing is going to result in a positive or more favorable political outcome, we'll back you," said Andrew Exum, who served as the deputy assistant secretary of defense for Middle East policy in 2015-2016. "But in this case, we thought they were getting into a quagmire, without having a clear idea how they were going to terminate the conflict and how they were going to end up with a better outcome."

After the United Kingdom threatened to block further arms sales, Saudi Arabia announced in December 2016 that it would stop using British-made cluster munitions. That same month, the White House blocked the sale of cluster munitions to Saudi Arabia (there have since been reports that the Saudis continue to use Brazilian-made cluster bombs).

"They're getting better," the former Pentagon official said. "You can't make them altar boys in a day."

Low priority

President Donald Trump, who had been critical of Obama's support for Saudi Arabia in the past, inherited the prior administration's Yemen policy. In late January, on the recommendation of Pentagon leadership, Trump authorized a disastrous special operations raid in Yemen that left one Navy SEAL dead, three more injured, and resulted in the loss of a $75 million aircraft that crash-landed. At least 10 Yemeni civilians were also killed in the raid, according to multiple reports.

Trump quickly distanced himself from the mission, which failed to kill or capture any high-value targets and appeared to yield little valuable intelligence on al Qaeda. "This was a mission that was started before I got here," Trump said after the raid.

While the Trump administration has not focused much on the Yemen conflict, it did at one point consider expanding cooperation with Saudi Arabia on the war in Yemen. And in May, Trump traveled to Saudi Arabia, trumpeting $100 billion in arms sales to the kingdom, which critics felt undercut any leverage the administration could have had on limiting the war in Yemen.

Preoccupied by tensions with North Korea and how to handle the Iran nuclear deal, the Trump White House has not made Yemen a priority in its first eight months in office, according to sources with close ties to the White House, leaving the Obama policy on autopilot.

In the wider regional rivalry between Shiite-ruled Iran and Saudi Arabia, the conflict in Yemen has become a bleeding wound for Riyadh, much to the benefit of Tehran.

"The big winner in all of this is the Iranians, because the Saudis and the Emiratis are spending a fortune — and Iran is spending 1/100th of that," said Riedel, the former CIA officer who is now a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "They have this very useful war of attrition that bleeds their enemies."

In the meantime, the Trump administration is largely continuing the Obama-era Yemen policy. There are still Americans on the ground providing direct support and logistical help to allied troops, said a U.S. military official, who asked to speak anonymously to discuss current operations. "We don't share intelligence, but we will advise and accompany them on some of these missions," the military official said.

In addition to the advising effort, which defense officials say is similar to what U.S. troops are doing with local forces in Iraq, Syria, and soon Afghanistan under the new strategy there, American commandos have taken larger risks in Yemen and have been involved in direct combat. American drones and manned aircraft have also conducted more than 90 airstrikes against al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula targets this year, more than doubling the 38 strikes launched in 2016.

But both the refueling and ground efforts share the same lack of oversight from Washington. "We have no overall overarching Yemen policy. From a military point of view, it would help to have some sense of what the strategy is going to be, but there's nothing right now at all," the military official said.

Senators this week are pushing two amendments to the defense spending authorization bill that would block future arms sales unless Saudi Arabia and its partners demonstrate they are abiding by the Geneva Conventions in the air war. One of the proposals, sponsored by Republican Sen. Todd Young of Indiana, includes a condition that Riyadh lift the blockade on the delivery of the four cranes for the Yemeni port of Hodeida.

In the run-up to the Senate vote in June, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir wrote to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, assuring him that his government would take measures to reduce civilian casualties, including expanding a list of off-limits targets for bombing.

But there is no evidence that Saudi Arabia has reined in its air campaign, which has been marked by strikes on hospitals, residential buildings, and schools, or undertaken genuine investigations into bombing raids gone wrong, said Kristine Beckerle, a researcher at Human Rights Watch. "Despite promises to the contrary, the Saudi-led coalition has continued to carry out indiscriminate attacks in Yemen and failed to credibly investigate airstrikes that have resulted in laws of war violations," Beckerle said.

Human Rights Watch is due to release a report on Tuesday that cites five airstrikes since Jubeir's letter to Tillerson that reportedly killed 39 civilians, including 26 children. The group concludes that the bombing raids appear to have violated the laws of war.

The Trump administration takes "all reports of civilian casualties seriously" and "continues to work with the Saudi-led coalition to reduce and minimize civilian casualties," said a spokesperson for the White House National Security Council. And the administration also has made clear that "all sides of the conflict must improve humanitarian access to desperate populations in Yemen."

But the NSC spokesperson said the United States is committed to backing the coalition war effort, which is "supporting the legitimate Yemeni government and defending itself from Houthi incursion into Saudi territory and missile attacks."

Yet by continuing a strategy that expresses concerns for civilians while backing the Saudis, the Trump administration is left grappling with the dismal humanitarian situation in the country. The stranded cranes destined for Hodeida are perhaps the most glaring example of this tension. U.S. officials "regularly raise" issues such as food insecurity and the cranes at the port of Hodeida with Yemeni and Saudi counterparts, a State Department spokesman told FP.

While the Saudis are blocking the delivery, the administration argues that the Houthi rebels shoulder much of the blame. "The Houthis have refused to engage on a U.N. plan to allow neutral authorities to administer the port of Hodeida, which the Saudi-led coalition and Yemeni government support," the State spokesman said. "This initiative could increase confidence between parties and lead to renewed talks."

The Saudi delegation to the U.N. referred FP to an Aug. 17 statement in which it expressed its willingness to allow for the installation of the cranes in Hodeida as part of a plan brokered by the international body to increase commercial and humanitarian shipments into Yemen's Red Sea ports. But the Saudis have informed the United States and the U.N. that they can't move forward on the plan until the Houthis accept the U.N. ports proposal.

The most recent attempt to resolve the impasse came last month, when Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, and a senior U.N. official met with Saudi representatives to push the issue. But Haley's Saudi counterpart, Abdallah al-Mouallimi, and the head of a relief fund run by Riyadh refused, according to a U.S. official and two other diplomatic sources. The Saudis said the blockade on the cranes planned for the port of Hodeida could be lifted only in a final peace settlement.

One U.S. official said the White House and the Pentagon have expended little political capital trying to pressure the Saudis to relent.

"Who cares what [Haley] says in New York when the White House is not backing her," the official said. "The Saudis sitting in Riyadh are mostly getting advice from the DOD on targeting. That will always undercut the humanitarian argument anyone is making in New York."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Schanzer : How Do Palestinians Define 'Terrorism'?

Jonathan Schanzer and Grant Rumley

The Taylor Force Act is gathering momentum in Congress. Named for a West Point graduate who was stabbed to death by a Palestinian during a 2016 trip to Israel, the bill would cut American aid to the Palestinian Authority until it takes "credible steps to end acts of violence" and stops paying stipends

to convicted terrorists. The legislation recently passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with rare bipartisan support, and last week Sen. Lindsey Graham attached it to the 2018 Foreign Operations budget, all but guaranteeing it will go into effect next year.

That means the clock is now ticking for the Palestinian Authority, which receives around $350 million from the U.S. each year. The Taylor Force Act wouldn't block humanitarian or security aid, meaning U.S. funds wouldn't be zeroed out, but our sources say the total could fall as low as $120 million, depending on how far Congress and the Trump administration want to go. At the same time the PA's support from other donors is dropping, putting further strain already on the government in Ramallah.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and his coterie say they cannot roll back the practice of paying convicted terrorists, which dates to 1964. They say failing to pay the salaries—estimated at around $350 million a year—would create an opening for the terror group Hamas or even Iran. They further argue that pulling the funding would deprive thousands of families of their livelihoods, which could spark protests and threaten the Palestinian Authority's rule.

Congress will rightly reject these arguments. The PA's obstinacy is the reason the Taylor Force Act is so close to becoming law. Lawmakers and the White House signaled for months that a cutoff was coming, yet Mr. Abbas refused to take action.

There is one step Mr. Abbas could take to demonstrate that he is taking Congress seriously: He could issue a definition of terrorism to his own people. Remarkably, the Palestinian Authority's "Basic Law" does not mention terrorism. The State Department says that although the PA has criminalized acts of terror, it lacks legislation "specifically tailored to counterterrorism."

The PA's security forces do regularly raid terror cells and detain operatives across the West Bank. In late July, for example, they nabbed Hamas members in four major cities. But the PA typically justifies such actions under presidential decrees, such as one that prohibits "harming public security."

In the past, PA forces also had claimed jurisdiction under a combination of legal parameters, including the Palestine Liberation Organization's Revolutionary Penal Code of 1979 and a set of Jordanian military codes. But since Mr. Abbas's election in 2005, and especially after the 2006 elections and the devastating 2007 civil war with Hamas, he has governed almost exclusively by executive decree.

A law passed by the PA's parliament that defines and criminalizes terrorism would carry greater weight and almost certainly garner more respect from the Palestinian people. But internecine conflict has rendered the parliament defunct, making a new law all but impossible to pass.

Mr. Abbas's decrees provide the Palestinian security forces with a broad mandate for arresting terror operatives who plot attacks against Israel or the PA. Mr. Abbas issued an order in 2007 that states "all armed militias and military formations . . . are banned in all their forms." At times, he has condemned acts of terror, such as last month after three Arab-Israelis killed two police officers in Jerusalem. The PA's news agency reported that Mr. Abbas called Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and "expressed his strong rejection and condemnation of the incident."

Yet the PA continues to pay stipends to people convicted of such attacks. The Palestinians could buy considerable goodwill merely by defining what the PA considers terrorism. Setting out such a definition would not change Congress's demands or prevent the Taylor Force Act from passing. But it would signal the PA is taking steps to address the problem. From there, the PA's next step would be to cut off money to convicted terrorists, pursuant to its new definition.

The Taylor Force Act's current language demands that the State Department certify every 180 days that the Palestinian Authority is "taking credible and verifiable steps to end acts of violence against Israeli citizens and United States citizens." Defining terrorism would be a credible and verifiable step, even if a limited one.

If Mr. Abbas were to do this, the world would closely watch his next move. If Palestinian leaders continued to condemn American lawmakers for considering cuts to aid, and if the PA kept paying prisoners convicted of terrorism, then the exercise would mean little. Congress would have every right to withhold funds, and the Taylor Force Act could be merely the beginning. But if Mr. Abbas truly wants to take an alternative path, defining terrorism would be a start.

Mr. Schanzer is a senior vice president at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, where Mr. Rumley is a research fellow.

The New York Times

Sub-Saharan African Migrants Face Old Enemy in Libya: Bigotry

Dionne Searcey and Jaime Yaya Barry

DAKAR, Senegal — When Kalilu Drammeh arrived in Libya he was in many ways similar to thousands of other migrants from across Africa, all of them desperate to cross the sea to get to Europe and, they hoped, a better life.

But in Libya, Mr. Drammeh, like many other people from his native Gambia and other sub-Saharan countries, stood out among the swirl of migrants and was an automatic target for abuse for one obvious reason: his skin color is darker.

Libyan smugglers call them "burned," a racial epithet sometimes used in the country for people whose skin color is black. And while many of the migrants who pass through Libya hoping to set sail for Italy are beaten and otherwise abused by smugglers, Mr. Drammeh believes his treatment was especially harsh because of his skin color.

Fellow Muslims — even children — refused to let him pray alongside them. "They think they're better than us," Mr. Drammeh, who is 18, said by phone from a refugee camp in Italy. "They say we're created different from them."

For Africans like Mr. Drammeh, few legal paths for migration exist, so tens of thousands use smugglers to help them cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe. To pay off the fees, which can be as steep as $5,000, many migrants crossing the sea's central route spend months working under harsh conditions and abuse in Libya, a country plagued by lawlessness and violence since the fall of the former dictator Muammar el-Qaddafi.

This year more than 132,000 migrants and refugees have crossed the Mediterranean to land in Europe — all of them facing huge risks along the way. More than 2,300 drowned or were missing after setting off from the northern coast of Libya, and many others are in Libya waiting to cross.

Some migrants are even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation than others, a new report from Unicef and the International Organization for Migration says. Among those at particular risk, according to the report, are people traveling alone, those with low levels of education, children of any age and migrants who have endured long journeys.

But people from sub-Saharan Africa are most vulnerable of all, simply because of their skin color, the report says.

"It's a brutal, terrible reality, but young people need to know the risks before deciding to go," said Christopher Tidey, a Unicef spokesman. "Bottom line: This proves how essential it is that migrant and refugee children have access to safe and legal migration pathways."

The report is one of the first attempts to use both anecdotes and quantitative research to document the abuse of migrants based on a variety of factors, including country of origin. It analyzes the testimony of some 22,000 migrants and refugees trying to cross the Mediterranean, focusing on those who are age 14 to 24.

The report offers an example: An adolescent boy from sub-Saharan Africa, even one who has secondary education and travels in a group along the Central Mediterranean route, faces a 75 percent risk of being exploited. If he came from another region, where skin tones are lighter, the risk would drop to 38 percent, it says.

"Countless testimonies from young migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa make clear that they are treated more harshly and targeted for exploitation because of the color of their skin," the report says.

Tensions between North Africans and sub-Saharan Africans have long existed.

In numerous sub-Saharan African countries, unemployment is soaring, prompting young men and women to leave home to get to Europe, where they hope to find work. Recent statistics have shown that the migrant flow to Europe has slowed, but no one is certain why. Analysts have cautioned that the lull is unlikely to be permanent.

The report says that while young people are at greater risk than adults regardless of where they cross the Mediterranean, those who cross from Libya are in the greatest danger. In Libya, "they contend with pervasive lawlessness and violence

and are often detained, by state authorities and others," it says.

Even before migrants arrive there, their journey across sub-Saharan Africa typically includes a treacherous trip through the desert in cramped buses or trucks.

In Libya, work and living conditions are grim. Women have reported being forced to work as prostitutes to earn money for the trip across the sea. Many men say they are beaten and even shot at by smugglers. Traffickers have locked up some migrants, forcing them to call home to have relatives pay ransoms to secure their release.

Sheku B. Kallon, a Sierra Leonean migrant who now resides in a camp in Italy, said smugglers charge people who have black skin more money for the trip. Traffickers justify the steep fees because they face more difficulties taking black people through Libya, where discrimination is common, he said.

Mr. Kallon said that while in Libya, smugglers hid him and a group of other black migrants by covering them with plastic sheets in the back of a truck. Even with the cover, the traffickers were so worried about being seen ferrying black people they took them through series of bypasses to get to Tripoli, he said.

Once in Libya, Mr. Kallon and his friends managed to find odd jobs from Libyan Arabs. But they were paid less because of their skin color, he believes. And sometimes they were not paid at all.

"I don't think there is a place as bad as Libya," he said.

The New York Times

Decades After Alcohol Ban, Iran Admits It Has a Problem

Thomas Erdbrink

TEHRAN — For most of his life, alcohol rehab for Mehdi consisted of regular stretches in prison and lashings that left dark marks on his back. Now, at 36, he has prematurely gray hair, but with the help of an Alcoholics Anonymous group he swears he has finally stopped drinking.

In recent years, Iran, where alcohol has been illegal since the 1979 revolution and is taboo for devout Muslims, has taken the first step and admitted that, like most other nations, it has an alcohol problem.

Since 2015, when the Health Ministry ordered addiction treatment centers to care for alcoholics, dozens of private clinics and government institutions have opened help desks and special wards for alcoholics. The government has also allowed a large and growing network of Alcoholics Anonymous groups, modeled after those in the United States.

The relaxing of prohibition has allowed addicts like Mehdi to emerge from the shadows and embrace a new circle of friends — recovering alcoholics — who greeted him as he entered a West Tehran apartment one recent evening. "I've given up the bottle for 12 days now," said Mehdi, a tall computer specialist who requested anonymity because of the stigma still attached to alcoholism in Iran. To cheers and hoots, he added, "This is a big step for someone who was drunk most of the time."

The government is even running public campaigns warning Iranians not to drink and drive, something it never would have done in the past.

Along roads leading to the Caspian Sea, a favorite holiday destination, billboards showing bottles of whiskey and crashed cars surprised many drivers. The Iranian police still organize media events where bulldozers squash thousands of bottles and cans confiscated from smugglers. But in contrast to the past, when the official line was that there was no drinking problem because no one drank, they now provide officers with breathalyzers.

President Hassan Rouhani, who came to power in 2013, has been trying to insert realism into Iran's often strict ideology. The decision to open more alcohol treatment clinics came from his Health Ministry, and reflects the way many social changes are introduced in Iran: quietly ordered and carried out by local governments under the radar.

The change in attitude by those in power is driven by changing realities in Iranian society. Official statistics show that at least 10 percent of the population uses alcohol in the Islamic country. For some among the country's urban middle classes, drinking has become as normal as it is in the West. The Iranian news media have reported that those Iranians who do drink tend to do so more heavily than people even in heavy-drinking countries like Russia and Germany.

One reason is that alcohol is relatively easy to procure. There are alcohol suppliers anyone can call, and they will deliver whatever you want to your doorstep. Dealers receive their goods through a vast illegal distribution network that serves millions with alcohol brought in from neighboring Iraq.

To some extent, the sheer availability of alcohol is driving the changes in official attitudes.

"These days there is so much alcohol available, simply punishing everybody and using force is no longer working," said Reza Konjedi, 36, a former alcoholic who runs several Alcoholics Anonymous support groups in Tehran. "Drinking and bootlegging used to be viewed as equal crimes, and people would be lashed for being abusers. Now, security officials, the municipality, they all view alcoholics not as criminals, but as patients who need treatment."

Before the revolution, Iran's national spirit was aragh sagi, or "dog spirit," which was distilled from raisins and contained 65 percent ethanol. It remains popular and is typically sold in four-gallon jerrycans.

Bootlegging is also a major problem; dozens of people die from alcohol poisoning every year after consuming low-quality moonshine — 135 in 2013, the latest year for which official statistics are available.

In July, after three people died and dozens were poisoned in the city of Sirjan, a former police chief went so far as to publish an open letter calling for an end to the taboo on alcohol.

Mehdi was brought into the group by Mr. Konjedi, after nearly a decade of run-ins with the law. He said he drank to forget. "Money problems," he said. "The economy is not good here. Whenever I would feel pressure, I would get a bottle and drink it."

Mr. Konjedi's wife, Samin — they met through A.A. — said she needed at least two meetings a day to prevent her from taking up the bottle. "It's like chemotherapy," she said. "I constantly need a dose to cure my disease."

A.A. and another group, Aware Anonymous, sponsor groups across the country, Mr. Konjedi said, adding that there were dozens in Tehran alone and over a thousand nationwide.

A week earlier we met around 7 a.m. at a regular A.A. meeting in a municipal building in the western part of town. Next to the room, which was provided rent-free, were a kindergarten and a room for Quran classes. Inside were 15 men and women who nearly every day would meet to help one another stay sober.

Members talked after an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in Tehran. Arash Khamooshi for The New York Times

"Local governments across the country are asking for our help, and facilitating our groups, because they are seeing that our work is effective," Mr. Konjedi said.

The only thing lacking is an official permit, something even groups fighting drug addiction have. That is because the Quran mentions the evils of wine but has nothing to say about drugs. "In Islam alcohol is seen by some as more dangerous than drugs," Samin said. "This while many in the society see drugs as being much worse."

In fact, some Iranians, especially in larger cities, view alcohol as something completely normal. On a recent midweek evening, eight Iranians met at a rooftop, where the red wine, vodka and aragh sagi flowed freely.

One guest said he had been arrested recently for drunken driving and was now awaiting lashings. Another said he, like many others, had developed liver problems because of regular drinking. Some people joked that they were alcoholics.

Mr. Konjedi said that he had seen the number of people with alcohol problems increase over the years, from a decade ago when he himself was homeless and drinking hard. "We need more billboards, more groups, to help them," he said.

He did not want to comment on whether the nearly 40-year prohibition was the best way to prevent people from drinking. "At least our officials are now taking the right steps to deal with those who are suffering," Mr. Konjedi said. "We should be happy with that."

The Washington Post

How Russia quietly undercuts sanctions intended to stop North Korea's nuclear program (UNE)

Russian smugglers are scurrying to the aid of North Korea with shipments of petroleum and other vital supplies that could help that country weather harsh new economic sanctions, U.S. officials say in an assessment that casts further doubt on whether financial measures alone can force dictator Kim Jong Un to abandon his nuclear weapons program.

The spike in Russian exports is occurring as China — by far North Korea's biggest trading partner — is beginning to dramatically ratchet up the economic pressure on its troublesome neighbor in the face of provocative behavior such as last week's test of a powerful nuclear bomb.

Official documents and interviews point to a rise in tanker traffic this spring between North Korean ports and Vladivostok, the far-eastern Russian city near the small land border shared by the two countries. With international trade with North Korea increasingly constrained by U.N. sanctions, Russian entrepreneurs are seizing opportunities to make a quick profit, setting up a maze of front companies to conceal transactions and launder payments, according to U.S. law enforcement officials who monitor sanction-busting activity.

Such trade could provide a lifeline to North Korea at a time when the United States is seeking to deepen Kim's economic and political isolation in response to recent nuclear and missiles tests. Trump administration officials were hoping that new trade restrictions by China — including a temporary ban on gasoline and diesel exports imposed this spring by a state-owned Chinese petroleum company — could finally drive Kim to negotiate an agreement to halt work on nuclear weapons and long-range delivery systems.

The U.N. Security Council late Monday approved a package of new economic sanctions that included a cap on oil imports to North Korea, effectively slashing its fuel supply by 30 percent, diplomats said. A U.S. proposal for a total oil embargo was dropped in exchange for Russian and Chinese support for the measure.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley spoke after the U.N. Security Council voted on Sept. 11 to impose further economic sanctions against North Korea. 'We are not looking for war,' Haley says about new sanctions against North Korea (Reuters)

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley spoke after the U.N. Security Council voted on Sept. 11 to impose further economic sanctions against North Korea. (Reuters)

"As the Chinese cut off oil and gas, we're seeing them turn to Russia," said a senior official with detailed knowledge of smuggling operations. The official, one of several current and former U.S. officials interviewed about the trend, insisted on anonymity in describing analyses based on intelligence and confidential informants.

"Whenever they are cut off from their primary supplier, they just try to get it from somewhere else," the official said.

[North Korean defectors risking their lives for a chance to escape]

The increase in trade with Russia was a primary reason for a series of legal measures announced last month by Justice and Treasury officials targeting Russian nationals accused of helping North Korea evade sanctions. Court documents filed in support of the measures describe a web of alleged front companies established by Russian citizens for the specific purpose of concealing business arrangements with Pyongyang.

While Russian companies have engaged in such illicit trade with North Korea in the past, U.S. officials and experts on North Korea observed a sharp rise beginning last spring, coinciding with new U.N. sanctions and the ban on fuel shipments in May by the state-owned China National Petroleum Corp. The smuggled goods mostly are diesel and other fuels, which are vital to North Korea's economy and can't be produced indigenously. In the past, U.S. agencies also have tracked shipments of Russian industrial equipment and ores as well as luxury goods.

Traffic between Vladivostok and the port of Rajin in North Korea has become so heavy that local officials this year launched a dedicated ferry line between the two cities. The service was temporarily suspended last week because of a financial dispute.

China, with its large shared border and traditionally close ties with Pyongyang, remains North Korea's most important trading partner, accounting for more than 90 percent of the country's foreign commerce. Thus, Beijing's cooperation is key to any sanctions regime that seeks to force Kim to alter his behavior, current and former U.S. officials say.

Still, Russia, with its massive petroleum reserves and proven willingness to partner with unsavory regimes, could provide just enough of a boost to keep North Korea's economy moving, allowing it to again resist international pressure to give up its strategic weapons, the officials said.

"Russia is now a player in this realm," said Anthony Ruggiero, a former Treasury Department official who is now a senior fellow with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington think tank. "The Chinese may be fed up with North Korea and willing to do more to increase the pressure. But it's not clear that the Russians are willing to go along with that."

["We'll see," Trump says on possible military retaliation for nuke test]

The reports of Russian oil smuggling come as Moscow continues to criticize international efforts to impose more trade restrictions on North Korea. Russian President Vladimir Putin, during a joint news conference Wednesday with South Korean leader Moon Jae-in, pointedly refused to support new restrictions on fuel supplies for the North.

"We should not act out of emotions and push North Korea to a dead end," Putin said, according to South Korean media accounts of the news conference.

Rare insight into exactly how Russian firms conduct business with Kim's isolated regime can be gleaned from the court papers filed last month to support new sanctions against Russian nationals accused of supplying diesel and other fuels to North Korea. The papers describe in detail how one company, Velmur, was set up by Russian operatives in Singapore to allegedly help North Korea purchase millions of dollars' worth of fuel while keeping details of the transactions opaque.

Velmur was registered in Singapore in 2014 as a real estate management company. Yet its chief function appears to be "facilitating the laundering of funds for North Korea financial facilitators and sanctioned entities," according to a Justice Department complaint filed on Aug. 22. The company has no known headquarters, office space or even a Web address, but rather "bears the hallmarks of a front company," the complaint states.

According to the documents, Velmur worked with other Russian partners to obtain contracts this year to purchase nearly $7 million worth of diesel fuel from a Russian supplier known as IPC between February and May. In each case, North Korean operatives wired the payments to Velmur in hard currency — U.S. dollars — and Velmur in turn used the money to pay IPC for diesel tanker shipments departing the port of Vladivostok, the documents show.

"The investigation has concluded that North Korea was the destination" of the diesel transshipments, the Justice Department records state. "As such, it appears that Velmur, while registered as a real estate management company, is in fact a North Korean financial facilitator."

[North Korea's latest nuclear test defied predictions]

Officials for Velmur could not be reached for comment. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, reacting to the U.S. court filing last month, dismissed the sanctions policy as futile, while declining to address specific allegations about sanctions-busting by Russian individuals.

"Washington, in theory, should have learned that, for us, the language of sanctions is unacceptable; the solution of real problems is only hindered by such actions," Ryabkov said. "So far, however, it does not seem that they have come to an understanding of such obvious truths."

U.S. officials acknowledged that it may be impossible to physically stop Russian tankers from delivering fuel shipments to North Korean ports, as long as the Putin government grants tacit approval. But the United States enjoys some leverage because of the smugglers' preference for conducting business in dollars.

When Justice Department officials announced sanctions on Russian businesses last month, they also sought the forfeiture of millions of dollars in U.S. currency allegedly involved in the transactions, a step intended as a warning to others considering trading with North Korea. Black-market traders tend to shun North Korea's currency, the won, which has been devalued to the point that some Pyongyang department stores insist on payment

in dollars, euros or Chinese renminbi.

"There are vulnerabilities here, because the people North Korea is doing business with want dollars. It was dollars that the North Koreans were attempting to send to Russia," said Ruggiero, the former Treasury official. "The Russians are not about to start taking North Korean won."

Checkpoint newsletter

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

After U.S. Compromise, Security Council Strengthens North Korea Sanctions

Somini Sengupta

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations Security Council on Monday ratcheted up sanctions yet again against North Korea, but they fell significantly short of the far-reaching penalties that the Trump administration had demanded just days ago.

While the sanctions were described in Washington and other capitals as the most extensive yet, in the end they amounted to another incremental increase of pressure on the country, even after it detonated its sixth and most powerful nuclear device.

It was far from clear that the additional penalties would accomplish what the Trump administration said was its goal: To force North Korea to halt its nuclear and ballistic missile tests and reopen some kind of negotiation toward eventual nuclear disarmament.

The North has claimed that last week's detonation, in an underground site, had proven it could build a hydrogen bomb, far more powerful than ordinary atomic weapons. It is still unclear how far along the road to a hydrogen bomb the country has gone.

Although the resolution won backing from all 15 council members, the weakened penalties reflected the power of Russia and China. Both had objected to the original language calling for an oil embargo and other severe penalties — with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia declaring last week that such additional sanctions would be counterproductive and possibly destabilizing.

Either could have used their status as permanent members of the Security Council to veto the measure.

The original demands from the United States for a new resolution, made by the American ambassador, Nikki R. Haley, were toned down in negotiations that followed with her Russian and Chinese counterparts.

Late Sunday night, after a series of closed-door meetings, a revised draft emerged, setting a cap on oil exports to North Korea, but not blocking them altogether.

The resolution asks countries around the world to inspect ships going in and out of North Korea's ports (a provision put in place by the Security Council in 2009) but does not authorize the use of force for ships that do not comply, as the Trump administration had originally proposed.

The resolution also requires those inspections to be done with the consent of the countries where the ships are registered, which opens the door to violations. Under the latest resolution, those ships could face penalties, but the original language proposed by the United States had gone much further, empowering countries to interdict ships suspected of carrying weapons material or fuel into North Korea and to use "all necessary measures" — code for military force — to enforce compliance.

The resolution also does not impose a travel ban or asset freeze on Mr. Kim, as the original American draft had set out.

And the new measure adds a caveat to the original language that would have banned the import of North Korean laborers altogether, saying that countries should not provide work authorization papers unless necessary for humanitarian assistance or denuclearization.

The resolution does ban textile exports from North Korea, prohibits the sale of natural gas to North Korea and sets a cap on refined petroleum sales to the country of two million barrels per year. That would shave off roughly 10 percent of what North Korea currently gets from China, according to the U.S. Energy Information Agency.

Even so, American officials asserted that the resolution would reduce oil imports to North Korea by 30 percent.

China had long worried that an oil cutoff altogether would lead to North Korea's collapse.

And even some British officials warned, in private, that if the original American proposal went forward, this winter the North Koreans would be showing photographs of freezing children, and portraying the West as architects of a genocide.

A recent analysis by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies suggested that an oil embargo would not have much impact in the long run anyway; Pyongyang, the analysis said, could replace oil with liquefied coal.

Despite the weakened penalties, Ms. Haley cast the resolution as a victory in her Security Council remarks.

Ms. Haley credited what she called President Trump's relationship with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, in achieving the toughened sanctions — the second raft of United Nations penalties against North Korea since August.

Ms. Haley said the resolution demonstrated international unity against the regime in Pyongyang, and she claimed that the new sanctions, if enforced, would affect the vast majority of the country's exports.

But in contrast to her assertion last week that the North was "begging for war," Ms. Haley said on Monday that Pyongyang still has room to change course. "If it agrees to stop its nuclear program it can reclaim its future," she said. "If it proves it can live in peace, the world will live in peace with it."

Ultimately, analysts said, diplomatic success would be measured not by the strictness of sanctions, but by the ability of world powers to persuade Pyongyang to halt its nuclear and ballistic missile tests.

"There's no only-sanctions strategy that will bring the North Koreans to heel," said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, a disarmament advocacy group based in Washington. "It has to be paired with a pragmatic strategy of engagement. But those talks are not yet happening."

In a nod to Chinese and Russian arguments, the resolution also calls for resolving the crisis "through peaceful, diplomatic and political means." That is diplomatic code to engage in negotiations.

In his remarks, the Chinese envoy, Liu Jieyi, warned the United States against efforts at "regime change" and the use of military force. "China will continue to advance dialogue," he said.

China and Russia have jointly proposed a freeze on Pyongyang's missile and nuclear tests in exchange for a freeze in joint military drills by South Korea and the United States. The Americans have rejected that proposal.

Russia's envoy, Vassily A. Nebenzia, said it would be "a big mistake" to ignore the China-Russia proposal. "We will insist on it being considered," he said.

Diplomats said the language in the new resolution, which was negotiated surprisingly swiftly after the North's latest nuclear test, reflected a tough but balanced measure designed to address Chinese and Russian concerns.

The French ambassador François Delattre, told reporters that a unified Security Council position was "the best antidote to the risk of war."

"By definition, this is a compromise in order to get everyone on board," he said before the vote.

"Everyone should be able to live with the resolution as it now stands," said the Swedish ambassador, Olof Skoog.

There was no immediate reaction to the new resolution from North Korea. But on Sunday the North warned that it would inflict the "greatest pain and suffering" on the United States, in the event of tougher international sanctions.

The fact that Russia and China did not veto the resolution suggested that both are increasingly concerned about the behavior of Mr. Kim, who has often taunted his neighbors and suppliers. But the Chinese in particular were reluctant to pass any sanction that could destabilize Mr. Kim's regime.

American intelligence agencies say they are expecting North Korea to test another intercontinental ballistic missile, building on two tests in July. But the new test, they speculate, will not be into a high launch into space, but will be flattened out to demonstrate how far the missile can fly.

Mr. Kim has said he would consider landing test missiles off the shore of Guam, the Pacific island where an American air base is used to fly practice bombing runs over the

South Korean side of the Demilitarized Zone with the North.

In reality, the Trump administration has relatively low expectations for the new sanctions, American officials say.

But it is discussing how to use them, the officials say, with a mix of overt military pressure, covert action, and steps to punish any Chinese banks that do business with North Korea, by banning them from also doing business with the United States.

That is exactly the combination of actions that was used by the Obama administration to drive Iran into negotiations over its nuclear activities for what became the 2015 deal that Mr. Trump has often denounced as a giveaway.

The New York Times

U.N. Security Council Adopts New Sanctions Against North Korea

Farnaz Fassihi

UNITED NATIONS—The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted new sanctions against North Korea on Monday after U.S. officials eased their demands to convince China and Russia to approve the measure.

The U.S., which drafted the initial resolution while pledging the harshest possible sanctions yet, rolled back its initial insistence on a complete oil embargo and asset and travel freezes targeting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, diplomats said.

Despite the compromises, U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley said of the adopted resolution: "This will cut deep."

"Today we are saying the world will never accept a nuclear armed North Korea," she said, crediting the accord to the "strong relationship" between President Donald Trump and China's President Xi Jinping.

"We are not looking for war. North Korea has not yet passed the point of no return," Ms. Haley said.

Diplomats and North Korea watchers say while the new measures will add economic pressure they won't force the regime to abandon its nuclear and missile programs.

The resolution targets North Korea's export economy, sanctioning 90% of its annual revenue, diplomats said.

It will reduce oil imports by North Korea by 30%, placing an annual cap of 2 million barrels on refined petroleum products such as gasoline and diesel and capping crude oil at about 4 million barrels, U.S. officials said. The U.N. measure also completely bans natural gas imports.

North Korea now imports a total of 8.5 million barrels of oil a year, mostly from China, said a U.S. official.

The resolution also imposes an embargo on all textile trade and requires inspections and monitoring of North Korea's sea vessels by member states. But it stops short of providing for the use of military force to gain access to the ships. The textile industry, the last big economic sector that hadn't yet been targeted in North Korea, accounted for $760 million in 2016 revenue, U.S. officials said.

A proposed ban on North Korean foreign workers, a source of hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue to the regime, was reworded to allow countries to employ North Korean nationals if deemed vital for humanitarian reasons. Current contracts on the workers, estimated to number around 93,000 from Russia to Africa, will be phased out and not renewed, diplomats said.

China and Russia, economic and political allies of North Korea who both hold U.N. Security Council veto power, said they endorsed the new sanctions because of Pyongyang's repeated violations of Council resolutions banning it from conducting nuclear and ballistic missile tests. But they both also criticized the U.S. and allies for not having a clear path toward diplomatic negotiations with North Korea and the ratcheting up rhetoric on military action.

"We hope that the U.S. will not seek regime change in North Korea," the "collapse of North Korea," or send its military into the country, said China's Ambassador Liu Jieyi.

China is reluctant to pressure the North Korean regime to the brink of collapse fearing instability at its border, a flow of refugees and a possible American military presence. Russia and China have both said they favor direct talks and not sanctions.

Russia and China renewed their calls for North Korea to suspend nuclear and military tests in exchange for U.S. halting its military exercises on the Korean Peninsula and dismantling an American missile-defense system in South Korea known as Thaad.

"We think it's a big mistake to underestimate this Russia and China initiative," said Russia's Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia. "It remains on the table at Security Council and we insist on it being considered."

The U.S. has dismissed this proposal before. Ms. Haley recently called it "insulting" because she said it implied a moral equivalence between the U.S. and North Korea.

Many U.N. diplomats had considered a unanimous Security Council vote against North Korea as politically more important than a strong U.S. stand that risked division, diplomats said.

"Any perception of weakness on the side of the Security Council would only encourage the regime to continue its provocations and objectively create the risk of an increasingly extreme situation," said France's Ambassador François Delattre.

After the vote, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe praised the resolution, saying it "raises the pressure on North Korea to an unprecedented new level and expresses the clear will of the international community that we must change the policies of North Korea."

North Korea this month conducted its sixth nuclear-weapons test and asserted that it had acquired the capacity to mount a hydrogen bomb on an intercontinental ballistic missile. Ms. Haley had warned that Pyongyang, North Korea's capital city, was "begging for war" and spearheaded a fast-paced diplomatic response by pushing for U.N. action with a one-week timetable.

North Korea issued a statement on its official KCNA news agency on Monday warning that if the "illegal and unlawful" sanctions resolution passed, Pyongyang would inflict "the greatest pain and suffering" on the U.S.

"In case the U.S. eventually does rig up the illegal and unlawful 'resolution' on harsher sanctions, the DPRK [North Korea] shall make absolutely sure that the U.S. pays due price," the spokesman of the country's Foreign Ministry said.

The Washington Post

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

The U.N. Security Council on Monday agreed on its toughest-ever sanctions against North Korea that passed unanimously after the United States softened its initial demands to win support from China and Russia.

The sanctions set limits on North Korea's oil imports and banned its textile exports in an effort to deprive the reclusive nation of the income it needs to maintain its nuclear and ballistic missile program and increase the pressure to negotiate a way out of punishing sanctions.

"Today, we are attempting to take the future of the North Korean nuclear program out of the hands of its outlaw regime," said Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

"Today, we are saying the world will never accept a nuclear-armed North Korea," she added. "And today the Security Council is saying if North Korea does not halt its nuclear program, we will act to stop it ourselves."

Everyday, North Koreans are told that the Americans are "imperialists" and North Korean children are taught that "cunning American wolves" want to kill them. To understand why, we need to go back to the Korean War. Why does North Korea hate the U.S.? Look to the Korean War. (Anna Fifield, Jason Aldag/The Washington Post)

Everyday, North Koreans are told that the Americans are "imperialists" and North Korean children are taught that "cunning American wolves" want to kill them. To understand why, we need to go back to the Korean War. (Anna Fifield,Jason Aldag/The Washington Post)

The new sanctions come on top of previous ones that cut into North Korea's exports of coal, iron ore and seafood. Haley said that more than 90 percent of North Korea's reported exports are now fully banned by sanctions.

The new sanctions ratchet up the pressure on North Korea, though they are far less sweeping than what Washington originally sought after Pyongyang carried out its sixth and most potent nuclear test Sept. 3. But

the United States agreed to drop several key demands, and toned down others, to keep China and Russia from exercising their veto over the measure.

Just a week ago, Haley urged the "strongest possible" sanctions on North Korea. Among the measures Washington pushed in an initial draft were a complete oil embargo and an asset freeze and global travel ban on leader Kim Jong Un. During negotiations last week and through the weekend, the embargo became a cap, and the punitive measures against the leader were dropped.

Though toned down, the sanctions are potentially far-reaching in their ability to shave as much as $1.3 billion from North Korea's revenue.

Under the Security Council resolution, imports of both refined and crude oil will be capped at 8.5 million barrels a year, which Haley said represents a 30 percent cut. Natural gas and condensates also were prohibited to close off possible alternative fuels. In addition, textiles, which last year accounted for $726 million, representing more than a quarter of North Korea's export income, are banned.

In an effort to curb smuggling, the resolution allows countries to demand the inspection of ships suspected of carrying North Korean goods, though a U.S. proposal to allow the ships to be challenged with military force was dropped. But ships proven to be abetting Pyongyang's efforts to evade sanctions are subject to an asset freeze and may be barred from sailing into ports.

And in a separate measure that will not take effect immediately, countries will be required not to renew contracts for an estimated 93,000 North Korean guest workers who labor overseas. According to U.S. assessments, their salaries bring the North Korean government $500 million a year.

In her remarks at the Security Council, Haley evoked the lessons of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon 16 years ago.

"That day, the United States saw that mass murder can come from a clear blue sky on a beautiful Tuesday morning," she said. "But today, the threat to the United States and the world is not coming out of the blue. The North Korean regime has demonstrated that it will not act on its own to end its nuclear program. The civilized world must do what the regime refuses to do. We must stop its march toward a nuclear arsenal with the ability to deliver it anywhere in the world."

Haley said the United States is not seeking war with North Korea, which she said had "not yet passed the point of no return."

"If it agrees to stop its nuclear program, it can reclaim its future," she said. "If it proves it can live in peace, the world will live in peace with it."

In recent days, the United States and its allies spent the past several days trying to come up with a resolution that would be acceptable to Moscow and Beijing.

Chinese analysts believe the country will continue to take an incremental approach.

It's not that Beijing is not angry with Kim — it is. But Beijing worries that instability in North Korea will hurt Chinese interests.

Recent weapons tests have literally shaken Chinese border areas, and residents worry about nuclear fallout. Chinese authorities worry conflict could send North Korean refugees streaming across the border or bring U.S. troops closer to their door.

"Beijing has multiple, complex strategic considerations," said Michael Kovrig, a senior adviser at the International Crisis Group. "It wants to send a message to Kim Jong Un that his nuclear program is unacceptable and to punish bad behavior, but it does not want to trigger North Korea's collapse or turn its neighbor into a permanent enemy."

Crude oil supply is vital to North Korea, particularly its military. A complete cutoff could be perceived in Pyongyang as an existential threat to the regime, Kovrig said. So China needs to seriously consider the chaos — political and otherwise — that could ensue.

And the timing is key. "Once China employs its economic leverage, it loses it as a further bargaining tool," Kovrig said. "That's why in the past, China has tried to calibrate sanctions to 'punish but not strangle' North Korea."

Haley praised Chinese President Xi Jinping, saying the Security Council resolution would not have happened without the relationship between Xi and President Trump.

Today's Headlines newsletter

The day's most important stories.

Russia, itself the subject of sanctions over Ukraine, has called sanctions against Moscow "illegal." Russia's ambassador to the U.N., Vasilly Nebenzia, said Moscow believes it would be "wrong" to allow North Korea's nuclear test to go unanswered. But he criticized the United States for not assuring Pyongyang that Washington does not seek war or regime change.

"We're convinced that diverting the menace posed by North Korea could be done not by more sanctions but by political means," he said.

In Pyongyang, North Korea's Foreign Ministry on Monday issued a statement warning the United States will pay a "due price" if it pursues stronger sanctions.

"The forthcoming measures to be taken by the [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] will cause the U.S. the greatest pain and suffering it had ever gone through in its entire history," according to the statement released by the Korean Central News Agency.

Read more:

Bloomberg

Schuman : South Korea Has Some Lessons Trump Should Heed

Michael Schuman

Advisers seem to have convinced U.S. President Donald Trump not to trash the country's free-trade agreement with South Korea -- for now. Trump himself still seems intent on extracting concessions from the Koreans and could yet withdraw from the deal. The irony is that, more than any other, South Korea's own story shows how foolish that would be.

QuickTake Free Trade and Its Foes

Korea's postwar rise may be the world's most striking testament to the power of trade to create jobs and amass wealth. Back in the 1960s, economists wrestled with the question of how to alleviate crushing poverty throughout much of the developing world, especially in newly formed nation-states in Africa and Asia that had recently emerged from the colonial era. At the time, South Korea's gross national income per capita was about $120, on par with Kenya and Madagascar.

The prevailing wisdom held that the global economy was rigged against poor countries and the only way they could escape destitution was by disengaging from it. If their economies remained tied to those of their former colonial overlords, emerging nations would be unable to develop the manufacturing and other industries they needed to progress.

A better idea, it seemed, was to raise tariffs and other barriers on imports in order to spur industrial production at home, create jobs and raise incomes. Many leaders throughout the developing world, who were often the product of independence struggles themselves, were drawn naturally to that argument. They influenced the direction of countries like India, where policy took on a decidedly anti-trade bias. These ideas on development coalesced into something called "dependency theory."

South Korea pursued the opposite course. Rather than turning its back on the global economy, Seoul's policymakers embraced it. They plugged the South Korean economy directly into the world trading system and promoted exports above all else.

In this regard, Korea was very much influenced by the experience of Japan, which was already in the midst of a historic economic boom that had also been sparked by an outward-focused economic model. But when Korea embarked on this course, it was still in the minority. Development economists didn't take the strategy very seriously.

Numbers tell the rest of the story. In 1962, India's GNI per capita was $90. By 1990, it had quadrupled to $380. Over that same time span, though, Korea's per capita income surged 53 times -- to $6,360. After 1991, India also adopted a more trade-based development strategy, which subsequently accelerated its growth rate.

"Dependency theory" went wrong because poor nations simply couldn't generate the levels of demand needed to support new industries, nor the comparative advantages for them to compete on a global scale. In many cases, the state ended up having to subsidize these sectors, rendering many of them inefficient.

Korea's trade-oriented model worked because it capitalized on the much larger demand in foreign markets like the U.S. It exploited the country's comparative advantages in the world trading system -- primarily, low wages that attracted factory work in labor-intensive industries such as shoes and toys -- and generated lots of jobs at home.

Korea then was able to use the capital this strategy generated to develop new, high-value industries -- the chips, LCD panels, cars and other products the economy is known for today.

The Koreans, to be sure, were never true free-traders. They found all sorts of ways to protect their nascent industries from foreign competition. But, to this day, they appreciate the importance of exports; Korean companies have increased their market share in the U.S. since the pact came into effect five years ago. That's why even new South Korea President Moon Jae-in, who generally favors more socialistic economic policies, has staunchly defended the trade pact with the U.S.

Unfortunately, dependency theory seems to influence several of the new U.S. administration's policies, which are aimed at fostering production at home rather than importing from abroad, even if that means subsidizing factories with state funds. In reality, free-trade agreements don't just expose U.S. companies to foreign competition, they also open foreign markets to U.S. exporters.

It's true that total U.S. exports to Korea have fallen since the free-trade agreement was signed. But they've declined less than Korea's overall imports: In other words, the market share of U.S. exporters has actually increased under the pact. Plus, the U.S. continues to run a surplus with South Korea in services, its strength. As Trump decides how hard to push South Korea, this is recent history worth keeping in mind.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Taiwanese Activist Pleads Guilty in China to Conspiring Against Beijing

Chun Han Wong

BEIJING—A Taiwanese human-rights activist pleaded guilty in a Chinese court to charges that he had plotted to overthrow Communist rule in China, a case seen as a marker of soured ties between Beijing and Taipei.

Lee Ming-che stood trial on Monday alongside an alleged Chinese accomplice, Peng Yuhua. Both faced charges of "subverting state power" through activities conducted mainly on social media, a municipal court in the central Chinese city of Yueyang said on its official microblog.

Subversion of state power is a broadly defined crime that Chinese authorities have used to jail critics and quash dissent. Taiwanese media say the case against Mr. Lee, 42 years old, marked the first time China brought such charges against someone from Taiwan—a self-ruled island estranged from the mainland since Communist forces drove off the Kuomintang government in 1949.

Mr. Lee went missing in March after traveling to China, a disappearance that spurred concern among some Taiwanese who fear that Beijing may be seeking new ways to punish Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen for not endorsing a political principle holding that the island is part of "one China."

Chinese officials publicly confirmed Mr. Lee's detention 10 days after he disappeared, saying he had been detained for "endangering national security." Authorities in Taipei have repeatedly called on Beijing to ensure Mr. Lee's personal well-being and disclose information about his case.

Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office has said Mr. Lee's legal rights are protected, and denounced efforts to characterize his detention as a human-rights case as attempts to interfere in China's judicial system.

At Monday's trial, Messrs. Lee and Peng both acknowledged guilt and expressed remorse in statements to the court, according to videos of the proceedings published by the Yueyang Intermediate People's Court.

"People on both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] are descendants of the yellow emperor and part of the Chinese civilization," Mr. Lee said in prepared remarks read off sheaves of paper. "We should give up biased Western views in order to learn about mainland China."

The official Xinhua News Agency said a verdict will be announced at a later date.

Messrs. Lee and Peng couldn't be reached. A lawyer representing Mr. Lee didn't immediately respond to a request for comment, while a lawyer representing Mr. Peng declined to comment.

Mr. Lee's wife, Lee Ching-yu, could be seen in the courtroom audience in videos and photos published by the Yueyang court.

After the trial, Ms. Lee in a Facebook post denounced the trial as a "political show," and reiterated her earlier comments to reporters, in which she asked "my fellow countrymen for their understanding" if they see her husband plead guilty "against his free will."

Prosecutors say the charges stem from activities dating back to 2012, when Mr. Peng set up online chat rooms where members often promoted Taiwanese and Western political systems while criticizing Communist Party rule in China.

Mr. Peng allegedly drew up plans for setting up a company that would use social-media platforms to agitate for the overthrow of China's existing political system, according to charge sheets published by the court. The company was to be named "Plum Blossom," Taiwan's national flower.

In court-published videos, Mr. Lee said he oversaw "education" work on Mr. Peng's behalf, writing and distributing essays that criticized China's Communist Party, government and political system, as well as making similar comments on social media.

An employee at a community college in Taipei, Mr. Lee performed volunteer work for Covenants Watch, a Taipei-based alliance of human-rights groups. Activists say Mr. Lee has been supportive of civil-society groups in China, often discussing human-rights issues with Chinese friends and mailing books to them.

Mr. Lee's detention came amid souring ties between China and Taiwan. Mainland officials cut off official communications with Taipei shortly after Ms. Tsai took office in May 2016, blaming her failure to acknowledge an understanding between Beijing and Taipei reached in 1992 that holds that there is just "one China" without defining what that means.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

China to Shut Bitcoin Exchanges (UNE)

Chao Deng and Paul Vigna

BEIJING—Chinese authorities are preparing to shut down the country's bitcoin exchanges, according to people familiar with the matter, reflecting a growing unease with the virtual currency and its recent surge in value.

The policy shift in the world's No. 2 economy shows how nations are wrestling with bitcoin and its place in the financial system. In China, specifically, the government's attack on bitcoin comes amid a focus on preventing capital from fleeing to digital currencies.

The move could send shock waves through the burgeoning market for virtual currencies and hundreds of new companies that have sprouted up to take advantage of the open-ledger technology that underpins bitcoin. The largest of these virtual, or "crypto," currencies, bitcoin has surged since March in part due to a loosening of restrictions in places such as Japan and advancements in buying and selling.

After a Chinese news organization Friday reported on China's commercial-trading ban, Bitcoin slid around 10% to $4,186, from levels above $4,600 on Thursday, according to research site CoinDesk. It has hovered around that level since, closing Monday at $4,211.

China has long been a major hub for bitcoin, which was created by an anonymous programmer during the depths of the 2008 financial crisis as an alternative to official currencies. Much of the world's bitcoin is mined—created through powerful algorithms—in China. As recently as this past January, before new rules damped trading in the country, more than 80% of global bitcoin activity took place in yuan.

In the latest move, China's central bank together with other regulators has drafted instructions banning Chinese platforms from providing virtual-currency trading services, according to people familiar with the matter.

The end of commercial trading in virtual currencies in China is likely to further diminish bitcoin use in a large and once-promising market. It also offers a guide to other countries' regulators seeking to bring order to what can be a chaotic market for these instruments, analysts said.

The ban was surprising for some, given that Chinese authorities have allowed bitcoin exchanges, such as BTCC, Huobi and OKCoin, to operate within the mainland for years.

Beijing's crackdown on bitcoin is part of a broader effort to root out risks to the country's financial system. Officials earlier this year circulated a draft of anti-money-laundering rules for bitcoin exchanges, a powerful warning, even though the regulations were never formalized, according to people familiar with the matter. The People's Bank of China didn't respond to a request for comment.

Now, regulators told at least one of the exchanges that the decision to shutter them has been made, one of the people said. Another said the order may take several months to implement.

More virtual-currency activity in China is moving off exchanges, where individuals can trade with each other privately, analysts say.

The stakes for Beijing grew as prices of virtual currencies like bitcoin soared, adding to the risk that Chinese investors would continue to speculate and expose themselves to big losses. Analysts and investors attribute the sharp rise in bitcoin last year to Chinese investors, who began buying it up while at the same time selling the yuan amid worries that the Chinese currency would weaken.

In recent days, bitcoin prices in China dipped lower than they did in other markets, reflecting uncertainty over the ban, said Charles Hayter, chief executive of CryptoCompare.

While China in the past accounted for the bulk of global bitcoin trading activity, the country's share has dropped dramatically since the government started making moves to cool the market.

In April, Japan's Financial Services Agency implemented rules that recognized bitcoin as a payment method. Since then, Japan has become the top market for bitcoin trading, accounting for almost half of global volumes. The U.S. share of trading has jumped to above 25% from 5% over the past year.

Virtual currencies in theory allow holders to bypass China's traditional banking system to move money outside its capital-controlled borders. That could make it more difficult for Chinese regulators to maintain a tight grip on the yuan.

Regulators overseeing cyberspace administration, banking and securities trading—as well as central-bank officials—considered various options for months but ultimately came to a consensus to shut down the exchanges, said the people familiar with the matter.

"Too much disorder was naturally a basic reason" for the ban, said one of the people.

The people said that regulators will likely have to tolerate noncommercial trading of virtual currencies. "The government also doesn't have the power to control" that, one of the people said.

This person said that regulators expect exchanges to report back on how they plan to unwind their businesses.

Bloomberg

Editorial : Myanmar's Rohingya Deserve Better From Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's iconic leader, is sacrificing her moral authority for political expediency. By failing to speak out against repression -- and, more broadly, by not doing enough to help her country grow and prosper -- she risks losing both her power and her reputation.

Suu Kyi, whose years leading the resistance to the Burmese junta earned her the Nobel Peace Prize, has dismayed former admirers by refusing to stop or even denounce what the United Nations calls "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" in her own country. Ever since militant members of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim minority attacked police stations and an army camp last month, security forces and local Buddhist vigilantes appear to have launched a brutal campaign against them. Hundreds of Rohingya have been killed, and nearly 300,000 refugees have fled across the border to makeshift camps in Bangladesh.

Suu Kyi, mindful of the near-universal loathing of the Rohingya among Myanmar's other communities, has blasted global criticism of this crisis as fake news; officials have accused Rohingya of setting fire to their own villages. Critics, some of whom have called on the Nobel committee to strip Suu Kyi of her prize, are right to take her to task.

Suu Kyi can't single-handedly eradicate anti-Rohingya prejudice, nor does she control the still-powerful Burmese military. But she could at least limit the army's depredations by demanding that civilians be protected and that journalists and U.N. monitors be allowed into the affected area. Her government could send aid for the refugees rather than simply allow countries like Turkey to do so. And she could begin to lay out a narrative that sketches a path to integrating the Rohingya into Burmese society, while implementing the recommendations made by the Kofi Annan-led commission she herself appointed to look into their plight.

She has practical as well as moral cause to act. Unless the military plans somehow to kill or expel the roughly 1 million Rohingya living in Myanmar, its scorched-earth campaign is guaranteed only to breed further resentment. Meanwhile, the indiscriminate response is embittering Myanmar's relations with Muslim nations from Turkey to Indonesia, and has made the Rohingya cause a rallying cry for Islamist extremists across Southeast Asia and beyond.

To fight back, Suu Kyi needs to do more than speak out; she needs to lead more effectively than she's done in the nearly year and a half since she took power. When it comes to the economy in particular, her administration has been plagued by inefficiency and indecisiveness. Though reforms to laws governing investments and companies have begun to move forward, the direction of economic policy remains too murky. Regulations are as stifling as ever; too many policy decisions are delayed by micromanagement. Foreign investment in the last fiscal year shrunk more than 30 percent from the year before.

Unless Suu Kyi's government can reverse this situation and give young Burmese more hope in their economic prospects, they will provide all-too-ready fodder for extremists on both sides of the Rohingya divide. A message of tolerance might be a hard sell right now. But if anyone in Myanmar has the power and (still) the authority to make it, it's Aung San Suu Kyi.

The Washington Post

Rohingya crisis: Is Arsa in Myanmar a group of terrorists or freedom fighters?

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

September 11 at 10:39 AM

More than 300,000 people, most belonging to Burma's Rohingya ethnic group, have fled their country for neighboring Bangladesh. Here's why the crisis is unfolding. How Burma's Rohingya militants are involved in the crisis (Jason Aldag, Max Bearak / The Washington Post)

More than 300,000 people, most belonging to Burma's Rohingya ethnic group have fled their country in to neighboring Bangladesh. Here's why the crisis is unfolding. (Jason Aldag, Max Bearak / The Washington Post)

Over the past 2½ weeks, the coastal borderland between Burma and Bangladesh has become the site of almost incomprehensible misery and suffering.

The United Nations says 313,000 people, most belonging to Burma's Rohingya ethnic group, have fled with nothing but the clothes on their backs to fetid roadside encampments in Bangladesh. They are escaping what many international observers say is a scorched-earth campaign led by the Burmese military to drive an unwanted, mostly Muslim minority from the country, complete with indiscriminate killing, systematic rape and the burning of entire towns.

Despite the evidence — which by Monday had led the United Nations' chief human rights officer to call the atrocities "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" — the Burmese military and government say they are not targeting civilians but rather a group of terrorists that claim to protect the Rohingya but are in fact militants bent on creating an Islamic state in southwest Burma's Rakhine state.

The situation calls to mind the adage: One man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter.

The Rohingya (pronounced ROH-hihn-juh) have been referred to as the world's "most friendless people" and are undoubtedly in need of protection. For decades, they have faced persecution and been denied citizenship in Buddhist-majority Burma, which is also known as Myanmar. With the country's democratic reforms in 2011, ending

half a century of military rule, many in the international community hoped the Burmese government would provide that protection, especially since the nation is led by Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and self-proclaimed pacifist.

[Who are the Rohingya and why are they fleeing Burma?]

But Suu Kyi has no direct control over Burma's military under the new constitution. And she also subscribes to the belief held by many in Burma that the Rohingya are essentially illegal Bangladeshi interlopers, despite evidence of their presence in the region for generations, if not centuries. The Burmese government officially refers to the group as "Bengali."

Burma's government refused a cease-fire offer from Rohingya Muslim insurgents for the sake of the thousands of refugees fleeing the violence. The government said it does not negotiate with terrorists. The U.N. estimates nearly 300,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh. Burma's government refused a ceasefire offer from Rohingya Muslim insurgents for the sake of the thousands of refugees fleeing the violence. (Reuters)

Burma's government refused a cease-fire offer from Rohingya Muslim insurgents for the sake of the thousands of refugees fleeing the violence. The government said it does not negotiate with terrorists. The U.N. estimates nearly 300,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh. (Reuters)

Until recently, Bangladeshis felt similarly about the Rohingya. "Bangladeshis once had hatred for us," a Rohingya man named Mohammed Yunus told the New York Times earlier this year. "They would call us names. They used to say we were Burmese, with a bad tone, and swear at us in different ways. But now they have the idea that we are persecuted."

That idea has spread far and wide, especially among Muslims around the world. Images and testimony shared by Rohingya have galvanized people from Chechnya to Jakarta to come out in mass protest against Burma's treatment of the Rohingya. Bangladesh now hosts 750,000 Rohingya refugees, and the government in Dhaka recently described Burma's actions as "genocide." Only international pressure could persuade Burma to accept most of the refugees back, given that almost none would hold Burmese citizenship.

[More than a quarter-million Rohingya have fled Burma in the past two weeks, U.N. says]

According to an investigation by the International Crisis Group published in December, the plight of the Rohingya has also inspired wealthy individuals in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere to fund a ragtag insurgency. When the report came out, the fledgling Rohingya militancy was known as Harakah al-Yaqin, Arabic for "faith movement." The group now calls itself the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, or Arsa.

Today's WorldView

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Money and weapons are channeled through groups of Rohingya expatriates living in the Persian Gulf and Bangladesh and eventually reach Burma, where local fighters receive training. The ICG report says Arsa has growing popular support among Rohingya in Burma, but the recent crackdown was sparked by a coordinated Arsa attack on multiple Burmese border police posts that killed at least 12 officers last month. On the other hand, the crackdown may inspire many Rohingya to join the militants.

Still, calling the conflict between the military and Arsa lopsided would be an understatement. Arsa probably has a only a few hundred fighters. There is little evidence foreigners have joined the fight. On Sunday, Arsa declared a unilateral cease-fire, hoping to assuage the humanitarian crisis. The Burmese government refused to enter into talks with them.

The Rohingya remain deeply unpopular in Burma, but Arsa's attacks, even if they pale in comparison with Burma's retaliation, only widen the divisions and serve the government's narrative. With the Burmese military essentially treating all Rohingya men as possible terrorists and effectively blocking humanitarian aid, the vicious spiral of persecution and militarization is in full spin.

Weeks after Arsa's coordinated attack on police posts, villages are still ablaze across Rakhine, and more Rohingya now live as refugees in Bangladesh than remain in Burma. One has to ask: Is Arsa helping or hurting the Rohingya?

The New York Times

Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar Is 'Ethnic Cleansing,' U.N. Rights Chief Says

Nick Cumming-Bruce

GENEVA — The United Nations' top human rights official accused Myanmar on Monday of carrying out "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" against Rohingya Muslims, hundreds of thousands of whom have crossed into Bangladesh since late August to escape a military crackdown.

Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, said the military's "brutal" security campaign was in clear violation of international law, and cited what he called refugees' consistent accounts of widespread extrajudicial killings, rape and other atrocities.

Mr. al-Hussein said the crackdown "resembles a cynical ploy to forcibly transfer large numbers of people without possibility of return," noting that Myanmar had progressively stripped its Rohingya minority of civil and political rights for decades.

"The situation seems a textbook example of ethnic cleansing," he said in a keynote address before the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

More than 300,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since Aug. 25, when armed Rohingya militants attacked police posts and a military base in the western state of Rakhine, which borders Bangladesh. The Myanmar authorities said 15 members of the security forces and 370 militants had been killed in the fighting.

'Endless Stream' of Rohingya Flee Military Offensive

"By far the worst thing that I've ever seen." The New York Times reporter Hannah Beech describes a huge exodus of civilians into Bangladesh after a new military offensive against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

By HANNAH BEECH, MALACHY BROWNE, BARBARA MARCOLINI and AINARA TIEFENTHÄLER on September 2, 2017. Photo by Adam Dean for The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

Since then, Rohingya refugees arriving in Bangladesh have told journalists, rights groups and others that soldiers, along with some local residents, had set fire to numerous villages and had butchered Rohingya men, women and children.

Some officials in Myanmar have said that Rohingya had set fire to their own homes and villages. On Monday, Mr. al-Hussein called such accusations a "complete denial of reality" that was damaging the international standing of a leadership that had benefited from considerable good will as the country emerged from decades of military rule.

Mr. al-Hussein's comments added to mounting international criticism of the military's actions in Rakhine. Some of it has singled out Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the de facto leader of the elected civilian government, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her resistance to the military dictatorship. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi does not control Myanmar's military, but she has yet to criticize its crackdown on the Rohingya.

On Friday, the Dalai Lama became the latest Nobel Peace Prize laureate to raise the issue of her silence, following statements from Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and the rights advocate Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan, both of whom called on Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi to take action.

The Dalai Lama told journalists in Dharamsala, India, that those who were persecuting Rohingya "should remember Buddha," a pointed reminder to the Buddhists who make up a majority of Myanmar's population. Some Buddhist nationalists in Myanmar have campaigned for Muslims to be driven out of the country.

The Buddha "would definitely give help to those poor Muslims," the Dalai Lama said.

On Sunday, leaders who had gathered in Astana, Kazakhstan, for a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation issued a statement condemning the "systematic brutal acts" against the Rohingya and asked Myanmar to allow a United Nations fact-finding mission into the country to investigate.

That mission was established after an earlier crackdown in Rakhine, in October, also in response to a coordinated attack on security forces by Rohingya militants. Myanmar's government has refused to cooperate with the mission and has said it will not allow members of the group into the country. The mission is scheduled to report to the

United Nations rights council this month.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is currently led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. His wife, Ermine Erdogan, traveled to Bangladesh with a consignment of humanitarian aid last week, urging the government in Dhaka to keep its borders open for Rohingya refugees.

The militant group blamed for the August attacks, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, declared a unilateral, one-month ceasefire on Sunday, citing the need to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid and urging Myanmar's military to lay down its arms. The government refused, saying it would not negotiate with terrorists.

In his address on Monday, Mr. al-Hussein said he was appalled by reports that Myanmar's military has placed mines along the border with Bangladesh. Amnesty International said on Sunday that it had documented "what seems to be targeted use of land mines" by Myanmar's security forces at crossing points used by refugees.

The rights group said that one civilian near the border had been killed and that three people, including two children, had been seriously injured by mines in the past week.

"This is another low in what is already a horrific situation in Rakhine," said Tirana Hassan, Amnesty's crisis response director.

Editorial : Redirecting Myanmar's dominant faith to peace

September 11, 2017 —According to a global ranking, Myanmar (Burma) is one of the most generous countries in terms of donating and volunteering, a result of a type of Buddhism practiced by a majority of Burmese. Yet this expression of outsize giving is not the image of Myanmar lately portrayed by its military's harsh treatment of the minority Muslims. Is there a way that Buddhists in Myanmar can extend their compassion to the people of another faith?

The simple answer is yes, at least according to the Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of Tibet's Buddhists. On Sept. 8, he said those persecuting Muslims in Myanmar "should remember Buddha," who "would definitely give help to those poor Muslims."

Yet such advice is still not being widely heeded in Myanmar. On Sept. 11, the United Nations accused the military, which controls key parts of the civilian-led government, of carrying out "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" against Muslims, who call themselves Rohingya. Since late August, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have fled the country. The latest exodus is the result of an assault by the armed forces after a new militant group, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, attacked government outposts, killing more than 100.

Many of Myanmar's Buddhists, who have long feared that their faith is in jeopardy, consider Muslims to be "terrorists" or a social threat. They make little distinction between the vast majority of Rohingya who espouse peace and the violent few who have lately turned to fighting discrimination and oppression. A few monks as well as the military have fed off this prejudice to create a brand of "Buddhist nationalism" that mixes the country's religious and civic identities.

The solution, according to a new report by the International Crisis Group, is for Myanmar's civilian government to reframe the place of Buddhism in a democratic society and to set forth a "positive vision." This means that the civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and her National League for Democracy party, must offer a higher moral alternative to young people than that promoted by Buddhist nationalists. These radicals gain support by providing youth with "a sense of belonging and direction in a context of rapid societal change and few jobs or other opportunities...," the ICG report states.

Many Buddhists in Myanmar see their faith as inherently peaceful and non-proselytising. But they also then see it as susceptible to oppression by more aggressive faiths, the ICG points out. This feeling is compounded by Myanmar's colonial history and the rise of militant Islam around the world.

While Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi commands respect and support, she is widely seen as backing liberal ideas promoting minority rights without doing enough to protect the Buddhist faith. Dealing with the historical fears of Buddhists – even though they are more than 80 percent of the population – might help reduce their fears of Muslims.

"In Myanmar's new, more democratic era, the debate over the proper place of Buddhism, and the role of political leadership in protecting it, is being recast," the report states.

The more the government can give people control over their economic destiny, in other words, the less they will look to Buddhist nationalists or cheer military suppression of the Rohingya.

U.S. Deploys Drone to Philippines in Fight Against Islamic State-Linked Militants

Jake Maxwell Watts

The U.S. will deploy one of its most advanced surveillance drones to the southern Philippines, joining other powers in escalating foreign involvement alongside the government's beleaguered forces as a battle with Islamic State-linked militants grinds into a fourth month.

The Gray Eagle Unmanned Aircraft System, an upgraded version of the well-known Predator, will provide surveillance support to the Philippine military, the U.S. Embassy said in a statement Monday. The drone is capable of carrying cameras with infrared capability, radar and missiles and can remain airborne for 25 hours.

The military is struggling to clear an estimated few dozen militants dug in positions in the southern city of Marawi, which was invaded and occupied by hundreds of fighters on May 23 in a dramatic attempt to launch a caliphate, or Islamic state, in a predominantly Muslim part of the southern Philippines.

The ill-equipped military, inexperienced in modern urban warfare, is fearful of inflaming religious tensions if it levels the mosques where the militants have holed up. The military also said it is trying to free an unknown number of hostages. After vowing to launch a final battle two weeks ago, the army was stymied by improvised explosive devices scattered throughout the crumbling neighborhoods once occupied by militants.

A key battle took place late last month over a bridge providing access to the area where the militants are holding out. At least 16 soldiers and 59 militants died in the past two weeks.

For months, military snipers have been trading fire with insurgents hiding in high-rise buildings, in mosques, and in the rubble of houses. The military has been taking back territory house by house, engaged in close-quarter combat as it pushes the militants into an even smaller area.

The prolonged fighting has concerned other countries that Islamic State could gain a new foothold in Southeast Asia after losing its Middle East strongholds, said Richard Heydarian, assistant professor of political science at De La Salle University. If other nations don't come to Manila's aid, he said, "the situation is going to get out of control."

No foreign troops are currently involved in direct combat operations in the Philippines, but several are increasing support. Washington has provided more than $295 million in military assistance to the Philippines over the past three years, including the recent donation of two small manned surveillance aircraft.

Australia announced Friday that it was in discussions with the Philippines to bolster a troop presence it maintains there to provide training and tactical advice. Australia has already deployed two maritime patrol and surveillance aircraft. Singapore, too, has offered the use of a transport aircraft and a detachment of unmanned aerial vehicles for surveillance.

The Philippine military said Monday that its operations in Marawi "remain relentless." Spokesman Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla Jr. told a news conference the military wouldn't negotiate with terrorists.

Gen. Padilla said the militants remain in control of an area of only about 250 square meters, but it includes "among the biggest and thickest buildings. That is what is becoming a challenge for us now."

The military said that more than 650 militants have been killed in the fighting, while 145 soldiers and 45

civilians have also died. Some analysts said they doubt the figures, noting difficulties in distinguishing between militants and civilians.

As much as 90% of the city—formerly with a population of 200,000—has been destroyed, much of it by airstrikes by government forces. Thousands of people remain displaced.

President Rodrigo Duterte's government has sought to accelerate a long-stalled peace process with larger, older rebel groups in the southern island of Mindanao, parts of which have been strongholds of Muslim and nationalist resistance in the predominantly Roman Catholic country for decades. He has advocated for decentralizing power now concentrated in Manila.

"I will tell you now, straight, that there will be no peace in Mindanao for the longest time," Mr. Duterte told a business conference Saturday.

The Washington Post

Editorial : Trump welcomes an authoritarian to the White House

PRESIDENT TRUMP has made a habit of embracing authoritarian rulers he regards as friendly, without regard for their subversion of democratic norms or gross human rights violations. Yet his meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak at the White House on Tuesday sets a new low. Not only is Mr. Najib known for imprisoning peaceful opponents, silencing critical media and reversing Malaysia's progress toward democracy. He also is a subject of the largest foreign kleptocracy investigation ever launched by the U.S. Justice Department.

U.S. investigators have charged that Mr. Najib and close associates diverted $4.5 billion from a Malaysian government investment fund for their own uses, including $730 million that ended up in accounts controlled by the prime minister. Justice first filed civil suits seeking the freezing of some $1.7 billion in assets in the United States, including real estate, artworks and stakes in Hollywood movies; more recently, the department asked that those actions be put on hold while it pursues a criminal investigation. Mr. Najib has not been charged with a crime and denies wrongdoing, but the U.S. investigation prompted speculation in Malaysia that he could be arrested if he set foot on American soil — not good PR for a leader who is obligated to call an election sometime in the next few months.

With his White House invitation, Mr. Trump has neatly gotten Mr. Najib off that hook and provided him with what the regime will portray as a tacit pre-election endorsement. Despite his repression, Mr. Najib could use that sort of help: In the last election, in 2013, his party lost the popular vote and retained power only because of the gerrymandering of election districts.

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If the White House received anything in exchange for that huge political favor, it's not evident. That's particularly unfortunate because Mr. Najib's regime is not only a conspicuous violator of human rights but a relative friend to North Korea. The regime of Kim Jong Un has exported workers to Malaysia to earn hard currency. Kim Jong Un's estranged half brother was murdered in Kuala Lumpur's international airport — so far with no consequences for Pyongyang.

Mr. Trump isn't the first U.S. president to pursue a policy of appeasement toward Mr. Najib. President Barack Obama golfed with the prime minister and flattered him with the first visit by a U.S. president to Malaysia in nearly half a century. Like Mr. Obama, Mr. Trump may imagine that courting Mr. Najib is a necessary counter to China, which has hosted him twice in the past year and wooed him with promises of about $100 billion in investments. Yet Mr. Najib's corruption and disregard for democratic norms mean he will inevitably prefer the values-free patronage of Beijing over alliance with Washington.

The best way for the United States to build a stronger alliance with Malaysia and bolster its independence from China is to encourage those in the country who support liberal democratic values — while holding Mr. Najib accountable for his human rights violations, as well as any financial crimes he may have committed in the United States. If Mr. Trump makes a start at that on Tuesday, he could begin to mitigate the error of inviting Mr. Najib to the White House.

ETATS-UNIS

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Florida Turns to Recovery After Irma (UNE)

Cameron McWhirter, Jon Kamp and Scott Calvert

PUNTA GORDA, Fla.—Hurricane Irma hammered almost every inch of Florida, knocking out power to millions of people while causing wreckage in the Keys and record flooding in Jacksonville, though the state's coasts were largely spared from the catastrophe many had feared.

From Miami to Naples to Tampa, many Floridians said they felt lucky to have avoided the epic flooding they feared when authorities ordered some 6.5 million people—nearly a third of Florida's population—to evacuate, and were relieved to discover their communities weren't wiped out. Few deaths in Florida have been attributed so far to the storm, which killed at least 38 people in the Caribbean, including U.S. territories there. Estimates of insurance losses declined considerably.

But Florida officials still warned of a long recovery ahead after the massive storm barreled up the entire peninsula, dropping heavy rain and causing surging seas. Reconnecting power to most of the state's 20.6 million people may be a mammoth, weekslong undertaking.

Irma wasn't done after crossing out of Florida. The storm knocked at least a million power customers offline in Georgia and the Carolinas, according to local utilities, while flooding downtown Charleston, S.C.

The Keys, where Irma made landfall with Category 4 strength early Sunday, appeared to bear the worst of the storm, with water, power and sewer services knocked out amid scenes of overturned mobile homes and boats thrown on top of each other.

Residents who evacuated there may not be able to return for weeks, President Donald Trump's homeland security adviser warned. And the 10,000 people who stayed behind may need to be evacuated, according to the U.S. Defense Department.

"For our entire state but especially for the Keys, it's going to be a long road," Florida Gov. Rick Scott said Monday after an aerial tour on a Coast Guard plane. "There's a lot of damage."

Most residents on the archipelago evacuated before the storm, according to officials, and many spent Monday in an anguished search from afar for news of holdouts who remained behind.

With phone lines down and the only road to the Keys inaccessible, displaced residents turned to a Facebook page called "Evacuees of the Keys," which had more than 7,000 members and hundreds of pleading posts.

Paul Keever, a 56-year-old evacuee from Key Largo, said that the storm battered his 27-slip sailboat marina. "Boats are setting on top of pilings, boats on top of boats," he said by phone from Orlando, where he had evacuated with his 21-year-old daughter.

Jacksonville, the state's most populous city, was dealing with "record and historical flooding along the St. Johns River," which meanders through downtown, the governor said. Much of the

sprawling city's downtown was under water, and city officials said they expected dangerous conditions to continue for days due to heavy rain, high tides and the overtopping of the river.

Officials also warned that river-flooding from rainfalls of more than a foot remained a threat for the rest of the week.

Irma devastated Florida's power grid, leaving untold numbers in the subtropical state to sweat it out without air conditioning for a repair effort the state's largest investor-owned utility said could take weeks, even with a record mobilization of utility crews on hand.

"We've got to get our hospitals back open. We've got to get fuel back here. We've got to get our roads open. We've got to get everybody their electricity back," Gov. Scott said. "It is going to be a lot of work to get this done."

More than 6.5 million power customers—62% of the state—were without power late Monday, according to a state tally. The massive scale of the outages left some two dozen nursing homes and 54 hospitals relying on backup generators, according to trade groups for the sectors.

Gov. Scott talked about the importance of getting fuel back into Florida's ports to keep those generators running. Two Lee Health hospitals in Fort Myers were without power for a second day Monday with five days of backup diesel, Chief Executive Lawrence Antonucci said.

"We'll have to have power by then or we'll have to get refueled," Dr. Antonucci said.

Tampa's sprawling port, which mainly handles bulk cargo like cars and fuel, was cleared to reopen Tuesday afternoon.

While estimates for insured losses dropped, Irma still could be among the costliest storms. AIR Worldwide estimated private-sector insured losses in the U.S. of $20 billion to $40 billion from Irma, which could rival Katrina's record-setting $50 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars. Still, that was below the more than $100 billion forecast by some firms on Friday.

Brooke Bass, who manages property claims field operations for Liberty Mutual's car-and-home insurance businesses, said more than 500 adjusters are available to deploy to Florida in coming days.

"The condition of Florida is the biggest obstacle" to getting them in place, Ms. Bass said, referring to the post-storm mess.

Many Floridians felt relieved to have dodged the kind of widespread loss that Hurricane Harvey wrought on Texas, where massive evacuations were needed to rescue people from flooding that sometimes left only rooftops peeking above newfound lakes.

"I thought we would be underwater or my roof would be gone," said Debra Rommel, a 65-year-old in Punta Gorda, a small west-coast city devastated by Hurricane Charley 13 years ago. Irma's floodwaters and wind left a mark, but Ms. Rommel's home came through unscathed. "We wound up making out like bandits," she said.

The governor, who has a home down the coast in Naples, also said that part of the coast avoided the worst flooding fears. Mayor Bill Barnett said the same after returning home from sheltering in a hotel. "We can count our blessings," he said.

In Miami-Dade County, where authorities ordered widespread evacuations amid fears of a direct Irma hit, cities were cleaning up debris under a warm sun. Floodwaters from Biscayne Bay receded from Miami's Brickell financial district, leaving pavement caked with mud and small pools of water.

Downed lampposts, trees and street signs carpeted nearby South Beach, but there was little evidence of damage to the hotels, condo towers and bars filling the chic tourist haven at the tip of Miami Beach. At the News Café on Ocean Drive, managing partner Tony Magaldi and some employees worked to get the bar ready to open on Tuesday.

Beyond the sand and dirt coating the sidewalk and a ripped awning, the establishment, already a veteran of Hurricanes Andrew, Katrina and Wilma, appeared little worse for wear.

"We have a nice clean-up to do, and we're back in business," said Mr. Magaldi.

—Arian Campo-Flores, Valerie Bauerlein, Leslie Scism and Melanie Evans contributed to this article.

The New York Times

Damp, Dark and Disarrayed, Florida Starts Coping With Irma's Aftermath

Alexander Burns

Florida emerged from Hurricane Irma on Monday as a landscape of blacked-out cities, shuttered gas stations, shattered trees and flooded streets, while the now-weakened storm kept sweeping northward.

Major streets remained underwater in cities from Miami to Jacksonville, with even more roads snarled by debris. As many as nine million Floridians lost electricity at some point during the storm, and the chief executive of a major utility, Florida Power & Light, said that it could take weeks to restore full service.

Officials were still assessing Irma's impact in the Florida Keys, which may have borne the worst of the storm. After a survey of the islands, Gov. Rick Scott told reporters that he had seen crippling damage there, including countless overturned trailers and many boats washed ashore. Recovery in the Keys would be a "long road," he said.

"I just hope everybody survived," Mr. Scott said. "It's horrible, what we saw."

Later on Monday, the Defense Department said that damage to the Keys was so extensive that it might be necessary to evacuate the 10,000 residents who rode out the storm on the islands.

Three other states — Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama — issued storm and tornado warnings as they prepared for their own brush with Irma, which was downgraded to a tropical depression late Monday as its winds slowed. The Georgia Emergency Management Agency alerted residents to "historic levels of flooding" on the Atlantic Coast and urged people to take shelter, if they had not already evacuated. By Monday afternoon, about a million people in Georgia and South Carolina had lost power.

On Isle of Palms, S.C., a small barrier island and beach destination near Charleston, Irma caused serious flooding on Monday and threatened more extensive damage with the next high tide overnight. Mayor Dick Cronin said most people on the island did not evacuate, because they saw the storm moving westward. He estimated that half the island's roads were at least partially submerged, and some were impassable.

"We're hunkered down and riding it out at the moment," Mr. Cronin said.

Insurance experts began offering projections on Monday for the total cost of the storm's damage, with initial estimates running in the range of $20 billion to $50 billion.

Throughout Florida, local officials implored residents to be cautious about returning to their homes. Conjuring images of surprise floods and electrocution by downed power lines, they asked residents not to misinterpret their state's less-severe-than-expected ordeal as a sign that life could quickly and easily snap back to normalcy.

In harder-hit areas of the state, emergency responders were still in rescue mode, fielding calls from people stranded in cars or in houses with structural damage. In Jacksonville, Mayor Lenny Curry said that neighborhoods could be flooded throughout the week. "We will be moving to a recovery stage soon," he said, "but we are in a rescue stage at this point."

"We need you to heed our warnings," Mr. Curry pleaded. "This is potentially a weeklong event, with water and the tides coming and going."

Jacksonville found itself caught between three water threats, city officials said: High tides, the storm surge driven by Irma's winds and the torrential rains over the weekend that have swollen rivers and streams.

While much of Central Florida was spared the worst of Irma's fury, a low-slung pocket of Orange County, which includes Orlando, woke up to furious flooding. Before dawn, National Guard troops and Orange County Fire Rescue crews worked to rescue nearly 150 people and an unknown number of family pets, in some cases from water that had reached three to six feet.

Urgent calls for help began coming just before 2 a.m. Monday as streets in the area turned to streams. Robert Jenkins and his family were rescued around 9 a.m.

"We woke up to a lake outside in my yard, and three feet of floodwaters inside my man-cave," said Mr. Jenkins, a doughnut maker. "Everywhere you looked, there was water."

On Marco Island, near Naples, where the eye of the storm came ashore on Sunday afternoon, Captain Dave Baer of the island's

police department said that rescuers had pivoted on Monday to what he called "well-being checks," as people who were off the island during the storm inquired about friends and relatives who had not been heard from or who needed assistance.

Some Florida communities that had braced for a severe pummeling escaped with extensive but temporary disruptions, as the storm tracked to the west, avoiding a direct and lingering strike on Miami and largely sparing Tampa and some other cities along the Gulf of Mexico. In Miami Beach, a city of some 90,000 that was under an evacuation order, Mayor Philip Levine said there was a pervasive sense of relief.

"We didn't dodge a bullet, we dodged a cannon," Mr. Levine said on Monday. "And we're very happy about that."

Jake Love, a resident of East Naples on Florida's west coast, returned to his mobile home on Monday to find about a foot of water in his driveway and a piece of his siding bent upward, but no more ruinous damage than that. Mr. Love said he had moved to Florida just a month ago from Minnesota with his parents, and had taken shelter on Saturday night at Temple Shalom in Naples.

When the storm's path shifted to the west, Naples was expected to be among the worst-stricken cities in Florida, but it was spared some of the more severe blows. Mr. Love said he had worried that he might not be able to bring home his father, Richard, who is disabled, but a couple that he befriended at the shelter volunteered their pickup truck to help.

"I was thinking we were going to come back and it was going to be gone," Mr. Love said of his new home. "This is the best I could hope for, for this category of hurricane."

Power losses appeared to be the state's most widespread affliction. In news conferences up and down the state, mayors and utility executives delivered the dispiriting statistics: In densely populated Pinellas County west of Tampa, about 70 percent of Duke Energy's customers, or 395,000 people, were without electricity, with no immediate restoration in sight. Mayor Tomás Regalado of Miami said a similar fraction of his city was dark, with roads left impassable and traffic lights not working. In Orlando, about half the city's utility customers had no service.

At the White House, Thomas P. Bossert, the president's Homeland Security adviser, said repairing the electrical system would require "the largest-ever mobilization of line restoration workers in this country, period."

Medical facilities and nursing homes reported struggles with power supplies. Though utility companies make restoring service to hospitals a priority, some were still lacking normal service on Monday. As of Monday night, 36 Florida hospitals were closed, and 54 were operating on backup generators, according to data from the Florida Department of Health.

Power to Baptist Health South Florida's hospitals in Miami-Dade County was sporadic, and each time the main supply failed, some areas would fall dark for eight seconds before the backup systems kicked in, said Wayne Brackin, the hospital group's chief operating officer.

"We have had significant and continuous power outages in most of the facilities, so we've been running off generators most of the time," Mr. Brackin said.

Emergency officials were contacting nursing homes on Monday to see whether they needed additional fuel for their backup generators or were having mechanical problems. Some of the state's assisted living facilities, which also house people who depend on electrical medical equipment, had no backup generators and said on Monday that they were completely without power.

Overnight from Sunday to Monday, floodwaters rose around a single-story nursing home in Palatka, about 60 miles south of Jacksonville. "We moved, like, 130 people in 15 to 20 minutes from one wing to another wing that wasn't affected by the threat of rising water," said Paul Flateau, battalion chief for Putnam County Emergency Services.

Millions of people in less mortal danger still faced the bleak prospect of doing without air conditioning and electric appliances for days or even weeks to come. Some families took refuge in their cars to escape the heat and humidity, but their vehicular respite may prove fleeting: Many gas stations across South Florida were closed for want of power, fuel or both, leaving some motorists driving for miles in a futile search for gasoline.

Still, areas that had braced for a lethal catastrophe felt lucky to get away with just prolonged discomfort and a mess to clean up.

"We survived pretty well," the mayor of Tampa, Bob Buckhorn, said. "Not a lot of flooding. Tree removal, debris — don't want to say it's negligible, but it's manageable."

The Washington Post

Robinson : The cruelest insult to Harvey and Irma's victims

When, if not now, is the time to talk about global warming and what to do about it? The answer from the Trump administration and the Republican Party, basically, is succinct in its willful ignorance: "How about never? Is never good for you?"

No rational U.S. administration would look at the devastation from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma and seek to deny climate change. At present, however, there is no rational U.S. administration.

We have instead a president and an Environmental Protection Agency chief who refuse to acknowledge the obvious. Thoughts and prayers are welcome at times such as these, but they are insincere if not supplemented by analysis and action. Future megastorms will likely be worse, scientists say; the question for policymakers is to what degree.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

According to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, for scientists to "use time and effort to address" the cause of these massive, anomalous storms would be "very, very insensitive to [the] people in Florida." If I search the archives, I can come up with a few statements from Trump administration officials that are more irresponsible, but not many.

Why did Harvey dump unprecedented, almost biblical amounts of rainfall on Houston and its environs? Why did Irma spend longer as a Category 5 storm than any other Atlantic hurricane on record? Why, for the first time anyone knows of, did we have two Atlantic Category 4 storms make U.S. landfall in the same season? Why did we have two major hurricanes (Irma and Jose) and a third, somewhat lesser storm (Katia) churning at the same time?

As deniers frequently point out, no individual weather event can be definitively blamed on climate change. But the World Meteorological Organization released a statement concluding that "the rainfall rates associated with Harvey were likely made more intense by anthropogenic climate change." And regarding Irma, the WMO cited models showing that "hurricanes in a warmer climate are likely to become more intense."

There are established linkages between a storm's severity and factors such as sea levels, ocean temperatures and the position of prevailing currents such as the jet stream. Global warming has altered all of those parameters.

This is precisely the moment when scientists at the EPA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Weather Service, NASA and other agencies ought to be laser-focused on climate change. They should study the characteristics and impacts of this season's hurricanes to better understand what changes global warming has wrought thus far. And I'm confident they will do so — unless their work is hampered by political hacks.

Climate change never should have become a partisan issue in the first place. There is no red or blue spin on the fact that humans have burned enough fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution to increase the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by more than 40 percent; or that carbon dioxide traps heat; or that global land and ocean temperatures have shot up; or that Arctic ice is melting; or that sea levels are rising. These things are directly measurable and true.

Global warming cuts no slack for political affiliation — as Republican Govs. Greg Abbott of Texas and Rick Scott of Florida now should humbly acknowledge.

But because the GOP cynically positions itself as anti-science, times of trial can *never* be the right time to talk about climate change. Nor can times when there are no storms. We're supposed to wait for the next Harvey, Irma or Katrina — then zip our lips out of "respect" for the victims.

President Trump may sincerely disbelieve the scientific consensus or he may be just pretending — it's hard to tell. He continues to peddle his fantasy of "beautiful, clean coal" and his empty promise to bring back the industry. Maybe he really doesn't grasp that coal was crushed not by government regulation but by the advent of cheap, plentiful natural gas due to fracking.

And maybe Trump doesn't get the fact that the rest of the world recognizes both the environmental and the economic benefits of clean-energy technologies. It is likely, I believe, that at some point there will be world-changing breakthroughs in solar power, battery capacity and nuclear fusion. I hope these advances are made in the United States; I fear they will be made in China, Japan or Germany.

The Trump administration should at least be insisting that coastal communities in Texas and Florida be rebuilt taking climate change into account. Sea- level rise is an unquestioned fact; the cruelest insult to those now suffering would be to pretend it is not.

Editorial : Florida was right to prepare for the worst

NEARLY A week before Hurricane Irma was predicted to make landfall in Florida, Gov. Rick Scott (R) declared a state of emergency for the entire state. State and local officials readied for the storm with promises of help from the federal government. Residents heeded the warnings with one of the largest evacuations ever to occur in the United States. The full damage of Irma, which continued to pose a danger Monday as it made its way north to Georgia and beyond, has yet to be calculated. But it is already clear that things would have been worse if not for that careful preparation.

Irma, the most powerful Atlantic storm in a decade, hit Florida Sunday after leaving a trail of destruction in the Caribbean. More than 6 million homes and businesses in Florida lost power, including most of Miami. Massive flooding was reported in Jacksonville, and the extent of the damage in the vulnerable Keys was not known because many of the islands were inaccessible Monday. At least nine deaths were reported in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, while at least 38 people died in the islands across the Caribbean, where it is feared the death toll will climb as more information becomes available.

Governments in Britain, France and the Netherlands, which oversee Caribbean territories hit by Irma, have come under criticism for an ill-prepared and slow response to the historic storm. "All the food is gone now. People are fighting in the streets for what is left" was the account in the New York Times of a resident of St. Martin. Other factors — the strength of Irma when it hit (Category 5) and flimsy building construction — helped account for the destruction in these hard-hit islands.

Act Four newsletter

The intersection of culture and politics.

So any criticism of Florida officials for taking the storm seriously and planning for all contingencies is misplaced. True, destruction was not as dire as predicted, but better to prepare for the worst than gamble with the lives of residents and visitors and those charged with protecting them. And this was a devastating storm for which there will be a long recovery period. Estimates are only starting to come in, but the economic toll — in disruptions to businesses, increased unemployment, crop losses, and property and infrastructure damage — is likely to be significant, with one forecaster putting the loss at about $100 billion. That is in addition to the $190 billion hit to the economy from Hurricane Harvey.

The magnitude of those losses — the fact of two Category 4 hurricanes within the space of weeks after the hottest year on record — hopefully will wake officials such as Mr. Scott to the need for foresight in preparing for future storms in an era of climate change while putting the economy on a track to slow greenhouse-gas emissions. It is true that single weather events usually cannot be linked definitively to climate change. It is also true that climate change will make such events more common and more severe. As Tomás Regalado, the Republican mayor of Miami, said, "This is a truly, truly poster child for what is to come."

Editorial : In Hurricane Irma's wake, 3 takeaways on the costs

The early response to Hurricanes Harvey and Irma has been encouraging. People around the country have offered their support. And, so far at least, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has not looked as inept as it did after Katrina in 2005.

This is a good thing, because people suffering in Texas and Florida could use all the help they can get. And maybe, just maybe, the relief effort might help change some of this nation's caustic political debate, which is often driven by petty partisan or regional fights, and refocus it on actual problems to solve.

Texas and Florida happen to be low-tax, low-regulation states with histories of resisting Washington. In 2012, when Superstorm Sandy ravaged the Northeast, Republicans from the two states overwhelmingly voted against a relief package. Now they are looking for federal assistance, the price of which will be inflated by state and local policies.

The federal tab for Harvey, for instance, will be greatly increased by Houston's inadequate system for dealing with storm water runoff. And Florida's decision to get into the homeowners insurance business makes it a federal bailout waiting to happen.

People generally don't mind extending a helping hand to their fellow Americans. Just one request for the recipients: Give the bureaucrat bashing and anti-government rhetoric a rest.

Don't lose sight of the crisis in the Caribbean islands

Hurricane Irma was bad enough in Florida, but not as catastrophic as some had feared.

That, unfortunately, was not true of the Caribbean. The top half of the so-called Leeward Islands — including the U.S. and British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and Barbuda, St. Barts and St. Maarten/St. Martin — were hit so ferociously by the Category 5 storm that they look like war zones.

Farther to the west, Puerto Rico and the island nations of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, the Bahamas, and the Turks and Caicos also took significant hits.

At least 34 fatalities have been recorded, with the number likely to grow. The process of rebuilding and restoring livelihoods will take years in some places.

Many Americans might not have fully absorbed the scale of the devastation. Cable news channels, which went pretty much 24/7 in the days leading up to Irma's arrival and then posted reporters out in its wrath as it made landfall, gave relatively little time to the devastation in the Caribbean islands.

This seems odd, because the scenes of destruction in places like Barbuda, more than the admonishments of some reporter, would have provided motivation for people in America to take this storm seriously.

More important, the relative lack of coverage should not be a signal for Americans to ignore the destruction beyond U.S. borders. These islands are our neighbors. For many Americans, they are home to family. For others, they are beloved vacation spots.

Some of the larger islands have significant poverty and cannot easily rebound. And the posh resorts are major employers for people of modest means.

Even as money and resources go into rebuilding Texas and Florida, Americans can afford to donate to relief efforts in the Caribbean. Some of the smaller islands — territories of wealthy nations such as Britain, France, the Netherlands and the USA — can expect significant governmental help. But the sovereign nations of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Antigua and Barbuda will need aid from friendly nations and private donors.

With all the attention paid to Florida from Irma and Texas from Hurricane Harvey, it's important not to lose sight of the crisis in the Caribbean.

Make America's weather model great again

Even as the nation's coastal population has soared, the death toll from storms such as Hurricanes Harvey and Irma has dropped, thanks largely to remarkable advances in weather forecasting.

Four of the five deadliest hurricanes in U.S. history occurred before 1930, including the Category 4 hurricane in 1900 that killed 8,000 in Galveston, Texas. They had just a day's notice that a storm was coming.

Contrast that with the week-long buildup for Irma as it churned through the Caribbean and headed for the U.S. mainland. Weather geeks and non-geeks alike were able to follow every zig and zag on the satellite imagery and latest prediction models.

The two major models, known as the American and the European, adequately forecast Irma's right turn toward Florida. But, as was the case with Superstorm Sandy and other high-profile events, the European model — backed by superior computer power, resources and resolution — performed better overall.

Upgrades to the American model have been in the works. But in weather forecasting as in life, you get what you pay for, and President Trump's budget calls for a 17% cut to the nation's top weather and climate agency.

If you want to make America great again, you might try making the U.S. forecast model better than the one based in England.

The New York Times

Florida Keys Battered but Still Standing After Irma's Rampage

Frances Robles

CUDJOE KEY, Fla. — You pay a price for paradise.

In the Florida Keys, it's hurricanes.

The stretch of highway that leads to the continental United States' southernmost point was riddled Monday with Jet Skis, seaweed, and the occasional refrigerator. In a few places, the ferocious force of water from Hurricane Irma's onslaught Sunday washed-out chunks of the two-lane highway. The National Guard was at work a day later clearing the trees that blocked the road.

The landscape is a seemingly random mix of the lost and the saved — homes and businesses unscathed in the wake of a storm that appeared to pick and choose its targets, taking a roof here and a yacht there, leaving roads littered with random debris.

All of the power and much of the water system is out. The Department of Defense, which is helping with the relief effort, said because of damage to the island and its water system, it may be necessary to evacuate the 10,000 people who did not evacuate before the storm.

Many are in desperate straits.

"There's nothing left for us," said Kris Mills, 38, a disabled combat veteran who lives here, where the eye of the storm passed, about 110 miles southwest of Miami. "Everything that wasn't packed in my truck is gone. We lost it all."

Almost all of the houses where Mr. Mills lives are still standing. Many are on stilts, so residents are likely to be pleasantly surprised when they return to find things still standing. But Mr. Mills lived on the bottom floor, so the storm surge from the canal behind his house soaked everything he had into an ruined mess. Now he is sleeping in a tent in front of the apartment he shared with his sister and six-year-old son.

Asked what he had managed to remove before he fled the storm in advance of the pounding rain, he paused for five impossibly long seconds. He held back tears thinking not about what he had lost, but what he almost did.

"I saved a chest that I've been putting stuff in ever since I was a little kid, pictures of my mom, you know baseball cards and stuff to pass to my son," he said. "But you know. It's part of living here."

"You save what you can, and Mother Nature takes the rest."

From Key Largo to Key West, coastal homes were saturated by a vicious storm surge that rose chest-high, wrecking homes and vehicles, leaving behind a stench of sewage and the sea. The Category 4 storm with sustained winds of 130 miles per hour took most mobile homes, toppling gas station pumps and splitting trees in two.

In Islamorada, north of here, there were similar scenes of desolation and devastation. Although a handful of people wandered about on foot or by golf cart, the streets were eerily quiet, the only noises the rumble of diesel engines or the pitch of a state trooper's siren. Radios crackled, and rescue teams reached for satellite phones, their cell networks deteriorating from fairly strong near Miami to gone by Islamorada.

And in an area where mile markers are both status symbols and landmarks, the devastation varied from mile to mile.

Near the boarded-up Abel's Tackle Box, a newspaper rack and ice machines rested on their sides, hurled by the storm or the authorities to the southbound shoulder of U.S. 1. To the north, a community of mobile homes was in ruins, and trees leaned on the power lines that electrify this chain of islands. In some areas, the lines sank low enough to be in the standing water.

In Cudjoe Key, few people were on the streets Monday because the authorities have not permitted even residents to return to their homes to assess the damage. The only people around were those who rode out the storm at local shelters, and some who were brave – or foolish – enough to confront Irma themselves.

Tim McKee lives at mile marker 52, about an hour from Key West, and had decided to stay behind at the waterfront property he rents. He ran the generators and tightened the straps securing his houseboat as the storm's winds picked up.

"This was not howling. It was screeching," said Mr. McKee, a property caretaker. "I've never heard or seen anything like it again, and I never will."

Officials with Monroe County, which covers the entire Keys, said the area continues to be closed for residents and visitors. Roads remain unsafe from debris, which includes boats, downed trees, downed power lines, sand and washed-out roadway.

The Florida Department of Transportation said that all bridges on U.S. 1 except those on the southernmost 16 miles have been inspected and are safe. They are continuing to inspect the remaining bridges.

All three of the Keys' hospitals remain closed, schools remain closed at least through Friday, and there is still a dawn-to-dusk curfew until further notice, officials said.

Mr. McKee described how he huddled in the bathroom of the three-story concrete house he rents as the water rose. It got higher and higher. He ran downstairs to his workshop to bring his favorite things upstairs. But each time he went downstairs, more of his possessions were gone. The sea had claimed it.

"It was like a mini tsunami," Mr. McKee said. "The water kept coming and coming. It lasted for hours. It was in and out, in and out."

He said he will never hear that sound again, because next time he will seek higher ground, perhaps out of state.

"That's a sound you don't ever want to hear: screaming like a witch or a banshee," he said. "And I survived it."

He did, however, cut his foot on broken glass. "That's another reason it's stupid to stay," he said. "If you get hurt, they can't help you."

The place stinks of the downstairs toilet, because the contents overflowed. But the houseboat docked outside made it, so he has a place to live.

Pete and Wendy Diaz, marine contractors in Key Largo, live several houses away from the shore. But that did not help when the water came.

It seeped into the garage first. That's where Mr. Diaz kept his collection of luxury cars. A 1965 Corvette, which he had just spent $100,000 restoring, was ruined. So was his wife's 2016 Mercedes-Benz, another Corvette and a Harley. He hopes to salvage his classic road bike.

"It's catastrophic for us," Mr. Diaz, 60, said. "We had a foot of water in the house."

The Diazes had heeded calls to evacuate, but when they arrived in Port Charlotte on Florida's west coast, the forecast had shifted. Irma was headed for them again, so they turned back.

"How do you choose when no options are good," he said.

His wife, Wendy, agreed. "I'm living the dream," Ms. Diaz said. "This is the price you pay for living the dream."

It was a sentiment repeated over and over by people as they picked through their soggy belongings.

"There's a price to pay no matter where you live," Mr. Mills said. "I choose hurricanes over anything else, because you have weeks to prepare. But you prepare and you prepare, and it's not ever enough."

More than 12 million without power in Florida as Hurricane Irma's effects linger (UNE)

https://www.facebook.com/markberman

MIAMI — As Hurricane Irma dissipated into a tropical storm on Monday, Florida's residents emerged to streets littered with debris and downed trees while nearly two-thirds of the state was left without electricity.

The once-powerful storm left trailer homes sliced open like ripe melons, boats tossed upside down on roadways and centuries-old trees strewn across power lines. As it trailed off on Monday, Irma's rains caused floodwaters to rise from Jacksonville, Fla., to Charleston, S.C., continuing to impact a massive area of the American southeast.

But it could have been much worse.

That was the grateful mantra on the lips of many on Monday, even as an estimated 12 million Floridians prepared for a dark night without air conditioning in the muggy post-storm swelter. Though there was significant property damage in the Florida Keys and in some parts of southwest Florida, officials said it was remarkable that so far they are investigating just a small number of fatalities that came as the storm made landfall. It was unclear how many were directly related to the storm.

[Why Hurricane Irma wasn't far worse, and how close it came to catastrophe]

The lack of electricity across most of South Florida was the most pressing and crippling problem. Millions could remain in the dark for days or even weeks as utility companies struggle to navigate impassable roads and floodwaters to slowly restore power.

But in the face of cataclysmic warnings and worries — including a mass exodus from Florida's most-populous area — Irma largely spared many of the major cities predicted to be in its path. Some, including Tampa and Orlando, escaped relatively unscathed. Others, such as Jacksonville, experienced unlikely — and record-breaking — effects.

Waters in Jacksonville, in the state's far northeast, sent residents scrambling to the top floors of their houses Monday morning. The St. Johns River, which cuts through the city, overflowed its banks, flooding bridges and streets.

Rescuers used boats, water scooters and even surfboards to get to residents surprised by the rising waters, said Kimberly Morgan, a spokeswoman for the Clay County emergency center. "You have to get creative in a situation like this," she said.

Morgan said that evacuation shelters, which already held 700 people before Monday, we're expected to fill up even more. "We don't think we're going to see the end of this until Friday," she said.

Scores of power lines went down as a result of Hurricane Irma's winds along Corkscrew Road near Estero, Fla. (Michael S. Williamson/The Washington Post)

Authorities warned that it was not yet safe for evacuated residents to return to their homes in many areas of Florida, the threat of floods still looming as rivers swell with rainwater and storm surges continue to send rising ocean waters into towns, especially in northern Florida. And state officials warned that another approaching storm, Hurricane Jose, is pushing still more water toward the northern part of the state.

Gov. Rick Scott (R) called the flooding in Jacksonville "historic" — officials said the city could end up with four feet of standing water — and he warned the many residents still stuck in the dark that "it's going to take us a long time to get the power back up."

Marilyn Miller awoke in St. Petersburg at 1:30 a.m. Monday to a pitch-black house. A native Floridian, Miller was expecting the outages and has even gotten used to them after enduring years of tropical storms.

What she didn't expect, she said, was the possibility that the blackout could last for days.

As neighbor after neighbor on her block tried to call Duke Energy for help, they heard that just 80 homes in their neighborhood had lost power — out of more than 100,000 across Pinellas County.

It became clear, Miller said, that her neighborhood would not be the priority. So she started making readjustments to a time before technology.

"I need my cellphone. It wakes me up in the morning for work. I need my air conditioner at nighttime," she said. "Can't cook. Can't see. Can't do anything."

Officials warned that flooding from Florida to South Carolina could pose a particular danger in coming days. Residents around Charleston, S.C., were urged to avoid the city's downtown until flooding there subsides.

Irma's thrashing winds cut power to two-thirds of all power company customers in Florida, totaling more than 6.5 million customer accounts. Because each account often represents more than one person, the overall number may be historic, said Eric Silagy, president and chief executive of Florida Power and Light (FPL), the state's largest utility, which supplies power to about half of Florida. Silagy said Monday that as many as 9 million people were affected by his company's outages.

Shawna Berger, a spokeswoman for Duke Energy, said 1.2 million of its 1.8 million customers were without power in Florida and noted that if you multiply that number by 2.5 — per the latest census data, she said — that shows that 3 million people were affected.

"We've never had that many outages," Silagy said. "I don't think any utility in the country has."

Beach resident Amela Desanto walks along Fort Lauderdale Beach Boulevard, an asphalt roadway covered with sand, to her condominium on Monday. (Andrew Innerarity/For The Washington Post)

The outages pose a particular issue in Florida, where temperatures in Miami and Tampa are forecast to get into the 90s this week. Silagy warned that some people "could be out of power for weeks," particularly if crews need to rebuild parts of the sprawling electrical system. The utility has sent out 19,500 workers across Florida to restore power and is trying to secure more crews from out of state.

Because of the storm's size, FPL crews were not able to start restoration efforts until late Sunday night, Silagy said. And they are still not able to move across northern Florida, he said, with debris and flooding impeding their way.

The blackouts extended to surrounding states, with more than 146,000 power outages in South Carolina and outages trending upward in Georgia on Monday night as the remnants of Irma passed through.

As a testament to Florida's fortune, Caribbean countries preceding it on Irma's path continued to struggle to recover Monday long after the storm had passed. In Cuba, the hurricane's scissoring winds and strafing rain had torn apart buildings and roofs and sent flooding along the northern coast. The storm ravaged the Virgin Islands, devastated Barbuda and pummeled other islands on its path.

Irma is expected to keep losing force as it continues inland, and forecasters say it should be a tropical depression by Tuesday afternoon. But the storm maintained its remarkable reach, with tropical-storm-force winds reaching more than 400 miles.

As the storm moved inland Monday, it continued pouring torrential rain onto Georgia, the Carolinas and Alabama, where President Trump declared a state of emergency on Monday night.

In Atlanta, Delta Air Lines canceled about 800 flights from its hub operations Monday in anticipation of "strong crosswinds," which could reverberate through the air travel system nationwide. Thousands of flights already have been halted due to the storm. 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 tropical-storm warning.

Rising waters cause boats to sink as Hurricane Irma passes through Key Largo, Fla. on Sept. 10. Rising waters cause boats to sink as Hurricane Irma passes through Key Largo, Fla. on Sept. 10. (Instagram/@enriquesinh)

Rising waters cause boats to sink as Hurricane Irma passes through Key Largo, Fla. on Sept. 10. (Instagram/@enriquesinh)

As the skies began to clear, hordes of evacuees inland began making plans to return home — a mass migration that had Florida officials pleading for patience and more time.

Nearly 6 million people were told to evacuate ahead of Irma, in what is believed to be the largest evacuation in American history.

Many roads remained blocked by heavy trees, authorities warned. Fuel also was a concern, with some seaports closed and tanker trucks unable to refuel gas stations along the homeward path of many residents.

"Wait for direction from local officials before returning to evacuated areas," Scott told evacuees in a tweet.

Driving in many cities remained extremely hazardous — an exercise in vigilance due to downed trees and the ubiquitous palm fronds that lurked in wait like alligators on the street. In Miami, some residents expressed frustration about the evacuations, which in many cases ultimately weren't necessary.

"Everyone got stirred up, and they were told to leave," said Sara Edelman, 29, a biologist walking along 104th Street with her mother, Philis Edelman, 60, an officer worker. "And now there's no one to clean the trees up."

Dan Zumpano, 44, who lives nearby, said he believes authorities began evacuations "way too early" in an abundance of caution, driving people from places that ultimately weren't seriously impacted by the storm into areas that were: "I thought it was the right thing to do, but I think they sent a lot of people right into the core of the hurricane."

That was a familiar story: People who evacuated from Miami to Tampa. And then, in some cases, from Tampa to Orlando. The storm followed many of them the entire time. "Every day you saw the models changing," Zumpano said.

But all along Miami's streets, signs also remained of the hurricane's fury and the tragic possibilities that might have been.

Politics newsletter

The big stories and commentary shaping the day.

Sailboats on Miami's Coconut Grove marina were flipped over. Million-dollar yachts were half submerged in the bay. Once-idyllic parks looked like desolate war zones. Large trees toppled over, roots dangling in the air.

Resident Paul Plante came to the marina to check on his home and boat, which he had docked indoors. His boat was fine, and he and his sister looked in disbelief at the submerged boats in the bay that weren't so lucky.

"You have to take nine different roads to get here now, but everything was okay," he said. "The storm surge could have been so much worse. We're lucky."

The New York Times

Trump Commemorates Sept. 11 Attacks With Vow to Conquer 'Evil'

Glenn Thrush

President Trump led a national moment of silence on the 16th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Monday, the first commemoration for a New York native who has described the destruction of the Twin Towers as a defining event in his political life.

At the White House, Mr. Trump and Melania Trump, the first lady, marked the moment, 8:46 a.m., when the first airliner struck one of the towers, leading to a catastrophic collapse that killed nearly 3,000 people, 343 of them New York City firefighters.

The first couple walked out of the White House at 8:45 a.m. A minute later, a bell tolled as they stood near a group of White House staffers and invited guests who bowed their heads as a Marine trumpeter played taps. The president and first lady placed their hands over their hearts and walked silently back into the residence at 8:48 a.m.

A short time later, during a ceremony at the Pentagon, Mr. Trump said, "Though we can never erase your pain or bring back those you lost, we can honor their sacrifice by pledging our resolve to do whatever we must to keep our people safe." He was joined by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"On that day not only did the world change, but we all changed," Mr. Trump said. "Our eyes were opened to the depths of the evil we faced, but in that hour of darkness we also came together with renewed purpose. Our differences never looked so small, our common bonds never felt so strong."

Mr. and Mrs. Trump gathered on the South Lawn with White House staff members for a moment of silence on Monday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

Mr. Trump said the country was committed to "destroying the enemies of all civilized people."

He added: "We are making plain to these savage killers that there is no dark corner beyond our reach, no sanctuary beyond our grasp, and nowhere to hide anywhere on this very large earth."

The moment of silence was also observed at the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon and a field near Shanksville, Pa., where one of four planes hijacked by Islamic militants crashed out of a nearly cloudless early-autumn sky.

It came on a day when emergency medical workers were engaged in rescue and recovery efforts in Florida and the Gulf Coast in Texas to deal with the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey, two huge storms that have stretched the resources of federal emergency management officials also responsible for protecting the nation from terrorist attacks.

Mr. Trump offered prayers to those affected by the storms.

"These are storms of catastrophic severity, and we're marshaling the full resources of the federal government to help our fellow Americans in Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and all of those wonderful places and states in harm's way," Mr. Trump told the crowd gathered in front of the section of the Pentagon, now rebuilt, that was destroyed by the hijackers in 2001. "When Americans are in need, Americans pull together — and we are one country. And when we face hardship, we emerge closer, stronger and more determined than ever. We're gathered here today to remember a morning that started very much like this one."

Vice President Mike Pence represented the administration at an observance at the Sept. 11 memorial in Shanksville.

The president, who was running his family's real estate empire in 2001, at first praised President George W. Bush's response to the attacks, initially supporting the invasion of Iraq before turning sharply against the war and Mr. Bush.

He has often criticized other politicians for failing to grasp the threat posed to the homeland by jihadists but has often repeated the false, unsubstantiated claim that Muslims in New Jersey danced in celebration as the towers tumbled.

The New York Times

Editorial : Want to Make a Deal, Mr. Trump?

Was President Trump's bipartisan hurricane relief/debt ceiling/government funding deal last week simply a "bipartisan moment," as the House speaker, Paul Ryan, put it? Probably, given this president's pattern of poor impulse control and of reverting to base politics. But it's tempting nevertheless to imagine what Mr. Trump might achieve if he could see beyond momentary, tactical wins. Hints of bipartisan consensus are popping up in Congress around enough significant issues to suggest that a determined, strategically minded president — yes, we know, but bear with us — could strike a number of important deals.

The legislation Mr. Trump signed on Friday provides $15 billion for hurricane and flooding victims and includes measures to keep the government funded until Dec. 8, instead of Sept. 30, and to extend the nation's borrowing authority. The extension delays the type of Tea Party-led showdown over spending and debt that has shut down the government before, but it also forces Republicans to engage in this politically damaging fight on the eve of an election year.

Mr. Trump struck this bargain under the disapproving noses of his party's own leaders, Mr. Ryan and the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, in an Oval Office meeting with his new pals "Chuck and Nancy": the Senate minority leader, Chuck Schumer, and the House minority leader, Nancy Pelosi. Gleeful at media coverage of his shockingly bipartisan move, Mr. Trump called Mr. Schumer last week to talk about keeping up the good work. So how could these unlikely allies actually make headway? Here are a few areas where capital insiders believe progress is possible:

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM This season's devastating hurricanes in two states that voted for Mr. Trump make this an obvious prospect. Last week's deal granted an extension until December of this inefficient, heavily indebted program, which was set to lapse on Sept. 30. Given that

Florida and Texas will require billions in payouts, this is a ripe moment for Congress and Mr. Trump to get behind an overhaul of an outmoded program that does nothing to discourage people from building, and rebuilding, in areas prone to catastrophic flooding. They could take steps to put the program on firmer financial footing by better tying premiums to risk, buying out homes susceptible to repeated catastrophic flooding, updating mapping to reflect current climate and flooding patterns, and helping policyholders finance improvements, like raising their homes, that would reduce payouts later.

HEALTH CARE Congress must vote by Sept. 30 to extend the Children's Health Insurance Program, which provides coverage for nine million low-income children. Democrats see the legislation as a vehicle for an amendment to extend for a year Affordable Care Act subsidies that reduce deductibles and co-pays for lower-income enrollees. Conservatives would normally have little interest in this, but state governors of both parties are demanding that Congress extend the A.C.A. subsidies now. Insurers must sign Obamacare participation contracts by Sept. 27, and action before then would encourage insurers to re-up, and help stabilize rates. Senator Lamar Alexander, chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, favors extending the subsidies. Instead of following through on his threat to blow up Obamacare by withholding them, Mr. Trump could sign on, and choke off a pointless partisan fight on an issue he's already lost.

DREAM ACT Mr. Trump's announcement last week that he intends to rescind President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals order, protecting 800,000 young undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children from deportation, was widely unpopular. The DACA program will now expire in six months, plunging these immigrants into limbo, and so far, Congress has done nothing but talk about helping them. Democrats see some hope in Mr. Trump's seeming lack of commitment to his own draconian edict — last week, "Nancy" persuaded him to tweet reassurance to those affected. It's a slim reed, but they hope he will pressure Republicans to act on the Dream Act, a 16-year-old proposal to resolve these immigrants' legal status permanently. Republicans, no doubt aware how it would look to subject 800,000 young people to deportation in a congressional election year, say they're working on it, but on Monday the Senate Judiciary Committee postponed a hearing on the issue. Congress is deeply divided over immigration policy, but the DACA deadline should stir decisive action.

As difficult as those items might be, there are other, tougher possibilities.

INFRASTRUCTURE In February, Democrats called Mr. Trump's bluff on his promise for a $1 trillion infrastructure spending program by sending him an outline proposal. The response? Radio silence. Mr. Trump has no plan, only vague suggestions of spurring investment through tax incentives. Democrats want direct spending. For that to happen, Mr. Trump would have to roll even more Republicans than he did on Friday. Given his lack of preparation, it doesn't look likely, but this is one job-creating promise his voters should expect him to keep.

TAX REFORM Mr. Trump has said he will cut taxes for working Americans, but so far, the White House has released only broad principles, including some, like tax cuts for the wealthy, that Democrats will not accept. House Republicans on the Ways and Means Committee were working to write a major tax-cut bill to avoid closing 2017 without a single big legislative win. That's looking like a pipe dream, and for Mr. Trump to move what he says is a top priority, he needs a plan that at least some Democrats can support. "Chuck and Nancy" want a plan that doesn't add to the deficit and that includes the promised middle-class tax cuts and a modest trim to corporate tax rates financed through closing tax law loopholes. They don't want tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans. A compromise will be long, if ever, in coming.

Mr. Trump and his new Democratic friends could work on more. They could raise spending caps set to kick in next month by matching increases in military spending that Republicans want with increases in domestic spending that Democrats favor. They could back a proposal to automatically increase the debt ceiling, ending perennial partisan battles over what used to be a routine vote essentially recognizing the debts Congress has already incurred.

They could agree that a "wall" on the Mexican border is a dumb idea and focus on fixing the broken immigration system (that's a *real* dream — Mr. Trump has threatened to shut down the government over spending on the wall).

Given the continuing Russia investigations, bipartisan bitterness, the limitations of the legislative calendar and Mr. Trump himself, we have no real reason to expect his bipartisan impulse to harden into practice. But we still hope that the president who has said making deals is how "I get my kicks" might want to turn last week's one-off into a streak.

POLITICO

'Everybody Needs to Stand Up'

By EDWARD-ISAAC DOVERE

To House Republicans who don't like the funding deal President Donald Trump made with Democrats, Rep. Will Hurd has a message: Get yourself together, or quit complaining.

Otherwise, get used to the feeling of watching the Republican president brag about how much he's getting done with Chuck and Nancy.

Story Continued Below

"If we're not in agreement on what the topic is going to be or what we want to achieve, then guess what? You're probably not going in with a strong hand," Hurd told me in an interview for the latest episode of POLITICO's Off Message podcast. "I think rank-and-file members need to understand that there is a team aspect to politics."

Hurd is in a weird spot—imagine being a Republican in Congress who likes government to do things and brags about how many of his bills Barack Obama signed, as opposed to the many members of his conference who want to stop government from doing things. Imagine being a Republican from Texas who supported this debt-ceiling deal, but thinks Congress needs to get serious about enforcing it in the future—"you give that up, you're basically giving up your responsibility," he says. Imagine representing a border district and being against the border wall, but for a rapid legislative fix on Trump's announced canceling of DACA. Then throw in being a black Republican who's still upset that Trump "created doubt" about where he stands on neo-Nazis—that's what it's like to be Will Hurd.

"In situations like this, you've got to be very clear and you've got to stand up," Hurd advises Trump when asked how he should have handled Charlottesville. "It's 2017."

Hurd boasts of the regulatory reforms that have passed through Congress this year as big accomplishments, but he's not signing on to Trump's claims of having signed more major legislation than any president ever. "I have not had my interns fact-check that yet," he says, sarcastically.

Nor is Hurd a fan of Trump's decision to end protections for Dreamers—even as he admits that it will likely force Congress to move on an issue that's been languishing for five years, since then-President Obama created the program.

"Having this clock ticking over their head, that creates angst and nervousness that I don't want anybody to have to go through," Hurd says. "But the reality is, we're here, Congress needs to do its work."

As the son of a white mother and black father—he remembers being a child in the 1970s when his father, a traveling salesman, still couldn't stop at every hotel and every restaurant in Texas—Hurd says he feels a special obligation to speak up about issues of race, but he's confused why more aren't joining him. "Everybody needs to stand up," Hurd says.

There are all of three black Republicans in Congress (Utah's Rep. Mia Love and South Carolina's Tim Scott round out the group). But almost as rare on the Hill is that other category Hurd falls into: He's a moderate. With Rep. Charlie Dent (R-Penn.) retiring, and other endangered Republicans joining him, there's a potential opening for a larger role for Hurd, now 40 and in his second term.

First, he'll have to get re-elected. Hurd is in one of 23 districts that Democrats are salivating over—those represented by a Republican, but won by Hillary Clinton last year. But he doesn't seem particularly worried. At least not yet.

But Democrats are lining up, though former Rep. Pete Gallego, whom Hurd beat twice, has opted against another try. Gina Ortiz Jones, a former Air Force intelligence office, has jumped in against him, pitting her military background against his oft-mentioned nine years as a CIA analyst. National Democrats are most excited about Jay Hulings, a former Hill aide, assistant U.S. attorney with a record of public corruption prosecutions and Harvard Law school classmate of

Julián and Joaquín Castro, the star twins of Texas Democrat politics who are backing him. Both of his parents served in the CIA. Huling is trying to rip apart Hurd's moderate image, calling him "a smiling face on an extreme agenda."

Hurd projects confidence, though he's mindful that in 2016 he won his heavily Hispanic district—which stretches from outside El Paso to San Antonio—by a whisker. Clinton beat Trump there by 4 percentage points.

So Hurd talks up bipartisanship, and likes to bring up his friendship with Beto O'Rourke, his Democratic House colleague from Texas, with whom he took a 35-hour, 1,600-mile road trip from San Antonio in March, livestreaming it the whole way.

But he'll only take it so far. O'Rourke is running around the state, making the kind of windmill-chasing Senate run against Ted Cruz that Democrats always say someone should do, but few actually attempt.

Don't expect Hurd to endorse O'Rourke any time soon. "Beto is a friend. Ted is a friend. And Beto knows this: He has a long way to go," Hurd says. "I do not think our junior senator is changing in this next election. But the competition of ideas is a good thing."

Asked what he made of that comment, O'Rourke in a phone interview on Monday acknowledged his long odds and chalked it up to "Will just being candid."

The only thing the two men have ever promised each other, O'Rourke says, is to keep an open mind on the possibility of working together on legislation, and that he'll be sitting out saying anything about Hurd's re-election bid himself.

"To maintain our working relationship," O'Rourke says, "he can't see me as an opponent or think I'm trying to politically undermine."

Asked if he'd sit out the Senate campaign, Hurd says, "yeah," but the analyst in him can't resist a subtle dig at his cross-aisle friend. "Look, I think everybody knows who's going to win that election," he says. "So I wish them both a great contest."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Editorial : Trump, Taxes and the Democrats

President Trump is elated with the media applause for his new political condominium with Democrats Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi, and it is amusing to see sudden praise from the same circles that claim he's unfit for the Presidency. If Mr. Trump endorses Medicare for all, maybe they'll put him on Mount Rushmore.

But anyone who thinks this really heralds a brave new world underestimates the current polarization in American politics. Democrats might be able to deal with Mr. Trump if the President embraces their agenda. But then he's going to have a heck of a time getting anything through this Republican Congress. On tax reform in particular, there's little potential common ground.

Recall that Mr. Trump didn't negotiate with Democrats last week. Like a first-time home buyer, he accepted their first offer. His concession was mainly on process, delaying for three months a fight over government spending and the debt ceiling—as part of a $15.25 billion hurricane relief bill. Yet even that split the GOP, passing the House 316-90 and the Senate 80-17. All the nays were Republicans, who think Mr. Trump handed Democrats greater leverage for showdowns in December.

Mr. Trump seems to be warning Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan that he can turn to Democrats if they can't get things done. But turn to them for what? Infrastructure spending is a possibility, except that Mr. Schumer wants all of it to be public money, not a private-public bond issuance. An immigration deal might have a chance, assuming Mr. Trump abandons his wall on the Mexican border. What else?

The December showdown will tee up another fight over the size of government. Does Mr. Trump think Mr. Schumer and Mrs. Pelosi will sign off on his spending increase for the Pentagon? Or steep cuts for the EPA? Even if Mr. Schumer were willing, the antipathy that grass-roots progressives feel for Mr. Trump won't let Democrats compromise on much.

The same holds for tax reform, which Mr. Trump says is his top priority. Mr. Schumer and 44 Senate Democrats stipulated their conditions for tax cooperation in a letter this summer: No tax cut for the wealthy, no increase in the deficit, and no use of the 50-vote budget reconciliation process. Only three Democrats didn't sign that letter: Heidi Heitkamp (N.D.), Joe Manchin (W.Va.) and Joe Donnelly (Ind.).

Yet Mr. Trump says he wants a large tax cut, including a corporate tax rate of 15% from the current 35%, and big tax cuts for "the middle class" and small "pass-through" businesses that pay at the individual tax rate. Democrats might go along with the middle-class tax cuts, but those won't help the economy.

The lowest corporate tax rate that Barack Obama would consider is 28%, which isn't nearly low enough to cause corporations to change investment plans. With Ireland at 12.5% and Britain headed for 17%, the U.S. needs to get to 20% to lift investment enough to spur growth to raise incomes. Will Mr. Schumer go along with that?

As for not adding to the deficit, that requires eliminating tax loopholes and using "dynamic" revenue scoring that assumes faster growth from the tax cut. Democrats aren't likely to go along with either one. They want to raise tax rates on investment income, but that is also a growth killer.

The best chance to win Democratic support is if the GOP and Mr. Trump move to eliminate the state-and-local tax deduction. Then Democrats from high-tax states might want to deal on the corporate rate in a trade for retaining the deduction. But after routing Republicans on health care, Democrats for now seem to believe they can defeat tax reform simply by claiming it's a tax cut for the wealthy.

Which means that if the President really wants Democratic votes on tax reform, he'll have to prove first that he has 50 Republican votes to pass it in the Senate. Only then will Ms. Heitkamp or Mr. Manchin come along to pad the victory margin and neutralize a 2018 campaign issue. They'll never agree to be the 50th vote to pass a bill because that would mean courting the wrath of anti-Trump voters on the left. They'd have to switch parties.

Mr. Trump has few policy convictions, and if Democrats win the 2018 elections we can see him cutting deals in the next Congress to blow out spending, impose price controls on drugs, raise tariffs on China, and maybe even Medicare for all. But if Mr. Trump wants tax reform in this Congress, he'll need Republican votes. Chuck and Nancy won't help him unless he surrenders to their vision of tax reform—which means a tax increase.

The New York Times

Editorial : Time to Restrict the President's Power to Wage Nuclear War

Jeffrey Bader and Jonathan D. Pollack

For the first time in a generation, there is widespread anxiety about the possibility of nuclear war, stimulated by the extreme tensions between North Korea and the United States. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has advised Americans that they can sleep safely at night, a reassurance that most people probably wish they did not need to hear.

Mr. Tillerson offered his soothing counsel to deflate media hype about recent threats and counterthreats exchanged between Pyongyang and Washington. His words also reflect profound unease about the temperament and judgment of the two leaders who could trigger inadvertent war: President Trump and Kim Jong-un.

Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim appear to believe that bombast serves their domestic needs. Both seem to think that they can dominate and intimidate through the direst of threats. However, words can easily have consequences that neither leader seems to grasp.

Should we be living in a world where two leaders can stumble into a nuclear holocaust? North Korea's accelerated pursuit of nuclear weapons clearly requires a much-enhanced containment and deterrence policy by the United States and its allies to prevent Mr. Kim from undertaking ever-riskier options. But what can be done to constrain the actions of an American president whose stability is now openly questioned, even by the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bob Corker of Tennessee?

To limit the possibilities of an almost unimaginable conflict, there is a need to pursue a long overdue legislative remedy.

Under Article I of the Constitution, only Congress can declare war. Yet

during America's numerous wars since World War II, presidents have never sought such authorization. The major reason? Nuclear weapons. There was widespread agreement that the president needed maximum flexibility to respond to a Soviet attack and that involving Congress would cause undue delays in a moment of crisis. As a result, the president has had essentially unchecked power to wage war, including launching a nuclear strike.

However, strategic planners understood the risks of enabling a single officer in a silo in North Dakota, perhaps under the most stressful conditions imaginable, to initiate a nuclear strike. The nuclear command-and-control system therefore entailed a "two key" system requiring simultaneous actions by two officers to activate a launch.

The time is long overdue to introduce comparable checks at the highest levels of the executive branch. The strategic circumstances faced by the United States today are altogether different from those during the Cold War. Despite heightened tensions triggered by Russian revanchism in Ukraine and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, the real risk of nuclear war emanates from a rogue actor, and North Korea heads the list. Almost casual presidential invocations of fire and fury have rendered circumstances far more dangerous.

The United States should in no way diminish its ability to respond to a nuclear or conventional attack by North Korea against United States territory or the territory of an ally. However, we should put in place a system of constraints to ensure that a preventive or pre-emptive nuclear strike by the United States must be evaluated through a careful, deliberative process.

Congress should therefore amend the War Powers Act to cover the possibility of preventive or pre-emptive nuclear strikes. This would ensure that the president could not simply provide the codes to his military aide carrying the nuclear "football" and launch such an attack on his own authority.

Legislation should provide for a small group of officials, possibly including the vice president, the secretary of defense, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the four leaders of the House and Senate, to give unanimous consent to any such nuclear strike. It would ensure that multiple sets of eyes, equipped with stable emotions and sound brains, would be able to prevent such a nuclear strike undertaken without appropriate deliberation.

This proposal would raise difficult constitutional questions. All presidential administrations have deemed the War Powers Act to be unconstitutional. Giving officers appointed by the president and subject to his direction formal veto power over military decisions could be problematic and precedent setting. If so, confining the veto power to the congressional leadership might be a preferable alternative.

Even during the Cold War, there was great risk in ceding to one person the ability to kill millions in a flash. There is no good reason to enable an American president to retain absolute authority in circumstances completely unlike those faced during the Cold War.

Assurances that nuclear weapons remain an option of absolute last resort, to be considered only after the concurrence of leaders from the executive branch and from the Congress, would also calm the nerves of United States allies deeply troubled by loose talk about the resort to nuclear weapons.

This is not to suggest that President Trump nurses some secret desire to launch a nuclear attack. However, the United States needs to act very prudently in dealing with an isolated and uniquely adversarial state. For its part, Congress has the power to prevent hair-trigger responses or impulsive actions that could lead to nuclear war.

Five memorable moments from Hillary Clinton's newest book

THE HILL

Amie Parnes

Clinton has said the book is the story of "what I saw, felt and thought during two of the most intense years I've ever experienced."

Here are five of the most memorable anecdotes shared by Clinton in her book.

Obama urged Clinton to run

President Obama signaled to Clinton early on in 2013 and 2014 that she should run for president.

"He made it clear that he believed that I was our party's best chance to hold the White House and keep our progress going, and he wanted me to move quickly to prepare to run," Clinton wrote.

She wrote that Obama's support meant a ton to her.

"I knew President Obama thought the world of his Vice President, Joe BidenJoseph (Joe) Robinette BidenFive memorable moments from Hillary Clinton's newest book Clinton looks for rewind button in 'What Happened' Biden speaks with student activists on DeVos rewrite of sexual assault guidance MORE, and was close to some other potential candidates, so his vote of confidence meant a great deal to me."

Clinton sought guidance from Bush on inauguration

As she decided whether to show up for President Trump's inauguration, Clinton sought advice from a surprising source: former President George W. Bush.

Bush had his own family disagreements with Trump, who had ridiculed his brother Jeb Bush during the GOP primaries.

But he advised Clinton to go to the inauguration, arguing it was for the good of the country.

"That gave me the push I needed," Clinton wrote. "Bill and I would go."

Bush was also the first to call Clinton after she delivered her concession speech and waited on the line while she hugged and thanked her supporters.

When Clinton finally came to the phone, the former president "suggested we find time to get burgers together. I think that's Texan for 'I feel your pain,' " Clinton wrote.

Clinton thought Chaffetz was Priebus

You'd think Hillary Clinton would know what former Rep. Jason ChaffetzJason ChaffetzFive memorable moments from Hillary Clinton's newest book Clinton says she mistook Chaffetz for Priebus at Trump's inauguration Curtis wins GOP primary for House seat vacated by Jason Chaffetz MORE (R-Utah) looks like.

The Utah congressman had long sought to make a political issue of Clinton's handling of the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, which resulted in the deaths of four Americans.

Yet Clinton wrote that she mistook Chaffetz for Trump chief of staff Reince Priebus when he approached her on Inauguration Day.

Chaffetz captured the moment on Twitter, posting a photo of the two that said: "So pleased she is not the President. I thanked her for her service and wished her luck. The investigation continues."

Clinton said she didn't know who Chaffetz was and thought he was Priebus.

After the Chaffetz tweet, she admitted that she "came this close" to tweeting back at the congressman: "To be honest, I thought you were Reince."

That wasn't the only awkward encounter with a critical Republican.

During the lunch at the Capitol following the swearing-in ceremony, Clinton also described a scene where Trump's soon-to-be Interior secretary, Ryan ZinkeRyan Keith ZinkeFive memorable moments from Hillary Clinton's newest book Zinke on Irma: 'Leave no neighborhood behind' Fox News host asks if 9/11 memorials will come down next MORE, introduced Clinton to his wife.

Clinton wrote that she was surprised that Zinke would want her to meet his better half, "considering in 2014 he had called me the 'antichrist.' "

"You know Congressman, I'm not actually the anticrist," she said she told Zinke. He was "taken aback," Clinton wrote, and "mumbled something about not having meant it."

Loyalty pays off

After then-FBI Director James Comey said they had reopened an investigation to examine emails found on former Rep. Anthony Weiner's (D-N.Y.) laptop, Clinton wrote that some people thought she should fire longtime adviser Huma Abedin, Weiner's wife.

"Not a chance," wrote Clinton. "She had done nothing wrong and was an invaluable member of my team. I stuck by her the same way she has always stuck by me."

In the end, it's Bill and Hill

In the wee hours of the morning on election night, after everyone left the Clinton suite, the former secretary of State wrote that she and her husband were alone.

"I hadn't cried yet, wasn't sure if I would. But I felt deeply and thoroughly exhausted, like I hadn't slept in ten years," Clinton wrote. "We lay down on the bed and stared at the ceiling. Bill took my hand and we just lay there."

Will Donald Trump Destroy the Presidency?

Jack Goldsmith

Donald Trump is testing the institution of the presidency unlike any of his 43 predecessors. We have never had a president so ill-informed about the nature of his office, so openly mendacious, so self-destructive, or so brazen in his abusive attacks on the courts, the press, Congress (including members of his own party), and even senior officials within his own administration. Trump is a Frankenstein's monster of past presidents' worst attributes: Andrew Jackson's rage; Millard Fillmore's bigotry; James Buchanan's incompetence and spite; Theodore Roosevelt's self-aggrandizement; Richard Nixon's paranoia, insecurity, and indifference to law; and Bill Clinton's lack of self-control and reflexive dishonesty.

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"Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm," James Madison wrote in one of the *Federalist Papers* during the debates over the ratification of the Constitution. He was right, but he never could have imagined Donald Trump.

At this point in the singular Trump presidency, we can begin to assess its impact on American democracy. The news thus far is not all bad. The Constitution's checks and balances have largely stopped Trump from breaking the law. And while he has hurt his own administration, his successors likely won't repeat his self-destructive antics. The prognosis for the rest of our democratic culture is grimmer, however. Trump's bizarre behavior has coarsened politics and induced harmful norm-breaking by the institutions he has attacked. These changes will be harder to undo.

Trump, in short, is wielding a Soprano touch on American institutions. "I'm fucking King Midas in reverse here," Tony Soprano once told his therapist. "Everything I touch turns to shit."

The Framers of the Constitution wanted to create a powerful, independent executive branch, but they didn't want to stoke fears that the new United States would replicate the monarchy from which it had just separated. Confident that George Washington would be the first chief executive and would use his power responsibly, they established an unstructured office with ambiguous authorities. Article II vests the president with "executive Power," but it doesn't define the term, and it gives the president only a few rather modest enumerated powers.

These vague constitutional contours allowed the presidency to grow, in response to changes in society and the world, into a gargantuan institution that the Framers never could have foreseen. The president's control over the bully pulpit, federal law enforcement, and the national-security establishment has made the office the dominant force in American government and a danger to constitutional liberties. The flexible structure of the office has meant that it is defined largely by the person who occupies it—his character, competence, and leadership skills. Great presidents, such as Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, exercised power wisely (though controversially) to lead the nation through crisis. But Richard Nixon debased the office and betrayed the Constitution and our laws, while others, like Ulysses S. Grant and Warren G. Harding, allowed the executive branch to become engulfed in corruption and scandal.

"He is unlikely to be contained by norms and customs, or even by laws and the Constitution."

This was the background to the near-hysterical worries when Trump became president. During the campaign, he pledged to act in illegal ways; expressed illiberal attitudes toward freedom of speech, religion, and the press; attacked immigrants and minorities; tolerated, and even incited, thuggery at his rallies. The man who on January 20, 2017, took a constitutional oath to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States" seemed disdainful of the rule of law and almost certain to abuse his power. "He is unlikely to be contained by norms and customs, or even by laws and the Constitution," wrote Peter Wehner, a circumspect Republican commentator, in *The New York Times* the day after Trump's inauguration. Wehner captured, in an understated way, prevalent fears about Trump's presidency.

Thus far, however, Trump has been almost entirely blocked from violating laws or the Constitution. The courts, the press, the bureaucracy, civil society, and even Congress have together robustly enforced the rule of law.

Trump's initial executive order on immigration—a temporary ban on entry for people from seven Muslim-majority countries that were not obvious sources of terrorist activity inside the United States—was widely seen as his first step toward authoritarianism. Issued seven days into his presidency, the ban was sloppily written, barely vetted inside the executive branch, legally overbroad, and incompetently rolled out. The administration gave the people subject to the ban's edicts no notice, which led to bedlam at airports. Many observers believed the immigration order indulged the "symbolic politics of bashing Islam over any actual security interest," as Benjamin Wittes of the Brookings Institution put it at the time.

Mike McQuade

A crucial moment occurred during the week after Trump issued the order. Civil-society groups such as the ACLU quickly filed habeas corpus petitions asking federal courts to enjoin the order in various ways, which they did. For several days, it was unclear whether border agents were complying with the injunctions, and rumors that Trump or his Department of Homeland Security had ordered them not to filled the news. When a federal district-court judge in Seattle named James Robart halted the entire immigration order nationwide in the middle of the afternoon on Friday, February 3, Twitter and the cable shows were aquiver for several hours with the possibility that Trump would defy the court.

"What would happen if the administration were to simply ignore this court order and continue to deny people entry?," MSNBC national correspondent Joy Reid asked her guests on *All In*. Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson, who had brought the case against Trump, treated the question as a live possibility. "I don't want to be overly dramatic, Joy," he said, "but you would have a constitutional crisis."

The hardest question in American constitutional law was suddenly raised: Why does a president, who controls what Alexander Hamilton described as "the sword of the community," abide by a judicial decision he abhors?

Trump wouldn't have been the first president to flout a court order. Six weeks into the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln defied a ruling by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney that the president lacked the authority to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, and Franklin Roosevelt threatened to ignore the Supreme Court in a World War II case involving Nazi saboteurs. But during the next few decades, judicial authority solidified. Though many worried that Nixon would disobey the Supreme Court in 1974 when it ordered him to turn over his incriminating tapes to a special prosecutor, Nixon famously acquiesced. Would Trump?

We can imagine that he didn't want to. We can imagine him ranting deliriously after Robart issued his decision. But at 10:05 p.m., the White House put out a statement declaring that the Justice Department would seek to stay the "outrageous order," which meant that the executive branch would pursue review in higher courts. And 10 hours later, at 8:12 a.m., the incensed chief executive tweeted the first of many attacks against Robart. "The opinion of this so-called judge, which essentially takes law-enforcement away from our country, is ridiculous and will be overturned!," Trump wrote. He would appeal, rather than defy, Robart's injunction.

We don't know why Trump acquiesced. Perhaps his staff convinced him that ignoring the ruling would spark resignations in the White House and the Justice Department, as well as congressional reprisal, which would jeopardize his two-week-old presidency. Whatever the reason, the most powerful man in the world complied with the edict of a little-known federal trial judge on an issue at the top of his agenda. The Constitution held.

The still-unfolding Russia investigation is a second context in which checks and balances have worked well thus far. The possibility that the president's inner circle might have colluded with our fiercest adversary to sway the 2016 election, or might have other inappropriate ties to Russian interests, is the most serious instance of potential presidential malfeasance since Watergate. In trying to influence the investigation, Trump has acted much like Nixon did. He has pressured his senior intelligence and law-enforcement officials to help clear his name and fired the original lead investigator, FBI Director James Comey. Unlike Nixon, Trump has also publicly attacked just about everyone

involved in investigating him. And yet every institution has stood firm.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions made his boss furious by following the Justice Department's rules and recusing himself from the matter because of his involvement in the Trump campaign. Many feared that the FBI's investigation would flounder when Trump fired Comey. But the opposite happened. Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, another Trump appointee, angered the president but also followed the rules in appointing a special counsel, the esteemed former FBI director Robert Mueller, to investigate the matter. Mueller has assembled a formidable squad of prosecutors and investigators and impaneled a grand jury.

Trump has sharply criticized Sessions's and Mueller's roles in the Russia investigation, raising concerns that he might fire one or both. (As of press time, he had not done so.) But such a step would not take the heat off him any more than canning Comey did. Firing Mueller in particular would be almost exactly like Nixon's infamous order to dismiss the Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox, known as the "Saturday Night Massacre," and it would invite the same heightened suspicion and blowback as befell Nixon. Justice Department leaders would face pressure to appoint a new and undeniably independent special counsel, who would have every incentive to replicate Mueller's aggressive investigation.

Past presidents have broken norms, too. But Trump's norm-breaking is different, both in scale and intent. (Joe Raedle / Getty)

The Republican-controlled Congress would also likely act. Many believe Congress hasn't done enough to stand up to Trump. But in the context of facing a Republican president in his honeymoon first year, it has been remarkably tough. This summer, by large bipartisan majorities, it passed a law imposing sanctions on Russia that Trump abhorred and that curbed his power. Congress has also shown backbone in investigating the Trump campaign's connection to Russian election meddling. The Senate Intelligence Committee has been conducting a "notoriously bipartisan" investigation, as *The Washington Post* put it. Representative Devin Nunes of California, the chair of the House Intelligence Committee, appeared to be in Trump's pocket and trying to delegitimize the committee's investigation. But the press uncovered his shenanigans, Nunes stepped aside, and the House has since been pursuing the matter more seriously. Republican senators also rose to Sessions's defense when Trump openly attacked him, and they have signaled strong support for Mueller. These efforts reflect unusual Republican distrust of a Republican president, and would surely ramp up if Trump fired Sessions or Mueller.

A symbiotic relationship between the bureaucracy and the press has also exposed abuses and illegalities. National-Security Adviser Michael Flynn's lies about his Russian contacts were leaked and reported, and forced his resignation. When *The New York Times* published a leaked draft of an executive order that would have restored CIA authority for black sites and enhanced interrogation, the outcry in Congress and elsewhere killed the order. Trump and his family have not yet been brought to heel on their business conflicts of interest. Checks have been weakest here, but that is mainly because the Constitution and laws are ambiguous on such conflicts, and are not designed for judicial enforcement. Nonetheless, several imaginative lawsuits have been filed against Trump and his associates, and the press has done a good job of bringing conflicts to light.

In these and other ways, actors inside and outside the executive branch have so far stymied Trump's tendencies toward lawlessness. One might even say that in the first year of his presidency, Trump has invigorated constitutional checks and balances, and the nation's appreciation for them.

Trump has been less constrained by norms, the nonlegal principles of appropriate behavior that presidents and other officials tacitly accept and that typically structure their actions. Norms, not laws, create the expectation that a president will take regular intelligence briefings, pay public respect to our allies, and not fire the FBI director for declining to pledge his loyalty. There is no canonical list of presidential norms. They are rarely noticed until they are violated.

Donald Trump is a norm-busting president without parallel in American history. He has told scores of easily disprovable public lies; he has shifted back and forth and back again on his policies, often contradicting Cabinet officials along the way; he has attacked the courts, the press, his predecessor, his former electoral opponent, members of his party, the intelligence community, and even his own attorney general; he has failed to release his tax returns or to fill senior political positions in many agencies; he has shown indifference to ethics concerns; he has regularly interjected a self-regarding political element into apolitical events; he has monetized the presidency by linking it to his personal business interests; and he has engaged in cruel public behavior. The list goes on and on.

Presidential norm-breaking is neither new nor always bad. Thomas Jefferson refused to continue the practice begun by George Washington and John Adams of delivering the State of the Union address in person before Congress, because he believed it resembled the British monarch speaking before Parliament. For the next 112 years, presidents conveyed the State of the Union in writing—until Woodrow Wilson astonished Congress by addressing it in person, a practice that once again settled into a norm. Wilson's novel step was part of a broader change from the 19th century, when giving policy speeches before the public was rare and controversial for a president, to the 20th century, when mass oratory became a routine tool of presidential leadership. Although the Constitution allowed presidents to serve for more than two consecutive terms, no one did so until Franklin Roosevelt won a third term, in 1940. Roosevelt tried but failed to break another norm when he sought to increase the number of Supreme Court justices in order to secure more favorable interpretations of his New Deal programs.

Trump is far less hypocritical than past presidents—and that is a bad thing.

These and countless other examples show that presidential norm violations have often been central to presidential leadership. Even if presidents don't always get the calculation right (Roosevelt's court-packing plan was and remains almost universally derided), they usually break norms to try to improve the operations of government.

Trump's norm violations are different. Many of them appear to result from his lack of emotional intelligence—a "president's ability to manage his emotions and turn them to constructive purposes, rather than being dominated by them and allowing them to diminish his leadership," as the Princeton political scientist Fred I. Greenstein has put it. Trump's behavior seems to flow from hypersensitivity untempered by shame, a mercurial and contrarian personality, and a notable lack of self-control.

A corollary to Trump's shamelessness is that he often doesn't seek to hide or even spin his norm-breaking. Put another way, he is far less hypocritical than past presidents—and that is a bad thing. Hypocrisy is an underappreciated political virtue. It can palliate self-interested and politically divisive government action through mollifying rhetoric and a call to shared values. Trump is bad at it because he can't "recognize the difference between what one professes in public and what one does in private, much less the utility of exploiting that difference," Henry Farrell and Martha Finnemore have noted in *Foreign Affairs*. He is incapable of keeping his crass thoughts to himself, or of cloaking his speech in other-regarding principle.

Among Trump's countless norm violations: giving an overtly political speech at the National Scout Jamboree, in July (Saul Loeb / Getty)

Commentary about Trump's behavior has tended to assume that presidential norms, once broken, are hard if not impossible to restore. This can be true, but in Trump's case isn't. Presidents don't embrace their predecessors' norm entrepreneurship unless it brings political advantage, and Trump's hasn't. His successors are no more likely to replicate his self-destructive antics than they would be if he yelled at the first lady during a public dinner or gave a televised address from the White House Rose Garden in his bathrobe.

Another reason presidential norms will prove resilient is that Trump's aberrant actions have been sweepingly condemned. He has been rebuked for his attacks on investigatory independence not just by his political opponents but by more-sympathetic voices in the Republican Party and on the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, and even, implicitly, by his own Justice Department appointees, who have continued the Russia investigation despite his pushback. Trump's response to the violent demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August produced a uniform outcry that will reinforce norms for future presidents about denouncing racism and racial violence. The majority of the other presidential norms that Trump has defied will similarly be strengthened by the reactions to his behavior, and will snap back in the next presidency.

But that doesn't mean virtuous norms will hold elsewhere.

During the presidential campaign, Trump gave his challengers derogatory nicknames. Hillary Clinton was "Crooked Hillary." Jeb

Bush was “Low-Energy Jeb.” Ted Cruz was “Lyin’ Ted.” And Marco Rubio was “Little Marco.” Trump’s taunts exceeded the bounds of campaign decorum but generated attention and helped distinguish him from the stale, conventional elite wisdom reflected by other candidates in both parties. (Norm-breaking helped him more during the campaign than it has in the presidency.)

Two days before Super Tuesday, on February 28, 2016, Rubio decided to fight back. “Have you seen his hands?,” Rubio asked the audience at a rally at Roanoke College. “You know what they say about men with small hands.” The college students loved the juvenile humor, and Rubio briefly got the increased cable coverage he sought. But he had sacrificed his integrity, and his campaign collapsed. Immediately after the remark, “Rubio’s aides were besieged with dazed and irate missives from donors, allies, and friends” because his “reputation as conservatism’s upbeat, optimistic standard-bearer—so meticulously crafted over so many years—was dissolving before their eyes,” Tim Alberta reported in *National Review*. Rubio later admitted that the gambit had been a mistake, and apologized. “I didn’t like what it reflected on me,” he said. “It embarrassed my family. It’s not who I am.”

What happened to Marco Rubio on the campaign trail is now happening to a variety of American institutions. These institutions have risen up to check a president they fear. But in some instances, they have defied their own norms, and harmed themselves and the nation in the process. Unfortunately, many of these norm violations will be hard to reverse.

Mike McQuade

Since the day of Trump’s election, members of the federal bureaucracy have taken unusual steps to stop him. Soon after November 8, online guides for how to “resist from below” or to “dissent from within” the administration popped up. During the transition, and continuing after the inauguration, federal employees who were repulsed by the new president and his agenda discussed strategies to hide or alter documents, leak damaging information, and slow down the process of changing government policy. “You’re going to see the bureaucrats using time to their advantage,” an anonymous Justice Department official told *The Washington Post* in January. “People here will resist and push back against orders they find unconscionable.”

These tactics had been used before; clashes between the governing class and a new administration are not uncommon. But the scale of the effort, and especially how it was coordinated, was new. “Federal workers are in regular consultation with recently departed Obama-era political appointees about what they can do to push back against the new president’s initiatives,” *The Washington Post* reported. Federal employees used encrypted communications to avoid detection by the president’s team, and a number of anonymous Twitter accounts attributed to government officials—@Rogue_DoD, @alt_labor, and the like—cropped up to organize resistance and release damaging information about the administration.

Leaks are not new, but we have never seen anything like the daily barrage of leaks that have poured out of Trump’s executive branch. Not all of them have come from bureaucrats; Trump appointees have engaged in leaking too. But many of the leaks appear to have come from career civil servants who seek to discredit or undermine the president. And many involve types of information that have never been leaked before. In August, *The Washington Post* published complete transcripts of conversations Trump had had with the prime minister of Australia and the president of Mexico. These leaks were “unprecedented, shocking, and dangerous,” as David Frum wrote for *The Atlantic*’s website. “No leader will again speak candidly on the phone to Washington, D.C.—at least for the duration of this presidency, and perhaps for longer.”

The most-harmful leaks have been of information collected in the course of surveillance of Russian officials. The first, in February 2017, concerned a December 2016 court-approved National Security Agency wiretap of a phone conversation between the Russian ambassador to the United States, Sergey Kislyak, and the incoming national-security adviser, Michael Flynn, that included a discussion of U.S. sanctions against Russia. (This was the leak that exposed Flynn’s lies and led to his resignation.) Other leaks by current and former intelligence officials have involved intercepts of Russian government officials discussing “derogatory” information about Trump and his campaign staff; of other Russian officials bragging that they could use their relationship with Flynn to influence Trump; of Kislyak claiming to have discussed campaign-related issues with then-Senator Sessions; and of Kislyak reporting to Moscow that Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, wanted to establish a secure communication channel.

The leaks of Russia intercepts may seem commonplace, but they violated taboos that had been respected even in the wild west of unlawful government disclosures. The first was a taboo against publishing the contents of foreign intelligence intercepts, especially ones involving a foe like Russia. It is hard to recall another set of leaks that exposed so much specific information about intelligence intercepts of a major adversary. This form of leaking risks compromising a communication channel and thus telling an adversary how to avoid detection in the future. The Russia leaks may well have burned large investments in electronic surveillance and constricted future U.S. surveillance opportunities.

The Russia leaks also breached a taboo against revealing information about U.S. citizens “incidentally collected” during surveillance of a foreign agent. The government acquires this type of data without suspicion that the citizen has engaged in wrongdoing, and thus without constitutional privacy protections. For this reason, it is typically treated with special care inside the government. The gush of this information to the public was an astounding breach of privacy. It also violated yet another taboo—against using intelligence information for political ends. In the bad old days when J. Edgar Hoover ran the FBI, the bureau regularly leaked (or threatened to leak) secretly collected intelligence information about U.S. citizens, including government officials, in order to influence democratic politics. The intelligence reforms of the mid-1970s and beyond eliminated this pernicious practice for four decades and were believed to have created a culture that would prevent its recurrence. The anti-Trump leaks mark a dangerous throwback.

These norm violations are an immune response to Trump’s attacks on the intelligence community. But the toll from the leaks has been significant and may outlast the Trump presidency. Although a future president likely won’t find advantage in following Trump’s example, intelligence officials who have discovered the political power of leaking secretly collected information about Americans may well continue the practice. A world without norms to prevent the disclosure of sensitive information about U.S. citizens is not just a world in which Michael Flynn is revealed as a liar and removed from office. It is also a world in which intelligence bureaucrats repeat the trick for very different political ends that they deem worthy but that might not be.

Trump has not attacked the U.S. military while president, but he has taken a wrecking ball to customs of civilian–military relations. More than other presidents, he has staffed senior positions with current and former military brass. He has attempted to leverage popular admiration for the military into backing for his policies, such as by signing his initial executive order on immigration in the Pentagon’s Hall of Heroes and by giving political speeches before military audiences. He has even urged soldiers to contact members of Congress in support of his policies, contrary to regulations and customs forbidding them from lobbying. These practices threaten to politicize the military and leave “tattered shreds of the military’s ethics and values in their wake,” Phillip Carter of the Center for a New American Security wrote for *Slate*. Even if future presidents don’t repeat Trump’s practices, he will have done great harm if attitudes change within the military toward the chain of command and the appropriateness of service members’ engagement in politics.

Trump is also politicizing the judiciary. He has accused the judges reviewing his January immigration order, and a replacement order he signed in March, of trampling presidential prerogatives and endangering national security. But the judges reviewing Trump’s orders engaged in norm-breaking behavior of their own.

Courts have always been political, in the sense that laws and precedents don’t always yield obvious answers and, especially in high-stakes cases, judges’ personal views can matter. But it is important to judicial legitimacy that judges appear neutral and detached, that they appear to follow precedent, and that they appear to pay presidents appropriate deference and respect. This is especially true in cases touching on immigration and national security, where the executive branch’s authority is at its height.

In the Trump immigration cases, the judges sometimes abandoned these norms. They were in a tough spot because they were reviewing extraordinary executive-branch actions in a highly charged context. But they reacted with hasty and, in some ways, sloppy judicial opinions. They issued broad injunctions unsupported by the underlying legal

analysis. They seemed to extend constitutional protections to noncitizens who lacked any connection to the United States. And they failed to give the government's national-security determinations proper deference.

The judges had many avenues to rule against Trump on many issues, especially with regard to the first order. They had plenty of reasons to be angry or defensive because of his tweeted attacks. But they neglected principles of restraint, prudence, and precedent to rule against him across the board based on what seemed to many a tacit determination that the just-elected president lacked legitimacy on immigration issues.

If judges were to continue such behavior for four or eight years, judicial norms and trust in the judiciary might take a serious hit. But there are reasons to think this won't happen. Federal judges sit in a hierarchical system with the Supreme Court at the top. The highest court in the land doesn't just overrule lower-court legal decisions; it can also model proper judicial behavior. This is what the Supreme Court did in its opinion in late June announcing that it would review the lower-court decisions about Trump's second immigration order. The nine justices rarely agree on any issue of importance. But they unanimously ruled that, at a minimum, the lower-court injunctions were too broad and had failed to take his national-security prerogatives seriously enough.

The Court did not indicate how it will ultimately rule. But its sober, respectful, low-temperature opinion sent a strong signal about the importance of judicial detachment. For this reason, the judiciary has a fighting chance to return to normal patterns.

The same cannot be said of the norms that govern the news media. Journalistic practices, of course, were already evolving as a result of social media, the decentralization of news production, and changing financial models. But Trump has had a distinct effect.

The vast majority of elite journalists have a progressive outlook, which influences what gets covered, and how, in ways that many Americans, especially outside of big cities, find deeply biased. The press was among the least trusted of American institutions long before Trump assaulted it as the "enemy of the people" and the "lowest form of life."

Members of the media viewed these attacks, correctly, as an effort by Trump to discredit, marginalize, and even dehumanize them. And they were shocked when the strategy worked. "The country was really angry at the elite, and that included us, and I don't think we quite had our finger on it," Dean Baquet, the executive editor of *The New York Times*, said with exquisite understatement during a roundtable discussion with his reporters in June.

Reporters are "binge-drinking the anti-Trump Kool-Aid," Bob Woodward says.

After the election, news organizations devoted more resources than ever to White House coverage, and they have produced exceptional in-depth reporting that has been integral to the constitutional checks on the presidency. Reporting on a flagrantly norm-breaking president produces a novel conundrum, however. A Harvard study found that Trump's mainstream coverage during the first 100 days of his presidency "set a new standard for negativity": four negative stories for each positive one and no single major topic on which he received more positive than negative coverage. Many Trump critics insist that his behavior justifies this level of adverse scrutiny. But even if that is true, the overall effect can make the press seem heavily biased and out to get Trump. "Every time he lies you have to point out it's a lie, and there's a part of this country that hears that as an attack," the *New York Times* media columnist, Jim Rutenberg, said at the June roundtable. "That is a serious problem." Trump's extremes require the mainstream press to choose between appearing oppositional or, if it tones things down, "normalizing" his presidency. Either way, Trump in some sense wins.

The appearance problem that Rutenberg described is real. But it is also true that many reporters covering Trump have overreacted and exaggerated and interjected opinion into their stories more than usual. In doing so, they have veered from the norm of "independence" and instead are "binge-drinking the anti-Trump Kool-Aid," as the venerable Bob Woodward argued in May. Such excesses lend credence to Trump's attacks on "the fake-news media."

So, too, do other changes in the norms of covering the president. Many journalists let their hair down on Twitter with opinionated anti-Trump barbs that reveal predispositions and shape the way readers view their reporting. And news outlets have at times seemed to cast themselves as part of the resistance to Trump, and seen their revenues soar. (It cannot be an accident that *The Washington Post*'s "Democracy dies in darkness" motto, though used in-house for years, was rolled out publicly in February.) Just as Trump drew energy and numbers on the campaign trail from the excessive coverage of his norm-busting behavior, the news media seem to draw energy and numbers from their own norm-busting behavior.

But while Trumpism has been good for the media business, it has not been good for overall media credibility. An Emerson College poll in February indicated that more voters found Trump to be truthful than the news media, and a Suffolk University/*USA Today* poll in June concluded that the historically unpopular president still had a slightly higher favorability rating than the media. Trump is not just discrediting the mainstream news, but quickening changes in right-wing media as well. Fox News Channel always leaned right, but in the past year several of its programs have become open propaganda arms for Trump. And sharply partisan outlets like *Breitbart News* and *The Daily Caller* have grown in influence among conservatives.

"Does it ever go back?" chief White House correspondent Peter Baker asked his *Times* colleagues. "Have we changed something in a fundamental way in terms of the relationship between the person in the White House, people in power, and the media?" The answers to those questions are no and yes, respectively. The media have every incentive to continue on their current trajectories. And because Trump's extreme media-bashing is perceived to have served him relatively well, other Republicans will likely perpetuate his strategy. Many on the right increasingly agree with a point Ron Unz, the influential former publisher of *The American Conservative*, made in a memo last year. "The media is the crucial force empowering the opposition and should be regarded as a primary target of any political strategy," Unz wrote. "Discrediting the media anywhere weakens it everywhere."

Citizens' trust in American institutions has been in decline for a while. That's one reason Donald Trump was elected. His assault on those institutions, and the defiant reactions to his assault, will further diminish that trust and make it yet harder to resolve social and political disputes. The breakdown in institutions mirrors the breakdown in social cohesion among citizens that was also a major cause of Trumpism, and that Trumpism has churned further. This is perhaps the worst news of all for our democracy. As Cass Sunstein lamented in his book *#Republic*, "Members of a democratic public will not do well if they are unable to appreciate the views of their fellow citizens, if they believe 'fake news,' or if they see one another as enemies or adversaries in some kind of war."

To that depressing conclusion I will add another. The relatively hopeful parts of the analysis offered here—that the Constitution has prevented presidential law-breaking, and that most of Trump's norm violations will not persist—rest on a pair of assumptions that have so far prevailed but that might not hold in the future. The first is that Trump's presidency, which has accomplished little, will continue to fail and that he will not be reelected. But it is conceivable that he will turn things around—for example, by pulling off tax and infrastructure reform and putting Kim Jong Un in a box—and win the 2020 election, perhaps in a three-way race. If Trump succeeds and makes it to a second term, his norm-breaking will be seen to serve the presidency more than it does today. If that happens, the office will be forever changed, and not for the better.

The second assumption is that the country is fundamentally stable. In Trump's first seven months in office, the stock market boomed and the United States faced no full-blown national-security crisis. But what if the economy collapses, or the country faces a major domestic terrorist attack or even nuclear war? What if Mueller finds evidence that Trump colluded with the Russians—and Trump fires not just Mueller but also scores of others in the Justice Department, and pardons himself and everyone else involved? These are not crazy possibilities. The Constitution has held thus far and might continue to do so under more-extreme circumstances. But it also might not.