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FRANCE - EUROPE

**The
New York
Times**

Macron Faces First Big Street Protests, a Challenge to His Labor Overhaul

Alissa J. Rubin and Aurelien Breeden

PARIS — Thousands turned out Tuesday for mass demonstrations intended to protest the country's new labor code, but by day's end the anger seemed directed more specifically at its author: President Emmanuel Macron, whose ambition for change has unnerved many in France.

The rallies were the first major street protests faced by Mr. Macron, and a barometer of the public's reaction to him. The crowd size was about what had been expected, and smaller than demonstrations last year against changes in labor laws.

But they nonetheless indicated the challenges ahead for Mr. Macron, who has seen his popularity plunge since he upset France's political landscape in May by winning the presidency and creating a new political party, which won a majority of seats in Parliament.

On Tuesday, Mr. Macron was nowhere near the protests, but rather was visiting the French islands of St. Martin and St. Barthélemy in the Caribbean after they were hit by Hurricane Irma last week. Still, the president was ever-present in the streets.

He, rather than any specific change to the labor code, was the most frequent target of criticism, particularly over what has been perceived as a dismissive and insulting attitude toward workers. That included recent remarks that were interpreted as implying that

opponents of his labor law were lazy.

Toting signs and chanting, people seemed more preoccupied with Mr. Macron than with the law. "Macron you are rotten, the slackers are in the streets," some chanted at rallies in Paris.

The taunt played on remarks Mr. Macron made last week in Greece, saying he was determined not to cede anything, "neither to slackers, nor to cynics, nor extremists."

Although Mr. Macron didn't specify exactly to whom he was alluding with the remark, he later claimed that he meant "all of those who for the past 15 years have said we mustn't move in France and in Europe." Many opponents of his changes nonetheless felt personally outraged and aggrieved.

"I've been working for the past 32 years. I wake up everyday at 5 a.m. I'm no slacker and my work is hard," Serge Amely, 50, a nurse's aide, said at the demonstration on Tuesday, adding that he felt the comments were "unworthy" of a leader.

In addition to union members, some supporters of the far-left France Unbowed movement, which is headed by the former presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, also turned out for the march.

Their focus, too, appeared to be less the labor law and more the future belt-tightening that Mr. Macron has promised, as well as his style of governing.

Organizers said they would stage more demonstrations in the coming weeks — the next one on Sept. 23. That leaves open the possibility that numbers in the streets could build.

More than 60,000 people demonstrated in Paris on Tuesday, according to unions, who called the protests a success. The Paris police prefecture said the figure was closer to 24,000. There were smaller protests in more than 180 cities, towns and communities around France.

The overall mood was calm, though law enforcement officials used tear gas and protesters sometimes threw rocks during sporadic clashes on the fringes of the main march in Paris. Last year, weeks of protests against similar labor changes were sometimes marred by violence.

The changes to the labor code would loosen regulations for small companies, make it easier to hire and fire employees, and enable businesses to negotiate certain workplace issues at the company level rather than having to abide by industrywide agreements.

Mr. Mélenchon said on Tuesday that Mr. Macron "can and must back down."

"This isn't our last stand," Mr. Mélenchon told reporters at a demonstration in the southern city of Marseille, part of the area he represents in the lower house of Parliament. "We are organizing a relentless defense of the labor code."

But the government is not expected to budge. Mr. Macron is enacting the overhaul to the labor rules by decree, and the changes are expected to be implemented this month.

Undercutting the protests' impact are union divisions, with only one major union mounting full-throated opposition.

Only the hard-line General Confederation of Labor, or C.G.T., called on its members to demonstrate on Tuesday. Several other major unions chose to compromise with the government and try to shape its policies to make them more acceptable to workers.

Alain Cure, a 66-year-old elementary-school principal in Paris and a union member, said it was "important to show that we, as union workers, are united."

Mr. Cure, who was waiting for a march to start on the Place de la Bastille in Paris, said that although the labor overhaul would not affect him, it was important to send a message ahead of other planned changes. Mr. Macron's government is also planning to overhaul France's pension and unemployment systems.

"If Macron passes the reforms, then he will have more powers to pass further reforms," Mr. Cure said.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

French Protests Take Aim at Macron's Labor Reforms

William Horobin

PARIS—French President Emmanuel Macron faced his first street protests as a far-left union led strikes and demonstrations against his plans to shake up the labor code.

The CGT union on Tuesday organized almost 200 rallies around the country against laws Mr. Macron plans to sign this month that would reduce financial risks for companies laying people off and make it easier to negotiate working conditions with

employees. But, in a favorable early sign for Mr. Macron, the other major unions didn't participate in the demonstrations.

"It is a considerable retreat for worker rights and a generalized destabilization of labor," said Antoine Girard, an unemployed theater worker at a march in Paris.

Thousands of people set out from the city's landmark Bastille column, chanting and shouting. Police estimated that 24,000 people attended the protest in Paris.

The demonstrations are a test for Mr. Macron as he embarks on contentious changes to welfare, taxes and pensions. He has said the moves are necessary to address low growth and high unemployment after his predecessors backed away from overhauling worker protections when faced with strikes and protests.

Mr. Macron is hoping he can use success at home to push for broader changes in the eurozone.

The French president is facing slumping polls amid public skepticism of his policies, but he has notched some victories. Of the five largest unions that officially represent employees in bargaining agreements, only the CGT's leadership has called for strikes. In addition, the CGT hasn't struck an alliance with far-left political groups, which are planning a separate demonstration on Sept. 23.

The 39-year-old leader said the new measures are necessary to encourage companies to hire by

giving them more flexibility to adjust their workforces in difficult times. The proposal would enable small companies to strike deals on pay and conditions with their employees, without having to negotiate with unions. The measures also include a cap on fines for unfair dismissals and a limit on the time workers have to appeal layoffs.

The CGT said the measures will increase joblessness and instability. "This is the first step of a mobilization to make people aware of what's at stake," CGT leader Philippe Martinez said of the protests. The CGT has called for more strikes and demonstrations on Sept. 21.

Mr. Macron, meanwhile, was in the Caribbean visiting victims of

Hurricane Irma on the island of St. Martin.

The French president hopes to persuade other eurozone countries to put their taxpayers' money into a shared budget to counter economic shocks, but said France must first show it is an asset and not a liability for the currency bloc by addressing its own economic problems.

The French leader has made a series of missteps that have hurt his approval ratings. Surveys show French voters oppose austerity measures and what they see as Mr. Macron's authoritative style, which was blamed for a budget spat with the army in July and the departure of the head of the armed forces.

Last week, the French leader drew fire from rivals when he said he would push through overhauls and cede no ground to "the lazy, cynics and extremists." Mr. Martinez described the remarks as "scandalous." On Monday, Mr. Macron stood by his comments, which he said referred to past governments.

"Those who think we have the luxury to do nothing and remain seated are making a profound error," Mr. Macron said.

The centrist CFDT union—the largest by membership—has said it is disappointed with the plans but won't join the protests. Force Ouvrière, a leftist union that has regularly protested alongside the

CGT, also is staying on the sidelines this time.

But small groups from the moderate unions still showed up on Tuesday.

Laurent Saulnier, an information technology worker in the CFDT union, said he joined the protests because Mr. Macron had "crossed red lines" with the cap on fines for dismissals and by opening the possibility for new types of work contracts that would end when a project is completed. He said he expects unions to put up more resistance in the future.

"There aren't a million people in the street but all the unions are represented," Mr. Saulnier said.

Bloomberg

Giugliano : For Europe, There Are No Shortcuts to Fiscal Union

Ferdinando Giugliano

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker made clear in his State of the Union speech today that he wants more Europe, including an expanded euro zone club. That will require a degree of economic and financial integration Europe currently lacks. The central question, with German elections nearly two weeks away, is whether Berlin will finally agree to the creation of some form of fiscal union, which would help member States deal with economic shocks before these turn into full-fledged crises.

One optimistic take is that this question may not matter all that much. Even if Germany continues to refuse to pool tax revenues to fund measures such as a joint unemployment benefit scheme, there are other ways to ensure that risks are spread more evenly across the euro zone. In particular, the speedy completion of the banking union and the creation of the EU's capital markets union can ensure that private investors from across the monetary union take a hit when a country suffers a shock. So long as governments do not step in to

cover these losses, the argument goes, the euro zone can thrive without a fiscal union.

The main appeal of this view is that it appears politically realistic. Last week at a conference in Brussels organized by the economic think tank Bruegel, the consensus seemed to be that we should not expect a great leap forward once a new government is in place in Berlin. "Is everybody around the table ready to accept a delegation of power to the European level? For these kind of steps to be taken now, it is a difficult period of time," said Belgian Finance Minister Johan Van Overtveldt, pouring water over the idea that greater integration, particularly on the fiscal front, may be just behind the corner.

But the problem with any "private" solution to the completion of the monetary union is that there is little sign that governments and regulators are truly open to the idea of domestic investors taking sizeable risks in the rest of the euro zone. Moreover, some politicians continue to find it hard to resist the urgency to bail out investors, especially in the case of banks. The "doom loop" between lenders and sovereigns is still alive.

The amount of financial integration at the European level is, unfortunately, still unsatisfactory. Data from the European Central Bank show that the amount of cross-border financial transactions within the euro zone has not recovered after collapsing during the sovereign debt crisis. The ECB's main "quantity-based" indicator of financial integration stood at the end of 2016 where it was in 2003. Cross-border loans to companies accounted for merely 9 per cent of the total. At the end of last year, the share of assets that investors allocated to bond securities from other euro zone countries continued to decline and was less than two-thirds of the proportion of bond securities from their own domestic market.

Looking at deals, since the creation of the banking union in 2014, there has not been a single takeover of a significant bank by a euro zone rival. Conversely, there have been several high-profile domestic deals, including the decision by Banco Santander to acquire Banco Popular in the euro zone's first ever resolution. The so-called "home bias" will be very hard to overcome.

Nor is it clear that governments are willing to let investors take losses when troubles arise. The Italian authorities have done all they could to protect senior bondholders when it became clear that two Venetian banks would fail. The "bail in" instrument, which is at the heart of any well-functioning private risk-sharing mechanism, will continue to prove contentious. So will any mechanism to restructure government debt in an orderly manner, which is also essential if investors are to shoulder some of the weight of a sovereign debt crisis.

The euro zone is right to remove barriers which still stand between national financial and capital markets. Demanding that bondholders face the true risk of their bets is not only efficient but also fair. However, it is hard to see how these aspirations are sufficient to insure weaker member states against the risk of a full-blown crisis. The case for pushing towards some form of fiscal union after Germany's elections remains compelling.

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CNN

Maltby : Hurricane Irma reminds Europe of its awkward colonial rule

Kate Maltby

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opinions expressed in this commentary are hers.

(CNN)French President Emmanuel Macron has troubles at home this week. France's second biggest union, the CGT, is leading public sector, rail and energy workers in local strikes in protest at Macron's proposed deregulation of the labor market.

The protest is planned to culminate in a major march through Paris on Tuesday afternoon.

Yet Parisians won't have an easy escape route to the provinces. In protest against measures introduced by the previous government,

carnival operators are also barricading roads

around several northern French cities. Some are in costume. Politics in a nutshell: You start by picking a fight with rail unions, and you end up facing down a horde of angry clowns.

So where is Macron at this time of crisis? Posing with a patriotic strikebreaker in the Alsace? Engaging in hand-to-hand combat with a Groucho Marx impersonator in Rouen? No. On Tuesday

afternoon, the French President will be flying into the

Caribbean island of St. Martin

to oversee French aid efforts. During the most difficult week of his early presidency, he'll be more than 4,000 miles away from Paris.

Why has Macron arranged this visit? Sure, Hurricane Irma has concerned TV viewers all over the globe, and there's nothing more reassuring than a youthful politician personally delivering succor to stranded children. You'd be forgiven for assuming that the French President's trip is a standard humanitarian PR job, a distraction from bigger troubles.

You'd be wrong. However intense the strikes at home, however unstable Macron's hold over his legislature, nothing is as politically dangerous this week as the impact of Hurricane Irma on French identity.

In France -- as in Britain and the Netherlands -- Irma has exposed an inconvenient truth. All three nations still govern overseas colonies, over an ocean away from their old imperial masters.

Many of the residents of these territories still hold a strong affection for the host country. In a 1993 plebiscite in Dutch Curaçao, for example, only 0.49% of the population voted for absolute independence.

But when a hurricane hits and citizens begin to die, many begin to question why rescue decisions are being made from Paris, London or The Hague.

The governments of all three Western powers have faced questions about the efficacy of their response to Hurricane Irma -- implicitly, the strength of their commitment to economically dependent subjects that largely represent a different race and language.

On Monday, British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon hit back hard at criticism

, pointing out that the British had acted long before hurricane season to station RFA Mounts Bay, a 16,000-ton aircraft carrier, in calm Caribbean waters with stacks of aid on board.

He also said that such superior UK advanced planning meant that

France had relied on British aid to help its own people. This is a game of European one-upmanship, played out against emergency relief tents in the Caribbean.

Yet the European colonial overlords are well aware that Irma has rocked their seats in the region. As France's Macron flies out to visit St. Martin, Dutch King Willem-Alexander will be on St. Maarten, the Dutch-speaking side of the same island. (The island of St. Martin is the smallest inhabited island in the world divided between two nations. Several deaths have been confirmed,

and looting on both sides of the island

is now a major problem.)

In Britain, a row is brewing

. After pressure on senior ministers or royals to match the Dutch and French visits, UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has announced that he too is on his way to visit Britain's overseas territories in the Caribbean.

It doesn't help that most mainland Brits are ambivalent about the nation's relationship with overseas territories. For most, the phrase

British Virgin Islands means only a tax haven, even though the vast majority of the people born on those islands likely work in the hospitality and tourism industries and don't reap any of the riches from evading tax rules.

That's if Brits are aware at all that their old colonies are still subject to the Queen. For many, watching UK ships head (slowly) to the Caribbean has been a guilty post-colonial wake-up call.

Hurricane Irma is unlikely to wreck the relationships between Europeans and the Caribbean islands completely. But the colonial cleanup operation won't end when power is returned to homes and running water is flowing again.

It will require a postmortem of whether the governing powers served their subjects well in an hour of need. For European leaders such as Macron, that has more potential to topple a ruler than any strikes on the streets of Paris.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Britain Pledges to Lend Military Might to Europe After Brexit

Jenny Gross

LONDON—Britain pledged

Tuesday to contribute troops and to work with the European Union to implement foreign sanctions after Brexit, underscoring how the U.K. sees its military and security contributions as key cards to play in negotiating its exit from the bloc.

As Brexit negotiations hit road blocks over issues like how much Britain will have to pay to leave the EU, the U.K. wants to emphasize that a close economic partnership would mean strong military cooperation in the future. The U.K. and France provide the bulk of the EU's military, intelligence and foreign policy weight and Britain's exit represents a threat to the EU's international standing.

In a new paper—the latest in a series on how Britain sees its future relationship with the EU—the U.K. government seeks to address a major concern of pro-Brussels lawmakers: that Britain will be excluded from foreign policy discussions, including on sanctions, once it leaves the bloc. Its exit is scheduled for March 2019.

The U.K. said Tuesday it wanted closer defense cooperation than any other country with the EU and would use its military and intelligence agencies to combat terrorism and cybercrime.

Britain has the largest defense budget in Europe and the second largest in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization after the U.S. Britain and France are the only two EU countries that are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Earlier this year, U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May was criticized by EU politicians after she said a failure to reach a Brexit agreement would damage cooperation between the U.K. and the EU in countering crime and terrorism.

At the time, Guy Verhofstadt, the EU Parliament's chief negotiator on Brexit, said the European Parliament wouldn't accept any attempt by the U.K. to use its military prowess as a bargaining chip.

One way forward could be to establish a formal body for the U.K. and the EU to discuss foreign policy

goals, sanctions and security issues to ensure close cooperation. However, the U.K. government didn't spell out on Tuesday how this could work and said these discussions would take place as part of Brexit negotiations.

The paper said continued cooperation was crucial because Europe's peace was more fragile than any time since the Cold War.

EU countries have increasingly used sanctions to carry out foreign policy aims and Britain has been one of the bloc's strongest proponents of penalizing Russia over its actions in Ukraine, as well as Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

On Tuesday, the U.K. said a strong economy would increase its ability to respond to threats like cyberattacks—thereby linking security issues to a future trade deal with the EU.

Britain said the U.K. and its European allies were more resilient against cyberthreats when all countries were working to improve their defenses.

European Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas said the EU would analyze the paper and discuss with the U.K., but that more progress needed to be made on other issues first.

"Sufficient progress on all these three areas—citizens' rights, financial settlement and Ireland—is necessary before discussions on the future relationship can begin," Mr. Schinas said. "And of course on this basis the European Council guidelines state that the EU is willing to establish partnerships with the U.K. in areas unrelated to trade, in particular the fight against terrorism and international crime, as well as security, defense, and foreign policy."

Britain and the EU will begin the fourth round of Brexit negotiations on Sept. 25, the U.K. Department for Exiting the European Union said Tuesday.

— Laurence Norman and Emre Peker in Brussels contributed to this article.



Walker : Brexit could end with no deal -- but no one wants to admit it

Carole Walker

(CNN)It's been more than five months since the formal start of

negotiations over Britain's departure from the EU -- and progress so far has been painfully slow.

Both sides admit there are significant differences to be overcome and are

locked in a standoff

over the structure of the talks.

Neither the UK nor the EU wants to talk about what will happen if there is no deal, but some British Members of Parliament believe it is time for the government to start talking seriously about what would happen in this scenario.

The UK's chief Brexit negotiator, David Davis,

insists

that "concrete progress" has been made. He has received assurances on healthcare rights for British citizens living in the EU and on arrangements for sharing data. But he has admitted the talks are "tough and at times confrontational."

His EU counterpart, Michel Barnier, has said there has been "no decisive progress on any of the principle subjects" and he is "disappointed" at the British approach. He is insisting that there must be sufficient progress on

the the issue of whether or not there will be a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland

, the rights of EU citizens in the UK and the Brexit bill before any discussion of a future trade deal.

Davis says such matters can only be decided as part of the discussions on the post-Brexit relationship. He points out it is impossible to resolve questions such as

the Irish border

without considering future customs arrangements.

At next month's summit in Brussels, the EU is due to declare whether there is sufficient progress on what it calls "separation issues" to begin talking about post-Brexit trade.

But senior figures in the European Parliament are already suggesting the assessment should be

delayed until December.

Sources close to the talks have suggested Prime Minister Theresa May could use the occasion to appeal directly to EU leaders to try to break the stalemate. But the remaining 27 EU states are clearly reluctant to unpick their carefully negotiated joint approach to the talks.

The EU does have a tradition of somehow finding a compromise at the eleventh -- or even the thirteenth -- hour, and it is in the interests of both sides to reach a deal. But we are constantly reminded that the clock is ticking and the gulf between the two sides on so many critical issues remains as deep as ever.

Both sides want a transition period so there is no "cliff-edge" for businesses and citizens. But that will only happen if there is at least an outline agreement on where that transition will lead.

Without a deal, the UK would suddenly find itself in the same position as any other non-EU country which does not have special arrangements in place with the EU. It would suddenly operate under World Trade Organization rules, which would mean tariffs and restrictions on trade with its biggest economic partner. And there would almost certainly be big problems at the borders.

There are real risks for the British government in talking up the prospect of leaving without a deal. It would face accusations of a disastrous failure. Businesses would warn of serious consequences and the pound would probably dive still further. Theresa May could struggle

to retain her already precarious hold on power.

But if the negotiations continue at the snail's pace which we have seen over the past five months, we will reach a point when it becomes clear that an agreement is unlikely to be reached in time to achieve the smooth transition which the UK government is seeking.

If it has laid the ground for such a scenario, it is just possible that it may be able to contain the fallout. It could set out contingency plans, talk up the prospects of global free trade deals and lay the blame firmly at the door of an intransigent EU.

British ministers may need to demonstrate that they are seriously prepared to walk away without agreement if they are to win any real concessions from the EU.

The UK government has always said "no deal is better than a bad deal." It may need to make it clear this is not just a hollow threat if there is to be a breakthrough in the complex and tortuous Brexit negotiations.



Hockenos : Angela Merkel's legacy hinges on mending Europe

Paul Hockenos

(CNN)It looks increasingly likely that the German national election on September 24 will secure Angela Merkel a fourth and final term as chancellor. With victory comes a definitive opportunity to distinguish her legacy.

After 12 years in office, she'll go down in the history books as one of the great German leaders. Today, the country packs more gravitas -- economically and politically -- than at any time in the postwar era, as well as being a respected middle-heavyweight in world politics.

Berlin dominates the EU, which Merkel's Germany-first overtures have ensured works to Germany's benefit above all else.

Yet, for all of Germany's fortune, Europe is mired in crisis and the

EU is more ramshackle than ever

since its founding six decades ago.

Merkel's legacy beyond Germany -- as a great European statesperson -- will hinge upon her ability, together with French President Emmanuel Macron, to reform the fraught EU, which is the key to so many of the continent's ills, including migration,

the rise of far-right populism and economic stability.

The question looming before the chancellor is whether she will leave behind her a German Europe -- an EU designed according to German precepts, in the service of German interests -- or a European Germany -- a country that understands its well-being as inseparably intertwined with those of its European partners.

The latter must be Merkel's ambition. Indeed, the chancellor has confirmed that she's prepared to

work hand-in-glove with Macron to put the EU back on its feet

. But Merkel, not a politician known for lofty visions, hasn't revealed her intentions concerning European reform during the election campaign, which has been woefully short of such nuts-and-bolts content as it is.

She certainly realizes that Germany will have to relinquish some of its privileges in order for the EU to serve the interests of Europe as a whole -- not a position that would win her conservative votes at home.

Germany is going to have to compromise -- and this must begin with the first order of business, which is shoring up the monetary

union, the eurozone. Most economists in Europe concur that a common currency requires a full-fledged monetary union, in which the money and fiscal policies of its members are tightly woven together.

This one-for-all and all-for-one euro means putting in place mechanisms that make the strongest in the currency union -- those, like Germany, who profit most from the union's perks -- responsible for the weaker members, who profit less from borrowing rates and the euro's value.

Some Germans will believe that their country already has made compromises when southern European states and Ireland tanked in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 2008-2009. Yet Berlin always stopped short of vouching for the debts of weaker economies -- as must happen in a functional monetary union.

Merkel's conservatives also have plainly said no to deviating from their austerity and tight money policies -- German trademarks -- which Berlin claims are best for all of Europe, despite evidence to the contrary.

And Germany has steadfastly resisted the easing of interest rates and other expansionary measures to

stimulate investment, which could enable the rest of Europe to pull itself out of recession the way Germany has.

It's an entirely positive sign that Macron appears to grasp what is at stake and, in part, what needs to be done.

Macron has underscored the necessity of more social and fiscal "convergence" in the monetary union, which points in the right direction.

He has floated the idea of a eurozone finance minister and common budget, the latter of which could finance investments to stimulate growth in struggling eurozone countries. It could also mean, Macron has implied, borrowing to do so (thus far, fresh debt has been a strict German taboo.)

Moreover, the French President wants a separate eurozone parliament within the EU, which would handle euro-related issues. Macron says he will announce a "dozen" proposals for the eurozone after the German election.

It's not crucial for Merkel's legacy that this reform agenda spring from her imagination. Rather, she must seize the moment to act and pull her

own party on board, which will be no mean feat, given its conservatism. Yet she's run against the grain of Christian Democratic orthodoxy before -- on nuclear power, minimum wage, immigration, and other issues -- and pulled it off. She can do it again with the right coalition partner. "We will not falter," she said of eurozone reform in July together with Macron in Paris. "There will be further steps later this year."

But the euro is not the EU's only problem child. The union as a whole suffers from a crisis of legitimacy that has caused its popularity to plummet and eurosceptic parties on the far left and right to flourish. Brexit was just one expression of

the exasperation with business as usual. A glaring democracy deficit as ever more national powers are transferred to Brussels has other countries too, such as the Central Europeans, crying "enough!" Yet others, mainly in Western Europe, want to accelerate integration.

The EU's structural problems are so great that what is ultimately needed to fix it is a wide-ranging restructuring of its core bylaws and institutions. But this would require changes in the EU's founding treaties, which require all 28 members' legislatures approve them. Merkel knows, though, that there are far too many disparate views among the member states for

treaty change of this magnitude to happen.

Thus Merkel and Macron

will probably go forward with a "two-speed" EU

in which some countries would forge ahead in certain areas, such as defense or European unemployment insurance, while other countries would sit out, perhaps catching up to the "avant-garde" countries at a later point.

The euro, with its 19 members, is one example of such a multi-speed approach. Yet there's resistance to this too. Smaller countries such as Poland, Hungary and Slovakia fear the two-speed approach would

sideline them on all important matters.

Angela Merkel is going to have to convince Germans that they profit when the EU as a whole profits, even when it costs Germany in other visible and immediate ways. This was the secret of postwar (West) Germany's success and paved the way for German unification in 1990.

The EU stands at a critical juncture, which a European Germany could do much to put on the right path. Everything hinges on Angela Merkel's conviction that this is imperative.

**The
New York
Times**

A Long-Tolerant Spa Town Feels the Chill of Slovak Populism

Rick Lyman

PIESTANY,

Slovakia — Why so many wealthy Arabs have chosen Piestany, a pleasant but faded little spa town, as a vacation destination is something of a mystery.

Some say it started in the 1960s, when aspiring pilots from the Middle East came for flight training at the nearby airport. Others point to a Slovak soccer coach who went to Qatar decades ago and inspired visitors.

Whatever the case, every summer, they come by the thousands.

The town's spas stretch along a narrow island opposite the city center, presided over by the Hotel Thermia Palace, the grandest of the venues and once host to European royalty and Indian maharajahs. Now it is more likely to attract a Kuwaiti princess, as the town's central pedestrian strip has turned into an unlikely panorama of Muslim women in traditional dress and men smoking hookahs outside kebab shops.

It was never a problem. Until now.

The populist wave that has swept Central Europe — fueled by a backlash to the refugee crisis — is affecting even this pampered cocoon of transnationalism that depends utterly on well-heeled visitors from abroad. The hint of menace has unnerved and surprised regular visitors.

One of them, Hassan al Mekhyal, has been bringing his Kuwaiti family for years to Piestany, where the summer nights feel deliciously cool compared with the furnace back home.

"We like it here because of the peace and the quiet," said Mr. al Mekhyal, 49, as his wife nodded agreement, her eyes peering from a

narrow slit in her face-covering niqab.

It was only this year, as his wife was stocking up at the local Tesco superstore, that a furious young man began harassing her, calling her names, telling her to go back home.

Others have noticed the change, too.

There had never been an ugly incident involving his Muslim customers, said Ilknur Perda, 65, as he gently sliced off juicy shards of shwarma at his shop, Istanbul Doner-Kebab, on the town's main strip.

But then one day last year, a local 22-year-old walked up and began berating the Muslims at the outdoor cafe tables.

"He was being very hateful," said Mr. Perda, who moved to Slovakia from Turkey when he was 34. "He got into a fight with one of the customers. Later that night, the guy came back and smashed all my windows."

The incident was striking enough to make the national news in Slovakia. "The next morning, all my Slovak and Czech customers called me," he said. A march was organized to support him. One local man planted a "tree of tolerance" just outside the kebab shop.

But it was a sign, local officials said, that the atmosphere was shifting.

"People are feeling more and more emboldened," said Eva Bereczova, the city's spokeswoman. "They are unashamed to say things in public they would have been ashamed to say before. And it is probably going to get worse."

Slovakia regularly ranks near the bottom in European Union polling of

discriminatory attitudes toward foreigners and other ethnic groups.

The neo-fascist party of Marian Kotleba, currently polling a strong third, has two members of Parliament from Piestany. Support for the right-wing is growing.

"They come to City Council meetings in their green shirts sometimes," Ms. Bereczova said, referring to the party's official garb. "Then they wanted to hold a meeting at our local cultural center, but we put a stop to that."

She is frequently surprised by the hidden support for the right wing.

"I went to the swimming pool with a friend and we met some other people," Ms. Bereczova said. "Only after awhile, when politics came up, did I realize I was the only one who had not voted for Kotleba. They insulted me for being naïve."

Mohamad Safwan Hasna, chairman of the Islamic Foundation of Slovakia, said many Slovak politicians were eagerly fanning the anti-Muslim flames.

"The only thing they want is to win the election," he said. "So people are getting bolder. They got a signal from the politicians that it's O.K."

Now there is a virtual campaign against Muslims. "The photos began showing up on Facebook in August," he said.

Right-wingers snap photographs of Muslims they see on the streets. Then they post them online as "proof" that the government has been lying about how many Muslims are in the country. Some of the pictures are badly doctored. The comments are frequently hateful.

Mr. Hasna pulled out his cellphone and scrolled to one such photo, of a Muslim woman in full burqa saying

her prayers in a parking space at Bratislava's biggest mall.

"At first, even I thought it was a real photo," he said. "I thought, why is this woman praying in a parking lot? But then I realized, of course, it is a fake."

Slovakia, a country of five million, has about 5,000 Muslim citizens, and not a single mosque. Piestany is one of the few places their presence is felt, but a vast majority are visitors.

More than half of the 619,262 overnight stays last year in Piestany were by visitors from other countries, tourism officials said.

Piestany Spa, which operates the town's health facilities, broke down by nationality the guests who stayed at its resorts last year.

Of the 42,756 overnight stays, nearly 12,500 involved residents of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon or the United Arab Emirates. There were 1,674 more visitors from "other Asian countries," which spa officials said were nearly all other parts of the Muslim world. Another large group, accounting for 6,858 nights, came from Israel.

"There is not a problem with people from Israel and people from Arabic countries being side by side," said Monika Koborova, the guest relations manager for the Hotel Thermia Palace. "They come to get healthy, not to make trouble."

On cool summer evenings, Muslim visitors frequent the town's sidewalk cafes.

"We had friends visiting, and we took them to the city center in the evening and even we were surprised," Ms. Bereczova said. "We were the only local residents there."

Mr. Perda, who runs the Istanbul Doner-Kebab, said the rise in anti-

Muslim attitudes had caused some of his former customers to spend their summers elsewhere.

But whether this new anti-Muslim wind will be strong enough to break decades of attachment between

Piestany's healing mud and the summer-baked Persian Gulf remains to be seen.

Mr. al Mekhyal, clicking through a series of photos on his cellphone of some of the 300 camels he owns in

Kuwait, along with a Ferrari, said his family would probably continue to make Piestany part of their regular European idyll. The green hills and vaporous forests still call to them.

His 22-year-old daughter, Noura, a civil engineer, was not so sure.

"It's a little too quiet for me," she said.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Russia Conducts Drills Ahead of Exercise That Has Sparked NATO Concerns

Julian E. Barnes in Brussels and Thomas Grove in Tallinn, Estonia

Russia has begun military drills ahead of major war games that North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies are concerned about, but say are helping them better prepare for future tensions.

NATO countries have warned that Moscow's military maneuvers in Russia and Belarus, known as Zapad, threaten to trigger an accident or a wider conflict and offer an opportunity for Russia to push more powerful weaponry toward the border.

"We see a very, very large scale offensive exercise that demonstrates hatred against the West," said Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, whose country borders Belarus and Russia's Kaliningrad exclave. "It is clear that this will be used to upgrade the military in the region, to upgrade the modernization of the army."

Russia has said the exercise will formally begin on Thursday and run through Sept. 20. But ahead of the official start, Russia announced lower-level training exercises along its western border.

On Tuesday, snap readiness drills were held in Russia's western military district, the defense ministry said. The day before, the country's Baltic Fleet carried out training with S-300 and S-400 air defense systems along with Su-24 bombers.

The military didn't say the exercises were connected to the Zapad war games. But NATO officials say that Russia has been doing drills since August that are connected to the maneuvers. Lithuania cancelled all leave for its troops beginning last month.

The Russian defense ministry was not immediately available for comment. Separately, Russia also tested its nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile Yars today, successfully hitting a target more than 3,000 miles away in the country's far east.

Western officials have said they hope to learn about a range of Russian capabilities, including weaponry designed to make it difficult for NATO to reinforce forces stationed in the Baltic states. Ms. Grybauskaitė and allied diplomats said the drills will also allow NATO to revise its security assessments, and learn more about Russia's military capabilities.

The Baltics, which have had strained relations with Moscow in recent years, are particularly concerned about Russia's military maneuvers. During World War II the Soviet Union annexed Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, which only regained their independence in 1990.

The U.S. and other allies positioned small number of troops in the Baltic states and Poland after Russia's invasion and annexation of the

Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Last year, NATO decided to send a larger force of 4,000 troops that began arriving this year to serve as a deterrent to any Russian aggression or military action.

The U.S. has taken over NATO's air patrol mission in the region ahead of the Zapad drill, increasing the number of patrol planes from four to seven, and has moved troops into the Baltic states.

"Ironically, we can thank Russia for its aggressive behavior," Ms. Grybauskaitė said. "We are under pressure to invest in our security."

In addition to the military drills that began stepping up in recent days, Russia is responsible for a broader, ongoing propaganda campaign against Lithuania and the other Baltic countries, aimed at undermining their governments, Ms. Grybauskaitė said.

"In reality, the Zapad exercises are already ongoing," Ms. Grybauskaitė said. "It's not just military exercises, but information operations, propaganda and other follow ups."

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius has loudly criticized what he has called Russian-backed propaganda campaigns against his country that began to intensify over the summer.

He called the campaigns "psychological attacks" which sought to tie Lithuania's resistance

movement against the Soviet Union to Germany's Nazi government.

"Unconventional war is already happening as we speak," Mr. Linkevičius said.

Russia regularly dismisses Baltic claims of propaganda attacks and accuses the countries of Russophobia.

Russia has said only 12,700 troops will participate in Zapad. But Western officials have said Russia is using interconnected and overlapping exercises to hide the true number of forces.

Ms. Grybauskaitė predicted that some 100,000 troops will participate in the Zapad exercise. Western officials have made assessments based on rail cars moving equipment into Belarus and other information, they said.

Lithuanian Defense Minister Raimundas Karoblis said the country had prepared for Zapad with a series of training exercises. The ministry cancelled all leave for its armed forces in August and September, a ban that will likely be extended into October.

The country's rapid reaction forces can move in as little as two hours, he said. "They are on permanent stand-by," he said.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Corruption Battle Roils Ukraine

James Marson

KIEV, Ukraine—A push for overhauls encouraged by Ukraine's Western backers is deepening divisions in the government, including a call by some officials for the dismissal or investigation of the reformist finance minister.

The clash has raised concern in the U.S. and European Union and presents a new challenge for the country's economy, which is recovering from a two-year recession sparked by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and military interventions in Ukraine's east.

Finance Minister Oleksandr Danylyuk is point man for talks with the International Monetary Fund that were set to continue this week, and has driven efforts to overhaul state finances and cut official interference in business, steps seen as key in curbing corruption.

An effort by Mr. Danylyuk and others to weaken the state's hand in the economy and overhaul inefficient state sectors has spurred attacks from opponents who accuse him of hindering their work.

"This is not surprising," Mr. Danylyuk said. "We are working to change the old system and the old rules, and

quite logically, the system is fighting back."

The general prosecutor, Yuriy Lutsenko, who was appointed by President Petro Poroshenko, told his staff in late August that he had written to the prime minister asking him to fire Mr. Danylyuk, according to Mr. Lutsenko's spokeswoman. Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman's spokesman didn't respond to a request for comment.

Two other senior officials have publicly called for investigations of Mr. Danylyuk's finances and budget decisions.

Mr. Danylyuk has denied any wrongdoing and said the multiple

allegations he has faced were "distractions, often intentional and aimed to derail."

The finance minister gained a firmer grip on his job recently when the General Prosecutor's Office closed an investigation into allegations that he had evaded taxes, according to the Finance Ministry.

He began meeting with international investors on Monday with the aim of placing Ukraine's first Eurobond since restructuring around \$15 billion of foreign debt in 2015.

Other reformist officials and anticorruption activists have complained of official pressure—causing unease in the West. The

U.S., like the EU, has provided financial support to the Ukraine government when it carried out certain economic and anticorruption overhauls.

"Members of civil society play vital role for transparency; targeting them is a step backwards," the U.S. Embassy in Kiev tweeted in March.

Ukraine's Western backers have praised economic and governance changes since a pro-Western government came to power in 2014, but have taken a more critical tone in recent months as progress on overhauls has slowed.

"Ukraine needs to continue moving aggressively to strengthen the rule of law and to limit the influence of entrenched interests," U.S. Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch said in August.

The IMF, too, has criticized what it says is slow progress on steps needed to open up Ukraine's economy and spur growth. First Deputy Managing Director David Lipton was set to visit to Kiev amid concerns about whether Ukraine can push ahead with such measures.

The IMF has provided billions of dollars in loans to Ukraine in return for measures to strengthen state finances. Yet calls by the IMF and others for privatizations and creation of a land market have faced resistance from some lawmakers who argue the changes would benefit few people. Long-promised efforts to strengthen rule of law through changes to the judicial system have stalled.

Corruption and economic inequality have fueled two revolutions in Ukraine in the past decade and a half, and surveys show many Ukrainians are unhappy with progress under Mr. Poroshenko, whose approval rating stood at 17% in July, according to pollster GfK Ukraine.

The president has notched some successes since taking office in 2014 with the country in recession and facing conflict in its east. Ukraine launched its Anticorruption Bureau, started cleaning up its banking system and moved to strengthen the finances of the state energy company.

"This is the most-open and transparent government we've had

in Ukraine," said Andy Hunder, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine. "We want to see more, such as new, noncorrupt courts, privatization of state-owned enterprises and continuation of the IMF program."

As finance minister since April 2016, Mr. Danylyuk, a 42-year-old former McKinsey & Co. consultant and investment-fund head, has led an overhaul of the system for value-added tax refunds, for years a venue for corruption. He has helped draft legislation needed to unlock further IMF loans this fall, and is working to overhaul the state fiscal service by cutting bureaucracy, allowing online submissions and abolishing the tax police.

He is also trying to crimp the budget of the powerful General Prosecutor's Office and reduce the powers of law-enforcement agencies to investigate economic crimes.

Anticorruption activists have accused such agencies of corrupt abuse of their powers. "Every day people come [to me] with stories of raids on business by the Security Service of Ukraine, the Interior Ministry and prosecutors," said

Serhiy Leshchenko, a lawmaker and former muckraking journalist. None of the agencies responded to requests for comment.

"Danylyuk is a key anchor in terms of reforms," said Timothy Ash, senior sovereign strategist for emerging markets at BlueBay Asset Management in London. "He's likely trodden on a few people's toes."

Some activists and officials who target corruption are also complaining of intimidation. The U.S.-funded Anti-Corruption Action Center, an NGO, said its staff has faced a campaign of harassment, including tax probes and a video portraying a fictional investigation into the finances of its director.

Artem Sytnyk, the head of the government's Anticorruption Bureau, which is tasked with investigating high-level corruption, has complained of pressure on his detectives.

INTERNATIONAL



Lake : Iraq's Kurds Have Earned Their Right to Independence

Eli Lake

Consider the plight of an ethnic group seeking self-determination in the Middle East.

Its leaders have renounced terrorism. Their militias fight alongside U.S. soldiers. While their neighbors built weapons of mass destruction, they built a parliament, universities and the infrastructure for an independent state. And they pursue independence through a recognized legal process, enshrined in their country's constitution.

I am, of course, talking about Iraq's Kurds. On Sept. 25, they will vote in a referendum to endorse a state of their own.

One might think the U.S. government would see the Kurds as ideal candidates for statehood in a region where self-determination is often sought through violence. But the Trump administration so far has worked assiduously to dissuade the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq from giving its people the

opportunity to vote for independence.

The U.S. arguments against the statehood referendum revolve mainly around timing, according to both U.S. and Kurdish officials. Next year, Iraqis themselves are supposed to have elections. A vote to break away from Iraq would weaken Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi at a moment when he has been helpful in keeping Iraq together and leading the fight against the Islamic State.

What's more, the Kurdish referendum will offer Iraqis in disputed areas like Sinjar, and most importantly the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, the opportunity to choose between Iraq and an independent Kurdish state. Asking citizens to vote for independence in areas that are already disputed within Iraq is a recipe for trouble, U.S. diplomats say. They want the Kurds to reconsider.

Michael Rubin, an expert on the Kurds at the American Enterprise Institute, told me the referendum "is being done for the wrong motives." He said the decision to apply the referendum to people in Kirkuk and other disputed areas "will guarantee conflict." "If they were to go independent, immediately Kurdistan would have a fight over its borders," he said.

These objections, however well intentioned, have not deterred the initiative. The Iraqi constitution promised such a vote, and Kurdish leaders have delayed it for years. It is time for Iraq's Kurds to at least formally convey what anyone who has followed this issue already knows: Kurds deserve their own country.

Aziz Ahmad, an adviser to Masrour Barzani, the national security adviser to the Kurdistan Regional Government, told me senior delegations who traveled to Washington and Baghdad asked the U.S. for some assurance in

exchange for flexibility. "We told them, 'If you have disagreements on the timing, give us formal guarantees of when we should hold the referendum.' And they never did," he said.

Instead of treating this like a problem, President Donald Trump should see the Kurdish referendum as an opportunity. Here we have an ethnic minority that has done -- for the most part -- everything we ask of groups seeking statehood. Compare this to the Palestinians, who have squandered billions in aid and years of exquisite international attention, yet still lack the kind of functioning institutions the world takes for granted in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan region.

"We hear daily statements about the two-state solution and the right of self-determination for the Palestinians, by the same officials who tell us we cannot have a vote to express the will of Kurds to have their own country," Hoshiyar Zebari, a former foreign minister for both the

Kurdish region and Iraq, told me. "This is a double standard."

There are of course important differences between the Palestinian and Kurdish cases for independence. Because the Kurds are not Arabs, their cause never got strong support from Arab states in the region, like the Palestinian cause has. And Israel never committed the kinds of large-scale war crimes against Palestinians that Saddam Hussein and Turkish governments have against Kurds. Also Kurds make no claim to Baghdad, the way both Palestinians and Israelis makes claims to Jerusalem. There is also still considerable support within Israel for a two-state solution, whereas there is no such support for Kurdish independence among Iraqi Arabs.

But the most consequential difference between the Palestinians' case for statehood and the Kurds' may end up being U.S. national interests.

Ten years ago, the U.S. needed to at least support a peace process for Israel and the Palestinians as a way to persuade Arab allies like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to join American efforts against Iran. The presidency of Barack Obama and the emboldened predations of Iran changed all of that. Today, America's Arab allies in the region are frustrated at the lack of a more robust policy to counter Iran, peace process or not.

The Kurdistan regional government today is by no means perfect. Its politics are still dominated mainly by

two families. They are three years past due for elections on a new government, though the region's president, Masoud Barzani, today says there will be new elections in November, and he has pledged he will not stand for office. Corruption, like in all Middle Eastern governments, remains a problem.

But compared with its neighbors, the Kurdistan regional government is Switzerland. Kurdish leaders do not name parks and streets after suicide bombers. Kurdish leaders have implored their citizens to fight alongside the U.S. against Iraq's common enemies. The Kurdish people do not burn American flags. Most of them are not gulled by Muslim fanatics. They have pursued statehood the way we hope the Palestinians would.

The Kurdish referendum this month closes a chapter that began 25 years ago, when President George H.W. Bush in the aftermath of the first Gulf War established a no-fly zone to protect Kurdish families driven into the mountains by Saddam Hussein's storm troopers.

In the last quarter century the Kurdish people have built a state worthy of independence, under the protection of the U.S. military. That should be a source of pride for all Americans. Our president shouldn't quibble over timing. The administration should welcome Kurdish independence.

**The
New York
Times**

Turkey Signs Russian Missile Deal, Pivoting From NATO

Carlotta Gall and
Andrew Higgins

Tuesday. "A deposit has also been paid as far as I know."

ISTANBUL — In the clearest sign of his pivot toward Russia and away from NATO and the West, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced on Tuesday that Turkey had signed a deal to purchase a Russian surface-to-air missile system.

The deal cements a recent rapprochement with Russia, despite differences over the war in Syria, and comes as Turkey's ties with the United States and European Union have become strained.

It is certain to stir unease in Washington and Brussels, where officials are trying to keep Turkey — a longtime NATO member, and an increasingly unlikely candidate for European Union membership — from entering Russia's sphere of influence.

The deal comes as relations between Russia and the West are at a particularly low point. Tensions escalated in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea and then began fomenting armed revolt in eastern Ukraine. They have grown still worse as evidence has mounted that Moscow was behind the hacking of the 2016 election in the United States and also tried to interfere in other nations' elections.

Although a prospective missile purchase from Russia was made public several months ago, Mr. Erdogan's announcement was the first confirmation that Turkey had transferred money to pay for the missile system, known as the S-400.

"Signatures have been made for the purchase of S-400s from Russia," Mr. Erdogan said in comments published in several newspapers on

The purchase of the missile system flies in the face of cooperation within the NATO alliance, which Turkey has belonged to since the early 1950s. NATO does not ban purchases of military hardware from manufacturers outside the American-led alliance, but it does discourage members from buying equipment not compatible with that used by other members.

A NATO official in Brussels, the headquarters of the alliance, said that no NATO member currently operates the Russian missile system and that the alliance had not been informed about the details of the purchase by Turkey.

"What matters for NATO is that the equipment allies acquire is able to operate together," the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity as required by alliance procedures. "Interoperability of allied armed forces is essential to NATO for the conduct of our operations."

Turkey had earlier planned to buy missiles from China, but that deal fell through under pressure from the United States.

Western arms makers lobbied hard for the expansion of NATO into former Soviet satellite countries after the collapse of Communism. They have since lobbied both new and old NATO member states not to stray outside the alliance for weapons purchases that would cut into their business.

Mr. Erdogan dismissed issues of interoperability, brand loyalties or the geopolitical optics of such a sale. "Nobody has the right to discuss the Turkish republic's independence principles or

independent decisions about its defense industry," the daily newspaper *Hurriyet* reported him as saying.

"We make the decisions about our own independence ourselves," he said. "We are obliged to take safety and security measures in order to defend our country."

Mr. Erdogan's announcement — made to Turkish journalists aboard his presidential jet as he returned from Kazakhstan — appeared timed as a riposte to two judicial cases announced last week in the United States. One is against his presidential bodyguards, who are charged with assaulting protesters when Mr. Erdogan visited Washington this year. The other is against a group of Turks, including a former minister, accused of breaking United States sanctions against Iran.

Mr. Erdogan has angrily criticized both cases.

Yet Turkey has other reasons for the missile purchase. It needs to cultivate good relations with Russia, and it also needs to build its own military defense, said Asli Aydintasbas, a fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "Turkey wants the deal," she said, "and Russia is only too happy to drive a wedge into the NATO alliance."

NATO's collective defense should be sufficient for Turkey; indeed, NATO deployed Patriot missiles there during a rise of tensions with Syria in the past. But Mr. Erdogan has lost trust in the West since last year's failed coup, which he has interpreted as a Western plot to oust him, and appears determined to secure his own defense, Ms. Aydintasbas said.

Military and civilian plotters used jets and tanks to try to seize power last July and bombed several locations, including the Parliament building, before being faced down by loyalist security forces and public demonstrations. Mr. Erdogan narrowly evaded capture.

The transfer of technology from Russia is attractive to Turkey, Ms. Aydintasbas said. Mr. Erdogan has spoken also of his frustration at having requests to the United States for drones turned down, and of his satisfaction that Turkey developed its own.

Mr. Erdogan's announcement of the deal with Russia came after Germany said that it was suspending all major arms exports to Turkey because of the deteriorating human rights situation in the country and the increasingly strained ties.

"We have put on hold all big requests that Turkey sent to us, and these are really not a few," the German foreign minister, Sigmar Gabriel, said during a panel discussion in Berlin on Monday, according to Reuters.

As suspicions toward the West have grown, relations with Russia have warmed, driven by the personal relationship between Mr. Erdogan and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Mr. Erdogan has expressed personal admiration for Mr. Putin, to the consternation of many European and American leaders, if not President Trump.

Mr. Erdogan has also shown a preference for the Russian model, with its sense of restoring a lost empire, returning Turkey to a more independent place in the world and rejecting Western democracy.

After a tense falling out in 2015, when Turkish jets shot down a Russian warplane on Turkey's border with Syria, Mr. Erdogan sought to improve relations with Russia, sending two letters to Mr. Putin and then traveling to Moscow for a meeting in June 2016.

His visit represented a marked shift from the Cold War era, when Turkey was a staunch ally of the West in facing down the Soviet Union. (Turkey shares a border with Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, former Soviet republics that remain, to varying degrees, under Russian influence.) Russian-Turkish rivalry in the Black Sea and the Caucasus dates back centuries.

Mr. Putin, at odds with the West since he annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, also worked hard to patch up relations with Ankara, seeing in Mr. Erdogan a like-minded strongman who shares his distrust of meddling by the West.

The fact that Turkey belongs to NATO, whose unity Moscow has struggled for years to undermine, has only increased Mr. Putin's desire to forge strong relations with Mr. Erdogan despite their differences over the conflict in Syria.

"Mr. Putin and myself are determined on this issue," Mr. Erdogan told journalists about the missile deal.

Last year, Russia and Turkey reached an agreement to revive a suspended natural-gas pipeline project.

The purchase of Russian missiles would take cooperation to a new level, but is not the first time that Turkey has bought military equipment from Russia. It turned to Moscow in the early 1990s to buy military helicopters and armored personnel carriers.

After relations hit a rocky patch over Russia's 1994 war in Chechnya, however, Turkey disappointed hopes in Moscow that it would become a major new market for Russian hardware.

Russia, largely squeezed out of the arms market in Western and Eastern Europe, even in countries that once bought nearly all their weapons from the Soviet Union, has looked for years to NATO's eastern flank as a promising market and the alliance's weakest link. It has also sold weapons to Greece, another NATO member and to Cyprus, which is not a member of NATO but houses British military bases and effectively serves as an outpost of the alliance.

**The
Washington
Post**

North Korea lashes out over 'vicious' U.N. sanctions

SEOUL — North Korea on Tuesday condemned the U.N. Security Council's decision to impose tougher sanctions and doubled down on its warning that the United States would "suffer the greatest pain" it has ever experienced for leading the effort to ratchet up economic pressures on the reclusive nation.

The United Nations on Monday unanimously agreed on its toughest sanctions against North Korea, setting limits on its oil imports and banning its textile exports. The United States and its allies had pushed for new sanctions to increase pressure on North Korea to agree to negotiations.

"My delegation condemns in the strongest terms and categorically rejects the latest illegal and unlawful U.N. Security Council resolution," North Korean Ambassador Han Tae Song told the U.N.-sponsored Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, according to Reuters.

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

Han said Washington "fabricated the most vicious sanction resolution," news agencies reported.

He said North Korea is "ready to use a form of ultimate means" but did not elaborate, Reuters reported. North Korea had warned ahead of the U.N. vote that the United States would pay a "due price" if it pursues stronger sanctions.

In remarks at the start of his White House meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, President Trump called the new sanctions "just another very small step."

But, he warned without elaborating, "those sanctions are nothing compared to what ultimately will have to happen."

The Security Council resolution was a watered-down version of what the United States and its allies had initially sought: a full embargo on North Korea's crucial crude oil supply, which would have crippled the country.

But China and Russia, both veto-wielding members of the Security Council, were wary of measures such as cutting off oil that would seriously destabilize North Korea. The United States agreed to tone down some of its demands to secure the votes of China and Russia.

[How Russia quietly undercuts sanctions against North Korea]

About 90 percent of North Korean trade goes through China, and China is North Korea's main source of fuel.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said at a conference hosted by CNBC on Tuesday that he would pursue sanctions against China if it does not adhere to the Security Council resolution.

"If China doesn't follow these sanctions, we will put additional sanctions on them and prevent them from accessing the U.S. and international dollar system, and that's quite meaningful," he said, according to news agencies.

The latest round of sanctions could have a significant effect on the North Korean economy, potentially cutting up to \$1.3 billion in annual revenue.

Before Monday's vote, the Security Council already had imposed sanctions on North Korea, including on its exports of coal, iron ore and seafood.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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

But the measures did little to change North Korea's behavior. The

country conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test on Sept. 3, detonating a device that it claimed was a hydrogen bomb designed to be carried by a long-range missile capable of reaching the U.S. mainland.

The international community widely condemned the test.

The latest resolution caps North Korea's imports of refined and crude oil at 8.5 million barrels a year, which represents a 30 percent cut, said Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Textile exports, banned under the resolution, represent more than a quarter of North Korea's export income. More than 90 percent of North Korea's reported exports are now fully banned under sanctions, Haley said.

South Korea praised the latest U.N. resolution, calling on North Korea to stop "trying to test the will of the international community." It added that the "only way to break away from diplomatic isolation and economic oppression is to return to a table of dialogues for complete, irreversible, verifiable nuclear dismantlement."

**The
New York
Times**

South Korea Plans 'Decapitation Unit' to Try to Scare North's Leaders (UNE)

Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL, South Korea — The last time South Korea is known to have plotted to assassinate the North Korean leadership, nothing went as planned.

In the late 1960s, after North Korean commandoes tried to ransack the presidential palace in Seoul, South Korea secretly trained misfits plucked from prison or off the streets to sneak into North Korea and slit the throat of its leader, Kim Il-sung. When the mission was aborted, the men mutinied.

They killed their trainers and fought their way into Seoul before blowing themselves up, an episode the government concealed for decades.

Now, as Mr. Kim's grandson, Kim Jong-un, accelerates his nuclear missile program, South Korea is again targeting the North's

leadership. A day after North Korea conducted its sixth — and by far most powerful — nuclear test this month, the South Korean defense minister, Song Young-moo, told lawmakers in Seoul that a special forces brigade defense officials described as a "decapitation unit"

would be established by the end of the year.

The unit has not been assigned to literally decapitate North Korean leaders. But that is clearly the menacing message South Korea is trying to send.

Defense officials said the unit could conduct cross-border raids with retooled helicopters and transport planes that could penetrate North Korea at night.

Rarely does a government announce a strategy to assassinate a head of state, but South Korea wants to keep the North on edge and nervous about the consequences of further developing its nuclear arsenal. At the same time, the South's increasingly aggressive posture is meant to help push North Korea into accepting President Moon Jae-in's offer of talks.

It is a difficult balancing act, pitting Mr. Moon's preference for a diplomatic solution against his nation's need to answer an existential question: How can a country without nuclear weapons deter a dictator who has them?

"The best deterrence we can have, next to having our own nukes, is to make Kim Jong-un fear for his life," said Shin Won-sik, a three-star general who was the South Korean military's top operational strategist before he retired in 2015.

The measures have also raised questions about whether South Korea and the United States, the South's most important ally, are laying the groundwork to kill or incapacitate Mr. Kim and his top aides before they can even order an attack.

While Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson has said the United States does not seek leadership change in North Korea, and the South Koreans say the new military tactics are meant to offset the North Korean threat, the capabilities they are building could be used preemptively.

Last week, President Trump agreed to lift payload limits under a decades-old treaty, allowing South Korea to build more powerful ballistic missiles. The United States helped South Korea build its first ballistic missiles in the 1970s, but in return, imposed restrictions to try to prevent a regional arms race.

"We can now build ballistic missiles that can slam through deep underground bunkers where Kim

Jong-un would be hiding," Mr. Shin said. "The idea is how we can instill the kind of fear a nuclear weapon would — but do so without a nuke. In the medieval system like North Korea, Kim Jong-un's life is as valuable as hundreds of thousands of ordinary people whose lives would be threatened in a nuclear attack."

Although a majority of South Koreans, especially conservative politicians and commentators, call for arming their country with nuclear weapons of its own, Mr. Moon has repeatedly vowed to rid the Korean Peninsula of such weapons. In June, Mr. Trump reiterated Washington's nuclear-umbrella doctrine, promising to protect the South with "the full range of United States military capabilities, both conventional and nuclear."

But after North Korea tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles in July, including one that appeared capable of hitting the United States mainland, South Koreans are not so sure the Americans would follow through.

"Would the Americans intervene in a war on the peninsula if their own Seattle were threatened with a North Korean nuclear ICBM?" said Park Hwee-rhak, a military analyst at Kookmin University in Seoul.

Mr. Moon has vowed to expand the defense budget to 2.9 percent of South Korea's gross domestic product during his term, from 2.4 percent, or \$35.4 billion, as of this year. For next year, his government has proposed a budget of \$38.1 billion, nearly \$12 billion of it for weapons to defend against North Korea.

In a Twitter post last Tuesday, Mr. Trump said, "I am allowing Japan & South Korea to buy a substantially increased amount of highly sophisticated military equipment from the United States."

South Korea has now introduced three arms-buildup programs — Kill Chain; the Korea Air and Missile Defense program; and the Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation initiative, which includes the decapitation unit.

Under the Kill Chain program, South Korea aims to detect impending missile attacks from North Korea and launch pre-emptive strikes.

North Korea keeps artillery and rocket tubes near the border, and is capable of delivering 5,200 rounds on Seoul in the first 10 minutes of war, military planners in South

Korea say. The North also operates hundreds of missiles designed to hit South Korea and United States bases in Japan and beyond to deter American intervention should war break out.

The need to detect an impending strike has become more critical. North Korea has made its nuclear bombs small and light enough — weighing under 500 kilograms, or about 1,100 pounds — to be fitted onto its missiles, though it is still unclear whether they are fully weaponized, Mr. Song, the defense minister, said last week.

But detection has also become harder.

North Korea hides missiles in its many underground tunnels. Switching to solid fuel has made some of its missiles easier to transport and faster to launch. In recent years, North Korea also has flight-tested missiles from submarines, which are tougher to detect.

And the potential consequences of accurate detection are huge. Miscalculation could prompt an unwarranted pre-emptive strike, which could start a regional nuclear war.

Speaking to a United States congressional hearing in June, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., said, "We will see casualties, unlike anything we've seen in 60 or 70 years."

Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities are crucial, said Daniel A. Pinkston, a defense expert at the Seoul campus of Troy University. Without those capabilities, "they would be 'shooting blind' because the missile units could not identify the targets," he added.

Last month, South Korea said it would launch five spy satellites into orbit from 2021 to 2023 to better monitor weapons movements in North Korea. In the interim, it is talking with countries like France and Israel to lease spy satellites. It also plans to introduce four American RQ-4 Global Hawk surveillance drones by next year.

If pre-emptive attacks failed, South Korea would hope its Korea Air and Missile Defense would shoot down any rockets from the North.

South Korea is planning to upgrade its PAC-2 interceptor missiles for a better low-altitude defense. Last week, South Korea helped the

United States military install a Thaad missile-defense battery, which intercepts enemy rockets at higher altitudes. For additional protection, South Korea is developing its own L-SAM interceptor missiles, as well as installing more early warning radars for ballistic missiles.

After the North's latest nuclear test, South Korea fired its Hyunmoo-2 short-range ballistic missiles in a drill simulating an attack on the North's test site. In July, the South's military also released simulated images of Taurus bunker-buster missiles hitting the Defense Ministry in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang. South Korea is buying 260 Taurus missiles from a German and Swedish joint venture.

The weapons are part of the Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation plan. Under that program, South Korea would try to divide Pyongyang into several districts and wipe out the area where Kim Jong-un is believed to be hiding, defense analysts said.

Washington's decision to lift the missile payload limits may allow South Korea to develop new Hyunmoo missiles capable of destroying weapons sites and leadership bunkers deep underground, said Shin Jong-woo at Korea Defense Forum, a Seoul-based network of military experts.

Mr. Shin said there was talk of building a Hyunmoo with a two-ton warhead.

The earlier restrictions barred South Korea from attaching a payload weighing more than half a ton to its Hyunmoo missile when the rocket had a range of up to 497 miles.

As word of South Korea's new assassination plans has spread, Mr. Kim has used his deputies' cars as decoys to move from place to place, South Korean intelligence officials told lawmakers in June.

Still, many say they doubt that the threat is enough to deter Mr. Kim. Only the prospect of nuclear retaliation will suffice, they say.

"The balance of terror is the shortest cut to deterring war," Yoon Sang-hyun, a conservative opposition lawmaker, told South Korea's Parliament last Tuesday.

WASHINGTON—The Trump administration threatened on Tuesday to impose further sanctions on China if Beijing doesn't do more to shut down banks and other Chinese firms aiding North Korea.

If China doesn't implement the United Nations sanctions regime it has backed, "We will put additional sanctions on them and prevent them from accessing the U.S. and international dollar system," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Tuesday at a conference.

The statement followed Monday's passage by the United Nations Security Council of new sanctions against North Korea—measures that were softened, diplomats said, to win approval from China and Russia, which wield veto power.

President Donald Trump also signaled that the U.S. was looking past the watered-down U.N. measures. He said the sanctions move was "not a big deal."

"Those sanctions are nothing compared to what will ultimately have to happen," Mr. Trump said.

U.S. officials and U.N. investigators have said China hasn't moved robustly enough to shut down networks they say are financing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's regime and weapons programs, including activities sanctioned by the U.N.

Earlier Tuesday, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said Beijing strictly enforces all U.N. resolutions.

Washington is intent on depriving Pyongyang of all its revenue sources even if it means unilaterally targeting firms in China, the world's second largest economy, Treasury's assistant secretary for terror finance Marshall Billingslea said Tuesday in testimony to a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump touted what he described as a plan by Malaysia Airlines Bhd. to spend between \$10 billion and \$20 billion on Boeing Co. jets and General Electric Co. engines as he opened a White House meeting with Malaysia's prime minister.

Mr. Trump, in a public appearance with Prime Minister Najib Razak, cited the airline deal as a basis for strong ties between the two countries. Boeing said the deal involved 16 new planes. He also identified Malaysia as a strategic national-security ally in Asia, while

Treasury's recent sanctions targeting a Chinese bank and other Chinese firms were meant to be a "message to China," Mr. Billingslea said. "We are capable of tracking North Korea's trade in banned goods, such as coal, despite elaborate evasion schemes, and we will act even if the Chinese government will not."

Mr. Billingslea's testimony was the first from a top Trump Treasury sanctions official on Capitol Hill, and the most comprehensive explanation of the administration's North Korea sanctions strategy to date.

The testimony followed Monday's sanctions vote and a U.N. report published late last week that identified a host of Chinese firms allegedly facilitating sanctions evasion.

U.S. lawmakers and Trump administration officials have expressed increasing frustration with China's handling of North Korea as its biggest trade partner and financier in the wake of Pyongyang's latest nuclear test, missile launches and threats to U.S. security.

China, sitting on the U.N. Security Council, has backed a steady increase in financial pressure on North Korea, and Monday approved the new U.N. bans on textile exports, a cap on oil imports and limits on overseas workers. U.N. sanctions already ban coal and other commodity exports from the country, targeting Pyongyang's biggest income streams.

The U.S. had initially asked the Security Council to approve a complete oil embargo and asset and travel freezes targeting the North Korean leader. But China has sought to avoid measures that it believes could provoke the collapse of a fellow socialist regime, drive refugees across its border and bring U.S. troops closer.

Malaysian Leader Plays Up Aircraft Deals, Investments During U.S. Visit

Michael C. Bender

playing down the significance of a fresh round of sanctions the United Nations Security Council approved against North Korea on Monday.

Mr. Trump also praised Malaysia as a significant investor in U.S. securities, saying American markets have been hitting records "on almost a weekly basis" during his presidency. "I congratulate you on those investments," Mr. Trump said during a brief public appearance with the Malaysian leader.

The airline deal puts the administration in the unusual position of coaxing investment from a trade partner that the U.S. is also investigating for investment fraud.

China's full and effective enforcement of U.N. sanctions is essential, Mr. Billingslea said. "Unfortunately, I cannot assure the Committee today that we have seen sufficient evidence of China's willingness to truly shut down North Korean revenue flows, expunge the North Korean illicit actors from its banking system, and expel the North Korean middlemen and brokers who are establishing webs of front companies," he said.

He said that if China wishes to avoid future measures, such as those imposed on Bank of Dandong and others, "then it urgently needs to take demonstrable public steps to eliminate North Korea's trade and financial access."

House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Ed Royce, (R., Calif.), said Washington needs to increase the number of companies and individuals targeted by Treasury under the North Korean sanctions regime.

"We must target major Chinese banks doing business with North Korea such as China Merchants Bank and even big state-owned banks like the Agricultural Bank of China," both of which have operations in the U.S., Mr. Royce said.

On Monday, China's central bank issued a directive instructing state-owned and commercial lenders to take steps to comply with all U.N. resolutions, including freezing accounts and blocking transactions linked to clients under sanction.

A number of Chinese state-owned banks have been blocking North Koreans from opening new accounts this year, according to bank employees based in cities near the North Korean border.

A China Construction Bank representative said North Koreans have been blocked from withdrawing

money, while an employee at Agricultural Bank of China said existing North Korean-owned accounts have been frozen.

For Beijing, stopping short of the tougher measures sought by the U.S. in the latest sanctions could help China retain leverage over Pyongyang.

"China wants to reserve some tools in its kitbox, to be used if North Korea carries out more provocative acts," such as another nuclear test, said Cheng Xiaohu, an associate professor at Renmin University in Beijing.

Susan Thornton, the State Department's top diplomat on Asia, criticized Russia at Tuesday's hearing, saying in her prepared remarks that the U.S. would "use the tools we have at our disposal" if Moscow and Beijing don't improve their implementation of U.N. sanctions.

North Korea relies on oil imports from Russia. Treasury last month sanctioned two Russian-operated firms accused of selling oil to North Korea.

The senior Trump administration officials said further sanctions targeting foreign banks and firms are to come, as the administration maps out North Korea's global trade, finance and shipping networks.

"We intend to deny the regime its last remaining sources of revenue, unless and until it reverses course and denuclearizes," Mr. Billingslea said. "Those who collaborate with them are exposing themselves to enormous jeopardy."

regional issues and security concerns, including the halt of the Islamic State extremist group, North Korea's push for nuclear weapons, and territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Jonah Blank, a senior political scientist with Rand Corp., said it is unlikely the leaders discussed the investment scandal since both had ample domestic reasons for wanting a harmonious meeting.

While Mr. Trump can tout investment, Mr. Najib will use the high-profile reception at the White House to boost his stature back home. "If he is able to portray himself as a firm partner of the U.S.,

The U.S. Department of Justice is investigating the alleged looting of 1Malaysia Development Bhd., a Malaysian economic-development fund. The probe threatens to ensnare much of the country's ruling elite, including Mr. Najib.

Mr. Trump didn't mention the investigation during his public appearance with Mr. Najib. White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said on Monday that the investigation was "apolitical, and certainly independent of anything taking place" during meetings involving the president.

Instead, the two leaders' were meeting to discuss a "wide range" of

it can of course be used against him, but it's likely a positive," Mr. Blank said.

Mr. Najib said during the public appearance with Mr. Trump on Tuesday that he was interested in contributing to the U.S. economy. Malaysia Airlines agreed in 2016 to buy 25 Boeing 737s, with an option to buy another 25, in a deal estimated at \$5.5 billion.

In an apparently new deal unveiled on Tuesday, Malaysia Airlines also will buy eight Boeing 787 Dreamliners, Mr. Najib said, a deal that would be valued at about \$2.2 billion. Mr. Najib on Tuesday said the airline deals would be valued at \$10 billion in five years, or more if the airline executes the option for additional planes.

Mr. Najib also said the Employees Provident Fund, a

major pension fund in Malaysia, planned to invest \$3 billion to \$4 billion in U.S. infrastructure projects. He said additional investments were planned from Malaysia's state investor Khazanah Nasional Bhd, which he said has an office in Silicon Valley.

Boeing said in a statement Tuesday night that the company signed a memorandum of understanding with Malaysia Airlines for 16 planes—the eight Dreamliners and eight additional 737s.

"We are delighted Malaysia Airlines continues to put its trust and confidence in Boeing," the statement quoted Boeing President and Chief Executive Kevin McAllister as saying. The statement quoted Peter Bellew, managing director and CEO of Malaysia Airlines as saying the deal built on more than 40 years of

partnership between the airline and Boeing.

Mr. Najib also didn't mention the Justice Department's 1MDB probe.

He said Malaysia was committed to fighting terrorism and "will also contribute in terms of the ideological warfare because you need to win the hearts and minds," while not specifically commenting on North Korea.

Mr. Trump said Malaysia "does not do business with North Korea" any longer. "We find that to be very important," he said.

The president noted the fresh round of U.N. sanctions against North Korea, but said "those sanctions are nothing compared to what will ultimately have to happen" as reporters were escorted from the room.

While in Washington, Mr. Najib and members of his entourage were shown in a videotape by the New Straits Times, a Malaysian newspaper, visiting the Trump International Hotel in Washington, which is owned by Mr. Trump. Hotel officials declined to say whether Mr. Najib and his aides were guests at the hotel, and aides to Mr. Najib didn't return calls seeking comment.

Ms. Sanders, the White House press secretary, brushed aside questions about the prime minister's accommodations at a news briefing, saying she didn't think his patronage of the president's business was an attempt to curry favor.

**THE WALL
STREET
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Trump Welcomes Najib Razak, the Malaysian Leader, as President, and Owner of a Fine Hotel

Mark Landler

WASHINGTON — When President Trump welcomed Malaysia's prime minister, Najib Razak, to the White House on Tuesday, he thanked him for "all the investment you've made in the United States."

Mr. Trump did not single out Mr. Najib's patronage of his hotel two blocks from the White House, but he could have: the Malaysian leader was spotted entering and exiting the Trump International Hotel, with his entourage, on Monday and Tuesday.

The White House denied that Mr. Najib had picked the hotel at Mr. Trump's behest. "We certainly don't book their hotel accommodations," the press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, said, "so I couldn't speak to the personal decision they made about where to stay here in D.C."

Whatever the motivation, the choice of lodgings added to the awkwardness of a meeting already replete with ethical questions. Mr. Najib is under investigation by the Justice Department, part of a corruption scandal that critics said he has fended off by firing investigators and dismissing negative news reports about him as "fake news."

In these respects, he is not unlike Mr. Trump. So it was perhaps not a surprise that the two leaders skipped a news conference, kept their public remarks brief, and stayed on the safe ground of trade and counterterrorism.

"We're talking about trade — very large trade deals," Mr. Trump said to

Mr. Najib, during a photo opportunity before they met in the Cabinet Room. "Malaysia is a massive investor in the United States in the form of stocks and bonds."

A grateful Mr. Najib replied, "We come here with a strong value proposition to put on the table." He talked about buying Boeing planes and General Electric jet engines but did not mention that he had just come from the Trump hotel.

Behind closed doors, the prime minister urged the United States to put pressure on neighboring Myanmar — including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the de facto leader of the elected civilian government — to stop the systematic persecution of the Rohingya, its minority Muslim population.

Mr. Trump, a senior administration official said, expressed anger over the military crackdown and discussed ways to pressure authorities in Myanmar. There are no current plans for Mr. Trump to call Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, this official said, but he did not rule out a future conversation.

American presidents have long done an awkward dance with the leaders of Malaysia, a Southeast Asian country that is a valuable trading partner and dependable counterterrorism ally of the United States but is ruled by a corrupt, entrenched Malay elite.

That tension is even more acute with Mr. Najib, who is under investigation by the United States and others for an estimated \$3.5 billion that investigators believe he and his associates diverted from a

Malaysian government fund that he headed. Among other things, the money was used to buy jewelry, real estate and the rights to Hollywood films.

The White House insisted that the Justice Department inquiry had no relevance to the meeting and would not figure in the conversation. "That investigation is apolitical and certainly independent of anything taking place tomorrow," Ms. Sanders said on Monday.

But the White House did move a picture-taking session from the Oval Office, denying Mr. Najib the customary photo with the president before the fireplace, under George Washington's portrait.

Before their meeting, Mr. Trump credited Mr. Najib with cutting off business ties between Malaysia and North Korea. The Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, has served as one of the hubs for North Koreans seeking to buy or sell nuclear-related technology or trade weapons.

Relations between the two countries ruptured after Malaysia accused the North Korean government of assassinating Kim Jong-nam, the half brother of Kim Jong-un, in a bizarre attack at Kuala Lumpur's international airport. Each country temporarily barred the other's nationals from leaving.

"He does not do business with North Korea any longer, and we find that to be very important," Mr. Trump said.

Mr. Najib presented a detailed list of purchases and investments — with dollar signs attached — that seemed tailored to Mr. Trump's balance-

sheet emphasis in dealing with other nations. Malaysia, he said, had committed to buying 25 Boeing 737's and eight 787 Dreamliners for its national airline.

In addition, Mr. Najib said, one of Malaysia's largest pension funds planned to invest between \$3 billion and \$4 billion in the Trump administration's effort to rebuild American infrastructure. And another sovereign wealth fund planned to increase its existing \$400 million investment in Silicon Valley.

"Great," Mr. Trump interjected, each time Mr. Najib reeled off a figure.

For Mr. Najib, who faces an election and has been under unrelenting pressure at home, the meeting qualified as a major victory. It demonstrated to critics that he could travel to the United States without fear of being detained.

For Mr. Trump, the payoff was less obvious. Administration officials view Malaysia as a counterweight to China and say it has been steadfast in the fight against the Islamic State. But the president broke arguably the strongest bond between the two countries when he pulled the United States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a regional trade pact that includes Malaysia.

Mr. Trump's predecessor, President Barack Obama, once praised Mr. Najib as a reformer and played golf with him in Hawaii in 2014. But after the cloud of corruption allegations took hold, Mr. Obama only met the Malaysian leader at regional conferences. Last year, when the two were together at a summit meeting at the Sunnylands estate in

Rancho Mirage, Calif., Mr. Najib did not earn a repeat invitation for golf with Mr. Obama.

Mr. Trump, however, seems comfortable with Mr. Najib, a suave figure who speaks impeccable English. In 2014, they played golf at Mr. Trump's club in Bedminster, N.J. Mr. Trump gave his guest a photo of

the two of them, inscribed, "To my favorite prime minister."

Mr. Trump has not hesitated to meet with autocratic leaders — or leaders with legal problems. He invited the Philippine president, Rodrigo Duterte, to the White House, despite what critics said was his record of

ordering extrajudicial killings of drug dealers.

Still, human-rights advocates criticized this meeting because of the signal they said it would send.

"It's a strange meeting," said John Sifton, the Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch. "Clearly,

President Trump has repeatedly shown that he is willing to host authoritarian leaders. But this meeting, in some respects, marks a new low. Najib has been engaged in a broad crackdown against journalists, civil society, even cartoonists."



Editorial : What Trump Can Do About Pakistan

Blasted by U.S. President Donald Trump for undermining the U.S. war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, Pakistan has reacted as defiantly as one would expect. The U.S. should resist the impulse to respond in kind.

In a speech last month, Trump bluntly accused Pakistan of playing both sides in the war, accepting billions in U.S. aid while providing safe haven to Afghan insurgents. Pakistani officials were quick to protest that their nation has made great sacrifices in its own battles against terrorism, and to declare that they wanted from the U.S. only respect, not cash, for their efforts. They also made clear that they had other friends, hastily sending the Pakistani foreign minister off to Beijing and Moscow.

None of this should dissuade the Trump administration from demanding that Pakistan do more.

Pakistan's efforts at home have been focused only on terrorists who target the Pakistani state. Its military continues to allow free rein to militants fighting Indian forces in Kashmir and, more to the point, offers sanctuary to leaders from the Afghan Taliban and their allies in the Haqqani Network, who are responsible for the deaths of thousands of U.S. troops.

At the same time, Pakistani officials know as well as anyone that Trump's options -- like those of his predecessors, and despite his rhetoric -- are limited. The question is how to deploy them for maximum effect.

The administration has wisely begun by simply conditioning aid on Pakistani progress disrupting terror networks within the country. Combined with an overall reduction in funding, this might at least improve the return on U.S. investment in the relationship. Better

to take this incremental approach rather than immediately declare Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism, which some members of Congress have proposed.

The U.S. should not be averse to applying pressure more narrowly as well: Levying U.S. and European Union sanctions on key Pakistani military and intelligence officials, for example, would not only make life harder for specific commanders -- many of whom have children studying in the West -- but embarrass the military as an institution. (Targeting military-linked companies is harder since most are focused domestically.)

The U.S. should also offer Pakistan a few incentives -- especially if the administration is to have any hope of enlisting the help of China, Pakistan's main patron. For several reasons, including the threat to its own credibility, China can't afford to abandon its troublesome proxy. But

neither do the two nations' interests entirely align, as even some Pakistani officials are beginning to acknowledge; a Taliban takeover in Afghanistan would threaten China's Belt-and-Road investments and fuel Islamic extremism in the troubled western province of Xinjiang. Credibly assuring that Pakistan's security concerns will be addressed in any peace deal might encourage leaders in both Islamabad and Beijing to be more helpful.

The U.S. should, of course, continue to reserve the right to take more kinetic action within Pakistan itself, as former President Barack Obama did with the assassination of Osama bin Laden. This kind of intervention carries risks for the U.S., obviously. Yet Pakistan's failure to act carries even greater risk -- to its economy, its reputation and, not least, the security and stability of the wider world.



Far From Myanmar Violence, Rohingya in Pakistan Are Seething

Mehreen Zahra-Malik

KARACHI, Pakistan — It was happening again, but worse than ever: Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Rohingya Muslims were fleeing Myanmar while under attack by the security forces, and the deaths kept mounting.

Everybody in the vast Arkanabad slum of Karachi has family members who were affected by the government raids that started last month.

Outside Myanmar, and perhaps now Bangladesh, Pakistan is home to the highest concentration of Rohingya in the world, from a previous exodus of Rohingya in the 1970s and '80s. A vast majority live in neighborhoods that are distressingly impoverished even by Karachi's standards.

Now they are angry that Pakistan is not doing more to stop the killing in Myanmar, let alone improve the condition of the estimated 500,000 Rohingya who live in this country.

"The government needs to do more: Send them more aid, send them food, and break ties with Myanmar completely," said Noor Hussain

Arkani, who leads the Pakistan chapter of a charity in the Rohingya community, the Rohingya Solidarity Organization. "We need world pressure behind us to end this violence, this hell. Just issuing statements isn't enough."

'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 »

Pakistan was among the earliest and most strident in condemning the Myanmar government for its offensive, which started after Rohingya militants killed members of the security forces. The United Nations said Tuesday that since then, at least 370,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh.

But even as politicians and civil society in Pakistan are up in arms over how members of the Buddhist majority in Myanmar are abusing the Muslim Rohingyas there, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya migrants here continue to live in desperation.

Across the Arkanabad slum — named after the old designation for Myanmar's present-day Rakhine State — decrepit shanties with temporary walls, often with no doors and windows and unsteady corrugated roofs, serve as homes to more than 100,000 Rohingya.

The men mostly work as fishermen, while a small number weave carpets or are employed in garment factories. Malnutrition and diarrhea are common among children who have little access to schools and spend their days playing in rivers of garbage.

Residents said that up to 30 families shared a single tap of water. But even where running water is available, it often flows for less than four hours a day. There are no hospitals in the slums, and at least six women spoke of having a relative die giving birth because she

had been denied admission to government hospitals.

Still, what people complained of the most in interviews last week was routine harassment by the police. Many spoke grimly of a "Burma Cell," a special police division responsible for cracking down on Rohingya migrants. (Burma is the former name of Myanmar.)

Many Rohingya have carried Pakistani national ID cards for years but since the authorities started cracking down on fake versions in 2014, many have found it hard to renew their cards. And the second generation is being denied cards altogether, they said.

"Without cards, we are blocked out of jobs, our children can't apply for admission in high schools and we can't access government hospitals," said Mr. Arkani, of the Rohingya Solidarity Organization.

In the slum of Burmi Colony, many residents spoke of being forbidden by the police to leave to fish. Mohammad Younis, a fisherman in his 30s, said he had not worked for half a year and his monthly salary of

around \$600 had shrunk to less than \$60.

"When I try and take my nets and go out, I get stopped by the police, who ask for my ID," said Mr. Younis, whose documents expired six months ago. "I show them documents to prove I am trying to renew my ID card, but they don't even let me leave the colony."

He added, "We will die, trapped here without access to our means of livelihood."

Residents described arrests of people without cards who were then held either on impossible bail or until they paid a bribe directly to officers.

Malik Ishfaque, the station house master at the police station under whose jurisdiction many of the Rohingya-majority slums fall, said

that officers were duty-bound to crack down on anyone who did not possess valid documents. And while he acknowledged that the Burma Cell used to exist, he said it had been dismantled.

Asked about instances of harassment and intimidation by the police that some Rohingya had described, Mr. Ishfaque said: "We act against these people because they are a group of thieves," noting that crimes like pick-pocketing and robbery in the surrounding area were mostly committed by the Rohingya.

Despite having little, the Rohingya have been trying to directly help their people back in Myanmar.

Mr. Arkani said the community had raised money to send meat from 30

cows for the new wave of refugees in Bangladesh, as no new refugees were being allowed into Pakistan. The Rohingya Solidarity Organization had also set up a glass donation box, but it was almost empty.

"We are so poor already, but even then we try to raise whatever little money we can among ourselves," he said. "But we need more help from Pakistani people who are rich, who have resources."

Many who live here cannot even officially identify themselves as Rohingya. To avoid persecution and be accepted as naturalized citizens, many pretended to be Bengalis who migrated from East Pakistan before the 1971 war of independence, after which it became Bangladesh.

"You ask if we have enough to eat or drink, but I ask you: What is our condition when we cannot even say we are Burmese?" said Noor Jabbar, a community elder whose ID card expired three months ago but who has not succeeded in renewing it.

For his part, Khalid Saifullah, 70, who migrated from Myanmar four decades ago, described persistent mistreatment. "They won't let me be a citizen, because then they have to give me rights and they won't call me a refugee because then they have to give me aid," said Mr. Saifullah, showing the high school diploma he had received from a school in Karachi. "I am not a citizen or a refugee. I am an illegal alien. I am nothing."

**The
Washington
Post**

'Textbook example of ethnic cleansing': 370,000 Rohingyas flood Bangladesh as crisis worsens

DHAKA, Bangladesh — The number of Rohingya refugees fleeing a military crackdown in Burma has now topped 370,000, a crisis the United Nations human rights chief called "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing."

Hundreds of thousands of the long-persecuted ethnic minority continued to stream via land and rickety boats into Bangladesh this week, arriving exhausted, dehydrated and recounting tales of nightmarish horrors at the hands of the Burmese military, including friends and neighbors shot dead and homes torched before their eyes.

"It seems they wanted us to leave the country," said Nurjahan, an elderly Rohingya woman who escaped her burning village 10 days ago and ended up camped by the side of the road, unsure of where to go.

In Geneva on Tuesday, the International Organization for Migration put the number fleeing Burma at 370,000 but admitted it could rise sharply.

"Clearly the estimates have been bypassed several times over," said spokesman Leonard Doyle. "I'm reluctant to give a number, but obviously people fear that it could go much higher."

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 for neighboring Bangladesh. Here's why the crisis is unfolding. (Jason Aldag, Max Bearak / The Washington Post)

[The Rohingya exodus from Burma is arduous — and sometimes lethal]

As the refugees continue to inundate the area, ferry operators are charging about \$122 for a river crossing — far out of reach for many of them.

Relief efforts have been rapidly overwhelmed, with stocks of food, temporary shelter kits and other supplies running low. Prices of vegetables, bamboo and plastic sheeting used to make shelters are soaring.

With camps full, many of the Rohingya refugees like Nurjahan have simply sat down on the roadside.

On Tuesday, Bangladesh's prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, visited the camps in the Cox's Bazar area of the country, which has sheltered thousands of the stateless Rohingya refugees since an earlier exodus in the 1990s. Her foreign minister has accused Burma of committing "genocide."

She said Burma, also known as Myanmar, would have to take back its Rohingya refugees, since Burmese authorities "created this problem, and they will have to solve it."

International condemnation of Burma's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, has intensified, along with repeated calls for her Nobel Peace Prize,

which she won in 1991 as a result of her long fight for democracy in Burma, to be rescinded — something the Nobel Committee has said will not happen.

On Monday, the White House issued a statement condemning the attacks and the ensuing violence, saying it was "deeply troubled" by the ongoing crisis and "alarmed" by "allegations of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, burning of villages, massacres, and rape, by security forces and by civilians acting with these forces' consent."

Matthew Smith, chief executive of Fortify Rights, a human rights group, said investigators from the group spent nine days at the border documenting atrocities.

Suu Kyi has long had strong supporters in the U.S. Congress and in the Obama administration, who saw her as the one leader who could bridge the country's tentative transition from military junta to civilian government.

But with Suu Kyi's continued reluctance to speak out on the plight of the Rohingya and the ensuing human rights crisis, her star has begun to dim. Her supporters say the episode has demonstrated how limited her powers are, as the military still controls 25 percent of the seats in the parliament as well as the security forces.

[The shameful silence of Aung San Suu Kyi]

Burma's more than 1 million Rohingya Muslims are essentially stateless, and the Burmese government considers them illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

The minority group has endured decades of discrimination and neglect, which worsened in 2012 after Rohingya clashed with Buddhists in Burma's western Rakhine State. More than 100,000 were then confined to camps where their movement, access to jobs and education were severely restricted.

A mother of two, Khadiza, 35, said that they were used to living with violence but that this latest episode was different: "Both the army and the Buddhists attacked us this time."

At first, her husband convinced her things would improve, but when a neighboring village was burned, they decided to leave. As they were fleeing overland, their group came under fire and the couple were separated, she said. She has not seen her husband since.

"I have no idea where he is now," she said. "I only came to save my two children."

The exodus began Aug. 25 after an insurgent group of Rohingya militants called the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked dozens of police outposts and an army camp, killing 12 and igniting days of violent retribution.

In addition to torching hundreds of villages and killing civilians, the Burmese military has been accused by Amnesty International and other human rights groups of planting land mines at the border, based on the wounds suffered by some of those escaping.

Evening Edition newsletter

The day's most important stories.

U.N. high commissioner for human rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein on Monday pointed to satellite imagery and reports of "security forces and local militia burning Rohingya villages."

"The Myanmar government should stop pretending that the Rohingyas are setting fire to their own homes and laying waste to their own villages," he said, a swipe at Suu Kyi's government, which has accused the Rohingya of doing the torching themselves. He called it a "complete denial of reality."

Since the emergence of armed Rohingya rebels, Suu Kyi's government has shifted its position, framing the issue as a matter of national security rather than a humanitarian crisis. On Monday, her government spokesman, Zaw Htay, reiterated that position, saying in a statement the government shares

the concern of the international community over the "violence ignited by the acts of terrorism."

Mushfiqu Wadud in Cox's Bazar contributed to thi

**The
New York
Times**

Friedman : Trump's Folly

Thomas L.
Friedman

America faces two serious national security threats today that look wildly different but have one core feature in common — they both have a low probability of happening, but, if they did happen, they could have devastating consequences for our whole country and the world.

One of these threats is called North Korea. If the reckless leader of North Korea is able to launch an arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles that strike the U.S. mainland, the impact on America will be incalculable.

And even though the odds of that happening are low — it would be an act of suicide by the North Korean dynasty — President Trump is ready to spend billions on antimissile systems, warships, cyberdefenses, air power and war games to defuse and deter this North Korean threat.

And if we prepare for a North Korean nuclear attack and it never happens, we will be left with some improved weaponry that we might be able to use in other theaters, like fighter jets, ships and missiles — but nothing particularly productive for our economy or job creation.

The other low-probability, high-impact threat is climate change fueled by increased human-caused carbon emissions. The truth is, if you simply trace the steady increase in costly extreme weather events — wildfires, floods, droughts and climate-related human migrations —

the odds of human-driven global warming having a devastating impact on our planet are not low probability but high probability.

But let's assume for a minute that because climate change is a complex process — which we do not fully understand — climate change is a low-probability, high-impact event just like a North Korean nuclear strike. What is the Trump team doing when confronted with this similar threat?

It's taking a spike and poking out its own eyes. In possibly the most intellectually corrupt declaration of the Trump era — a high bar — Scott Pruitt, a longtime shill for oil and gas companies now masquerading as the head of the E.P.A., actually declared that even discussing possible links between human-driven climate disruptions and the recent monster storms was "insensitive." He said that after our country got hit by two Atlantic Category 4 hurricanes in the same year for the first time since records have been kept — storms made more destructive by rising ocean levels and warmer ocean waters.

Makes me wonder ... if Pruitt were afflicted with cancer, would he not want scientists discussing with him, let alone researching, the possible causes and solutions? Wouldn't want to upset him.

Frauds like Pruitt like to say that the climate has been changing since long before any human drove a car, so how could humans be causing climate change? Of course they

aren't solely responsible. The climate *has* always changed by itself through its own natural variability. But that doesn't mean that humans can't exacerbate or disrupt this natural variability by warming the planet even more and, by doing so, making the hots hotter, the wets wetter, the storms harsher, the colds colder and the droughts drier.

That is why I prefer the term "global weirding" over "global warming." The weather does get warmer in some places, but it gets weird in others. Look at the past few months: Not only were several big U.S. cities slammed by monster hurricanes, but San Francisco set a heat record — 106 degrees on Sept. 1, a day when the average high there is 70 degrees; the West was choked by record-breaking forest fires exacerbated by drought; and South Asia was slammed by extraordinarily harsh monsoons, killing some 1,400 people.

But what if we prepare for disruptive climate change and it doesn't get as bad as feared? Where will we be? Well, we will have cleaner air to breathe, less childhood asthma, more innovative building materials and designs, and cleaner, more efficient power generation and transportation systems — all of which will be huge export industries and create tens of thousands of good, repeat jobs. Because with world population steadily rising, we all will need greener cars and power if we just want to breathe clean air, no matter what happens with the

climate. We will also be less dependent on petro-dictators.

Indeed, it is safe to say, that if we overprepare for climate change and nothing much happens, it will be exactly like training for the Olympic marathon and the Olympics get canceled. You're left with a body that is stronger, fitter and healthier.

Trump has recently fired various knuckle-headed aides whose behavior was causing him short-term embarrassment. The person he needs to fire is Scott Pruitt. Pruitt is going to cause Trump long-term embarrassment. But instead, together they are authoring a new national security doctrine — one that says when faced with a low-probability, high-impact event like North Korea, the U.S. should spend any amount of money, and if the threat doesn't materialize, well, we'll have a lot of Army surplus and scrap metal.

But when faced with an actually high-probability, high-impact threat called climate change, we should do nothing and poke both our eyes out, even though if the impact is less severe — and we prepare for it anyway — we will be left healthier, stronger, more productive, more resilient and more respected around the world.

That is the Pruitt-Trump Doctrine — soon to be known as "Trump's Folly."

the Atlantic

Is Trump Ending the American Era?

Eliot A. Cohen

Donald Trump was right. He inherited a mess. In January 2017, American foreign policy was, if not in crisis, in big trouble. Strong forces were putting stress on the old global political order: the rise of China to a power with more than half the productive capacity of the United States (and defense spending to match); the partial recovery of a resentful Russia under a skilled and thuggish autocrat; the discrediting of Western elites by the financial crash of 2008, followed by roiling populist waves, of which Trump himself was

part; a turbulent Middle East; economic dislocations worldwide.

An American leadership that had partly discredited itself over the past generation compounded these problems. The Bush administration's war against jihadist Islam had been undermined by reports of mistreatment and torture; its Afghan campaign had been inconclusive; its invasion of Iraq had been deeply compromised by what turned out to be a false premise and three years of initial mismanagement.

The Obama administration's policy of retrenchment (described by a

White House official as "leading from behind") made matters worse. The United States was generally passive as a war that caused some half a million deaths raged in Syria. The ripples of the conflict reached far into Europe, as some 5 million Syrians fled the country. A red line about the use of chemical weapons turned pale pink and vanished, as Iran and Russia expanded their presence and influence in Syria ever more brazenly. A debilitating freeze in defense spending, meanwhile, left two-thirds of U.S. Army maneuver brigades unready to fight and Air

Force pilots unready to fly in combat.

These circumstances would have caused severe headaches for a competent and sophisticated successor. Instead, the United States got a president who had unnervingly promised a wall on the southern border (paid for by Mexico), the dismantlement of long-standing trade deals with both competitors and partners, a closer relationship with Vladimir Putin, and a ban on Muslims coming into the United States.

Some of these and Trump's other wild pronouncements were quietly walked back or put on hold after his inauguration; one defense of Trump is that his deeds are less alarming than his words. But diplomacy is about words, and many of Trump's words are profoundly toxic.

Foreign leaders have begun to reshape alliances, bypassing and diminishing the United States.

Trump seems incapable of restraining himself from insulting foreign leaders. His slogan "America First" harks back to the isolationists of 1940, and foreign leaders know it. He can read speeches written for him by others, as he did in Warsaw on July 6, but he cannot himself articulate a worldview that goes beyond a teenager's bluster. He lays out his resentments, insecurities, and obsessions on Twitter for all to see, opening up a gold mine to foreign governments seeking to understand and manipulate the American president.

Foreign governments have adapted. They flatter Trump outrageously. Their emissaries stay at his hotels and offer the Trump Organization abundant concessions (39 trademarks approved by China alone since Trump took office, including one for an escort service). They take him to military parades; they talk tough-guy-to-tough-guy; they show him the kind of deference that only someone without a center can crave. And so he flip-flops: Paris was no longer "so, so out of control, so dangerous" once he'd had dinner in the Eiffel Tower; Xi Jinping, during an April visit to Mar-a-Lago, went from being the leader of a parasitic country intent on ripping off American workers to being "a gentleman" who "wants to do the right thing." (By July, Trump was back to bashing China, for doing "NOTHING" to help us.)

In short, foreign leaders may consider Trump alarming, but they do not consider him serious. They may think they can use him, but they know they cannot rely on him. They look at his plans to slash the State Department's ranks and its budget—the latter by about 30 percent—and draw conclusions about his interest in traditional diplomacy. And so, already, they have begun to reshape alliances and reconfigure the networks that make up the global economy, bypassing the United States and diminishing its standing. In January, at the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Switzerland, Xi made a case for Chinese global leadership that was startlingly well received by the rich and powerful officials, businesspeople, and experts in attendance. In March, Canada formally joined a Chinese-led regional development bank that

the Obama administration had opposed as an instrument of broadened Chinese influence; Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France were among the founding members. In July, Japan and Europe agreed on a free-trade deal as an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which Trump had unceremoniously discarded.

In almost every region of the world, the administration has already left a mark, by blunder, inattention, miscomprehension, or willfulness. Trump's first official visit abroad began in Saudi Arabia—a bizarre choice, when compared with established democratic allies—where he and his senior advisers offered unreserved praise for a kingdom that has close relations with the United States but has also been the heartland of Islamist fanaticism since well before 9/11. The president full-throatedly took its side in a dispute with Qatar, apparently ignorant of the vast American air base in the latter country. He has seemed unaware that he is feeding an inchoate but violent conflict between the Gulf kingdoms and a countervailing coalition of Iran, Russia, Syria, Hezbollah, and even Turkey—which now plans to deploy as many as 3,000 troops to Qatar, at its first base in the Arab world since the collapse of the Ottoman empire at the end of World War I.

The administration obsesses about defeating the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and yet intends to sharply reduce the kinds of advice and support that are needed to rebuild the areas devastated by war in those same countries—support that might help prevent a future recurrence of Islamist fanaticism. The president, entranced by the chimera of an Israeli-Palestinian peace, has put his inexperienced and overburdened son-in-law, Jared Kushner, in charge of a process headed nowhere. Either ignorant or contemptuous of the deep-seated maladies that have long afflicted the Arab world, Trump embraces authoritarians like Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi ("Love your shoes") and seems to dismiss the larger problems of governance posed by the crises within Middle Eastern societies as internal issues irrelevant to the United States. A freedom agenda, in either its original Bush or subsequent Obama form, is dead.

Big foreign-policy failures are like heart attacks: They follow years of hidden malady.

In Europe, the administration has picked a fight with the Continent's most important democratic state, Germany ("Bad, very bad"). Trump

is sufficiently despised in Great Britain, America's most enduring ally, that he will reportedly defer a trip there until his press improves (it will not). Paralyzed by scandal and internal division, the administration has no coherent Russia policy: no plan for getting Moscow back out of the Middle East; no counter to Russian political subversion in Europe or the United States; no response to reports of new Russian meddling in Afghanistan. Rather than pushing back when the Russians announced in July that 755 U.S. government employees would be expelled, Trump expressed his thanks for saving taxpayers 755 salaries.

America's new circumstances in Asia were not much better as this story went to press, in mid-August—and with the world on edge, they could quickly get much worse. Though North Korea is on the verge of developing a nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile, Trump neglected to rally American allies to confront the problem during his two major trips abroad. His aides proclaimed that they had discovered the solution, Chinese intervention—apparently unaware of the repeated failure of that gambit in the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations. Trump did, however, take a break from a golfing holiday to threaten North Korea with "fire and fury" in the event that Kim Jong Un failed to pipe down. To accommodate a president fixated on economic deals, an anxious Japan has pledged investments that would result in American jobs. A prickly Australia, whose prime minister Trump snarled at during their first courtesy phone call, has edged further from its traditional alliance with America—an alliance that has been the cornerstone of its security since World War II. (In a gesture that may seem trivial but signifies much, in July Australia's foreign minister, Julie Bishop, slapped at Trump for his ogling of the French president's wife, suggesting that his admiring looks had gone unreciprocated.)

On issues that are truly global in scope, Trump has abdicated leadership and the moral high ground. The United States has managed to isolate itself on the topic of climate change, by the tone of its pronouncements no less than by its precipitous exit from the Paris Agreement. As for human rights, the president has taken only cursory notice of the two arrests of the Russian dissident Alexei Navalny or the death of the Chinese Nobel Prize winner and prisoner of conscience Liu Xiaobo. Trump did not object after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's security detail beat American protesters on American soil, in Washington, D.C.

In April, he reportedly told Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte, who has used death squads to deal with offenders of local narcotics laws, that he was doing an "unbelievable job on the drug problem." Trump's secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, made it clear in his first substantive speech to State Department employees that American values are now of at best secondary importance to "American interests," presumably economic, in the conduct of foreign policy.

All this well before a year was out.

The Compounding Risk of Crisis

Matters will not improve. Trump will not learn, will not moderate, will not settle into normal patterns of behavior. And for all the rot that is visible in America's standing and ability to influence global affairs, more is spreading beneath the surface. Even when Trump's foreign policy looks shakily mediocre rather than downright crazy, it is afflicting the U.S. with a condition not unlike untreated high blood pressure. Enormous foreign-policy failures are like heart attacks: unexpected and dangerous discontinuities following years of neglect and hidden malady. The vertigo and throbbing pulse one feels today augur something much worse tomorrow.

To a degree rarely appreciated outside Washington, it is virtually impossible to conduct an effective foreign policy without political appointees at the assistant-secretary rank who share a president's conceptions and will implement his agenda. As of mid-August, the administration had yet to even nominate a new undersecretary of state for political affairs; assistant secretaries for Near Eastern, East Asian and Pacific, or Western Hemisphere Affairs; or ambassadors to Germany, India, or Saudi Arabia. At lower levels, the State Department is being actively thinned out—2,300 jobs are slated for elimination—and is losing experience by the week as disaffected professionals quietly leave.

High-level diplomatic contact with allies and adversaries alike has withered. Meanwhile, for fear of contradicting him, Trump's underlings avoid saying too much publicly. As a result, the administration's foreign policy will continue to be as opaque externally as it is confused internally.

One consequence will be a corresponding confusion on the part of foreign powers about the

administration's goals, commitments, and red lines—and the likely misinterpretation of stray signals. Even well-run

administrations can fail to communicate their intentions clearly, with dire consequences. On July 25, 1990, the American ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, met with Saddam Hussein. Glaspie assured Saddam of President George H. W. Bush's friendship and, although the administration was concerned about a possible Iraqi attack on Kuwait, blandly remarked that "we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait." A week later, Saddam's troops invaded Kuwait, and he was surprised when Bush did not take it well. Again, this happened in a competent administration. One shudders to think what the Trump equivalent might be with regard to, say, Chinese aggression in the South China Sea.

The first Bush administration recovered from the disaster of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait because it was an effective and cohesive team of highly experienced professionals—Brent Scowcroft, James Baker, Dick Cheney—led by a prudent and disciplined president. They built a coalition, reassured and mobilized allies, placated neutrals, and planned and executed a war. They disagreed with one another in open and productive ways. They shrewdly used the career civil servants and able political appointees who served them energetically and well. Even so, the war's ragged end and unexpected consequences are with us still.

Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, North Korea's invasion of the South in 1950, the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the Cuban missile crisis, the 1967 and 1973 Middle East wars, the collapse of communism, 9/11, the 2011 Arab Spring—all were surprises. So too were lesser episodes like the 2007 discovery of a North Korean nuclear reactor in Syria. Surprises are unavoidably what international politics is all about; what matters is how well an administration copes with them. Trump was lucky to avoid an external crisis in his first seven months. That luck will run out.

Mike McQuade

Add to this fractured foundation the erratic behavior of the president himself, who will be less and less likely to accede to (or even hear) contrary advice as he passes more time in the Oval Office. Septuagenarian tycoons do not change fundamental qualities of their personalities: They are who they are. Nor is someone who has spent a career in charge of a small, family-run corporation without shareholders likely to pay much attention to external views. These

arguments have been well ventilated. But what many people have not weighed adequately is the effect of the White House itself, the trappings and the aura, on those who inhabit it. After an initial period of awe, presidents become more confident that they know what they're doing. Particularly for someone whose ego knows few bounds, it can be a dangerously intoxicating place.

The longer someone is in high office and becomes accustomed to supreme power, the less opposition and disagreement he will encounter and the less disagreement he is likely to heed. This may explain Obama's Syria failure throughout his second term. This process is already well advanced within Trump's White House, as evidenced by the bizarre and deeply worrying spectacle orchestrated by the president on June 12, in which all members of his Cabinet, with the honorable exception of Defense Secretary James Mattis, offered up competitively obsequious compliments to the boss while on national television. As old advisers and officials fall by the wayside—exhausted, disgraced, or both—the new ones will be more likely to accommodate a man they have known chiefly as "Mr. President" and whose favor has required self-abasement.

Consider this contrast: In July 2005, I published in *The Washington Post* a searing critique of the Bush administration's conduct of the Iraq War. The besieged defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, did not fire me from the Defense Policy Board, a senior advisory committee to the Department of Defense, on which I served. Within months I was advising the National Security Council staff, and eventually Secretary Condoleezza Rice asked me to serve in one of the most senior positions in the Department of State without a murmur of disapproval from the White House. This reflected less my value to the administration than the large-spiritedness of President George W. Bush and those who worked for him, and their awareness that expressing criticism or dissent was an act of patriotism, not personal betrayal.

Trump lacks that spirit, and his advisers—one way or another—will find themselves sapped of it as well. Mattis and Tillerson have, by all accounts, raged at a White House obsessed with loyalty, which fired a junior staffer for unflattering retweets more than a year old and had trouble attracting first-tier or independent-minded experts to begin with. At some point these advisers will either give up in frustration or simply be replaced by more-pliable individuals.

Trump unrestrained is of course a frightening prospect. His instincts are not reliable—if they were, he and his campaign would have kept their distance from Russian operatives. A man who has presided over failed casinos, a collapsed airline, and a sham university is not someone who knows when to step back from the brink. His domestic political circumstances, already bad, seem likely to deteriorate further, which will only make him more angry, and perhaps more apt to take risks. In a fit of temper or in the grip of spectacular misjudgment—possibly influenced by what he's just seen on TV—he could stumble into or launch an uncontrollable war.

In one of the worst scenarios, Trump, as a result of his alternating overtures to and belligerence toward China, might bring about a conflict with Xi Jinping, who is consolidating his own power in a way not seen since the days of Mao Zedong. Military conflict between rising and preeminent global powers is hardly anomalous, after all, and the Chinese are no longer in the mood to accept American hegemony. In 1990, when George H. W. Bush confronted Saddam, an isolated dictator, a paralyzed Russia and weak China were powerless to interfere. He had at his disposal the American military at the peak of its post-Cold War strength, and a ready set of allies. The United States has grown used to wars with limited risk against minor and isolated rivals. A conflict with China would be something altogether different.

Trump is, and is likely to be to the end, volatile, truculent, and impulsive. When he does face a crisis, whether or not it is of his own making, he will discover just how weak his hand is, because no one—friends or enemies, the American public or foreign leaders—will take anything that he promises or threatens at face value. At that point we may find another Donald Trump emerging: the Trump who paid \$25 million to the victims of Trump University, who rages at *The New York Times* and then truckles to its reporters. Like most bullies, he can be stared down. But when he folds, American foreign policy will fold with him.

The Damage That Cannot Be Undone

This dangerous and dispiriting chapter in American history will end, in eight years or four—or perhaps in two or even one, if Trump is impeached or removed under the Twenty-Fifth Amendment. But what will follow? Will the United States recover within a few years, as it did from the disgrace of Richard Nixon's resignation and the fecklessness of

Jimmy Carter during the Iranian hostage crisis? Alas, that is unlikely. Even barring cataclysmic events, we will be living with the consequences of Trump's tenure as chief executive and commander in chief for decades. Damage will continue to appear long after he departs the scene.

Americans, after trying every other alternative, can always be counted on to do the right thing, Winston Churchill supposedly said. But who will count on that now, after the victory of a man like Trump? Other countries interpret Trump's election as America's repudiation of its role as guarantor of world order. Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland put it bluntly in a speech in June: "The fact that our friend and ally has come to question the very worth of its mantle of global leadership puts into sharper focus the need for the rest of us to set our own clear and sovereign course."

Indeed, that is what is happening. Trump is not entirely a historical fluke, and it is reasonable to see his foreign policy as reflecting some Americans' attitudes toward the outside world. Our politicians and our foreign-policy establishment—the former consumed by domestic matters, the latter largely by technocratic concerns—have lost the ability to make the case to the country for prudent American management of an international system whose relative peace for 70 years owes so much to Washington's leadership. Americans who oppose Trump may conclude (also reasonably) that the country's internal problems, including the fundamentals of its civic culture, demand their attention. They too may turn inward, not least because they have lost confidence in the strength of political institutions and the competence of the political class.

But there is also a more structural development that will make the recovery of America's global status difficult: Trump is accelerating the decomposition of the Republican foreign-policy and national-security establishment that began in the 2016 campaign. Two public letters signed by some 150 of its members during the spring and summer of last year denounced Trump not merely for bad judgment but also for bad character. (I co-organized one letter and assisted with the other.) Few who signed the letters cared to recant after the election. The administration clearly wanted nothing to do with any of them anyway, although it would have been wise to display magnanimity and recruit some of them. Magnanimity is not, however, part of the Trump playbook.

These would have been some of the leading candidates to serve in a normal Republican administration. Finding other candidates has been difficult, but eventually the jobs will be filled. If the administration lasts four years, and even more so if it lasts eight, those who fill them will be the GOP's successor generation, much of the anti-Trump group being too old, or too compromised within a Republican Party that has dutifully rallied around its leader, to hold sway. Because the Trump administration prizes personal loyalty above all other qualities—most emphatically including competence, creativity, integrity, and even, in some measure, patriotism—this is a serious problem.

Establishments exist for a reason, and, within limits, they are good things. Despite what populists think, foreign policy is not, in fact, safely handed over to teams of ideologues or adventurous amateurs. Dean Acheson, Harry Truman's secretary of state, who helped stabilize the post-World War II world, was not a corporate head who suddenly took an interest in what goes on abroad; neither was George Shultz, who, as Ronald Reagan's secretary of state, helped orchestrate the final stage of the Cold War. Behind each of those men were hundreds of experts and

practitioners who had thought hard about the world, and had experience steering the external relations of the Great Republic.

An elite consensus that spans both parties means a government that does not shift radically from administration to administration in its commitments to allies or to human rights, in its opposition to enemies, or in its support for international institutions; that has a sense of direction and purpose that transcends partisan politics; that can develop the political appointees our system uniquely depends on to staff the upper levels of government. As long as that elite is honest, able, open to new talent and to considered course alterations, and tolerant of dissent, it can provide consistency and stability.

Veterans of Trump's administration will include some patriots who knowingly took a reputational hit to save the country from calamity—plus a large collection of mediocrities, cynics, and trimmers willing to equivocate about American values and interests, and indeed about their own beliefs. Many of them even now can say, as the old Soviet joke had it, "I have my personal opinions, but I assure you that I don't agree with them." Or, as one person explained his decision to me as he began working for the

administration, "It's my last shot at a big job."

Most of these veterans, knowing what their former friends and colleagues think of their decision, will be angrily self-justifying. Many of the "Never Trumpers" who have held back from working for an odious man will be disdainful. That is human nature. But the upshot will be a Republican establishment riven, like the conservative intellectual class more broadly, by antagonisms all the more bitter because they rest as much on personal feelings of injury or vindication as on principled beliefs. "Everything I've worked for for two decades is being destroyed," a senior Republican experienced in foreign policy told Susan B. Glasser of *Politico* in March. One should not expect from such individuals ready forgiveness of the destroyers. All the while, the Democratic Party will be going through its own turmoil as its foreign-policy experts, who had aligned overwhelmingly with Hillary Clinton, come under pressure from members of the party's left wing, some of whose views on foreign affairs are not that far from Trump's.

America's astonishing resilience may rescue it once again, particularly if Trump does not finish his first term. But an equally likely scenario is that Trump will leave key

government institutions weakened or corrupted, America's foreign-policy establishment sharply divided, and America's position in the world stunted. An America lacking confidence, coupled with the rise of undemocratic powers, populist movements on the right and left, and failing states, is the kind of world few Americans remember. It would be like the world of the late 1920s or early 1930s: disorderly and unstable, but with much worse to follow.

There are many reasons to be appalled by President Trump, including his disregard for constitutional norms and decent behavior. But watching this unlikeliest of presidents strut on the treacherous stage of international politics is different from following the daily domestic chaos that is the Trump administration. Hearing him bully and brag, boast and bluster, threaten and lie, one feels a kind of dizziness, a sensation that underneath the throbbing pulse of routine scandal lies the potential for much worse. The kind of sensation, in fact, that accompanies dangerously high blood pressure, just before a sudden, excruciating pain.



Editorial : Senators in Search of a Foreign Policy

The range of problems facing the United States abroad is daunting: a volatile Middle East, an unpredictable, mischievous Russia, a truly menacing North Korea. To say nothing of destabilizing global challenges like the mass migration of desperate refugees, and climate change. President Trump's "America First" approach, which calls for disengagement from old alliances and responsibilities, is a dodge, not an answer. What's needed is a robust foreign policy led by a reinvigorated State Department that right now is suffering from presidential neglect, poor leadership and an absence of professional firepower in pivotal positions.

Two people who understand the urgency of helping the department recover from the damages inflicted by Mr. Trump are Senators Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, and Patrick Leahy, Democrat of Vermont. Leading members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, they have sought to rally their colleagues around a bipartisan spending bill for 2018 that would strengthen the department and replenish important foreign aid programs.

Last week, the two won unanimous committee approval for a \$51 billion bill for the State Department and foreign aid, about \$11 billion more than the administration requested. While the total is less than what Congress allocated for 2017, and less than necessary given the international challenges, it's nowhere near the 30 percent cut that Mr. Trump; his budget chief, Mick Mulvaney; and his secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, had absurdly insisted was imperative.

As interesting as the bipartisan vote was the Republican-led committee's report, which pulled no punches in blistering Mr. Trump and his aides for proposing a budget in May that amounted to an "apparent doctrine of retreat" from the world. "The lessons learned since September 11, 2001, include the reality that defense alone does not provide for American strength and resolve abroad," the report said. "Battlefield technology and firepower cannot replace diplomacy and development."

That argument strikes at the heart of Mr. Trump's approach, which favors warlike rhetoric and a reliance on the Pentagon as the primary levers of American power, while negotiation and diplomacy are given

short shrift. At more than \$600 billion annually, the military budget accounts for almost 19 percent of the federal budget, and Mr. Trump would add billions more for additional Navy ships and nuclear weapons. The State Department and its foreign aid programs account for 1 percent of the overall budget.

Sixteen years of war against terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere have given the military what it and many others see as a priority claim on federal dollars, leaving the State Department in a subsidiary role. Mr. Trump reinforced that trend with his proposed budget cuts, which would eliminate more than 2,500 diplomatic and development jobs and make major reductions in diplomatic security (36 percent in budget cuts), H.I.V./AIDS programs (17 percent), international disaster assistance and food aid (a whopping 77 percent) and migration and refugee assistance (18 percent). When the "unjustified" budget cuts were announced, the committee report said, they caused so much concern in foreign capitals that China and Russia were able to "hijack our national security narrative" as a commanding and

confident power capable of leading the world.

The committee bill would rescind many of these reductions and go beyond the numbers by imposing unprecedented restrictions to protect certain programs and operations from administrative meddling. The number of Foreign Service officer positions, for example, would not be permitted to go below 14,000; and the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration could not be eliminated.

There are two reasons for these rules. Senators were angered that Mr. Mulvaney arbitrarily took a meat ax to the State Department budget without understanding its programs or the consequences of reductions and without adequate consultation with Congress. There is also grave bipartisan concern about whether Mr. Tillerson, a former Exxon Mobil chief executive with no government experience, is over his head and, indeed, whether the reorganization he has promised will end up further weakening the department. The secretary is widely seen as lacking influence with Mr. Trump; often eclipsed on the world stage by the ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley; accessible only to a small coterie of aides; and detached

from an increasingly demoralized diplomatic corps. Many senior people have already left their jobs in an institution that many once saw as the government's crown jewel.

**The
New York
Times**

Jordan

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration is considering reducing the number of refugees admitted to the country over the next year to below 50,000, according to current and former government officials familiar with the discussions, the lowest number since at least 1980.

President Trump promised during his 2016 campaign to deny admittance to refugees who posed a terrorist threat. In his first days in office he took steps to radically reduce the program that resettles refugees in American cities and towns, capping the number admitted at 50,000 as part of his executive order banning travel from seven predominantly Muslim countries. That was less than half the 110,000 refugees President Barack Obama said should be admitted in 2016.

But in recent weeks, as the deadline approached for Mr. Trump to issue the annual determination for refugee admissions required by the Refugee Act of 1980, some inside the White House — led by Stephen Miller, Mr. Trump's senior adviser for policy — have pressed to set the ceiling even lower.

The issue has created an intense debate within the administration, with Mr. Miller and some officials at the Department of Homeland Security citing security concerns and limited resources as grounds for deeply cutting the number of admissions, and officials at the National Security Council, the State Department and the Department of Defense opposing a precipitous drop.

No final decision has been made, according to the officials, but as the issue is being debated, the Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed the administration to bar almost any refugees from entering the country while it considers challenges to the travel ban order. The court will hear arguments in the case next month.

A Historically Low Cap on Refugees May Fall Further

President Trump is considering lowering the cap on refugees admitted to the United States to less than 50,000 for the 2018 fiscal year, down from the 110,000 cap set by President Barack Obama before he

Like all institutions, the department can benefit from improvements. But there is no sign that Mr. Trump and his team understand its core mission and its importance in a turbulent

left office. Mr. Trump had previously ordered that the country admit no more than 50,000 refugees in 2017.

Spokesmen at the White House and the departments of Homeland Security and State declined to discuss an annual figure, noting that it had not yet been finalized. By law, the president must consult with Congress and make a decision by the start of each fiscal year, Oct. 1, on the refugee ceiling.

Mr. Miller, the principal architect of Mr. Trump's hard-line immigration policies, has been the most vocal proponent at the White House for reducing the number of admissions far below the 50,000 stipulated in the travel ban, at one point advocating a level as low as 15,000, the officials said. An aide to Attorney General Jeff Sessions when he was in the Senate, he has inserted himself in a policy process that is typically led by the State Department and coordinated by the National Security Council.

This year, the Department of Homeland Security is dominating the discussions, and the Domestic Policy Council, which reports to Mr. Miller, has coordinated the process. In a meeting on the topic at the White House on Tuesday, Homeland Security officials recommended a limit of 40,000, according to officials familiar with the discussions who spoke on condition of anonymity because the talks are private.

Should Mr. Trump move ahead with scaling back refugee resettlement, it would be the second time in as many weeks that he has used executive authority to reduce the influx of immigrants. Last week, he moved to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, the Obama-era program that grants protection from deportation to undocumented people brought to the United States as children, in six months. But he called on Congress to enact a law to address those immigrants' status.

One senior administration official involved in the internal debate over refugees described the move to curtail admissions as part of a broader rethinking of how the United States deals with migrants, based on the idea that it is more effective and affordable to help displaced people outside the nation's borders than within them, given the backlog of asylum seekers and other

immigrants already in the country hoping to stay.

Still, the prospect of capping refugee admissions below 50,000 has alarmed people both inside and outside the administration, given the refugee crisis unfolding around the world and the United States' history of taking a leadership position in accepting people fleeing violence and persecution.

"When you get down to some of the numbers that are being talked about, you get down to a program of really nugatory levels," said David Miliband, the former British foreign secretary who is president of the International Rescue Committee, said in an interview. "It's not an exaggeration to say the very existence of refugee resettlement as a core aspect of the American story, and America's role as a global leader in this area, is at stake."

Mr. Miliband's group is one of nine organizations — most of them religious groups — that work with the government to resettle refugees in the United States and are pressing for the admission of at least 75,000 refugees over the next year.

Two administration officials said those pushing for a lower number are citing the need to strengthen the process of vetting applicants for refugee status to prevent would-be terrorists from entering the country. Two others said another factor is a cold-eyed assessment of the money and resources that would be needed to resettle larger amounts of refugees at a time when federal immigration authorities already face a yearslong backlog of hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers.

Unlike refugees, who apply from outside the country for protection, those seeking asylum have already arrived in the United States fleeing persecution.

Mark Krikorian, the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington-based research organization that advocates less immigration, said the program represents a poor allocation of limited resources, and should be reserved for the most extreme of cases.

"There's no real, moral justification for resettling large numbers of refugees," said Mr. Krikorian, adding that his group's research shows that

Congress should ensure that a strong version of it becomes law.

White House Weighs Lowering Refugee Quota to Below 50,000 (UNE)

resettling a refugee from the Middle East in the United States costs 12 times as much as what the United Nations estimates it would cost to care for the person in the region. "Refugee resettlement is just a way of making ourselves feel better."

But throughout its history, the refugee resettlement program has had broad bipartisan support across administrations; many Republicans regard it as a tool to fight communism or extremism around the world, while Democrats see it as a means of helping the neediest.

The Obama administration toughened screening procedures in recent years even as it sought to streamline the process to embrace more refugees, and the Trump administration has reviewed and further enhanced security since the president's travel ban, which is currently being weighed by the Supreme Court.

Officials from the resettlement groups caution that lowering the ceiling will sap their ability to help refugees for years to come.

Bill Canny, the executive director of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the largest American resettlement agency which placed about 20,000 refugees last year, said his organization has already had to cut staff given Mr. Trump's initial order and would likely be forced to shutter entire programs if the numbers fell further.

"The United States has provided tremendous leadership in this area over many years and has encouraged other countries to accept more refugees, and those have been largely moral arguments on the part of our country, talking about duty and 'love thy neighbor' and helping those in need," Mr. Canny said. "By diminishing the numbers in the way that they've discussed, we diminish our capacity to do any of that."

Since the Refugee Act of 1980, which codified the president's role in determining a ceiling for refugee admissions, the average limit has been about 94,000 worldwide. It has slipped below 70,000 just once, in 1986, when Ronald Reagan set it at 67,000.

Correction: September 12, 2017

An earlier version of this article misstated the number of refugees that organizations working with the

government are pressing to resettle 75,000 refugees, not up to 75,000. in the United States. It is at least

ETATS-UNIS

**The
New York
Times**

Amid Chaos of Storms, U.S. Shows It Has Improved Its Response (UNE)

Richard Fausset

ATLANTA — The two massive storms brought death and suffering and damage that will be measured in the billions of dollars. They left millions of residents cowering in their homes to ride out pounding rains, and left evacuees — hundreds of thousands of them — scattered across Texas and the Southeast.

At the same time, Hurricanes Harvey and Irma may have revealed a largely unnoticed truth often buried under the news of unfolding tragedy: The United States appears to be improving in the way it responds to hurricanes, at a time when climate scientists say the threats from such storms, fueled by warming oceans, are growing only more dire. For all the chaos, the death toll from Harvey and Irma remained surprisingly contained: about 85 thus far in Florida and Texas.

“There’s no doubt that we’re doing better,” said Brian Wolshon, a civil engineer professor and evacuation expert at Louisiana State University. “The stuff we’re doing is not rocket science, but it’s having the political will, and the need, to do it.”

Across much of Florida and the region on Tuesday, stressed and exhausted families were assessing damage from Irma, or just beginning the arduous journey home, often grappling with gasoline shortages, sweltering heat, and power and cell service disruptions in addition to downed trees and damaged property. At least 13 people were reported dead in Irma’s wake, although the toll could still rise in the Florida Keys.

The pain was felt where the storm hit hardest, like the Florida Keys, where an estimated 25 percent of homes were destroyed and bleary-eyed residents contemplated a battered landscape of destruction.

And the pain was felt far away as well: in Jacksonville, where there was still major flooding from epic storm surge, heavy rains and rising tides; in Georgia, where at least 1.2

million customers were without power Tuesday; and in Charleston, S.C., where Irma’s effects coincided with high tide, causing some of the worst flooding since Hurricane Hugo, which devastated the area in 1989.

The political will Mr. Wolshon cited has arisen, in large part, from the two defining, and very different, disasters of the century: the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and, four years later, Hurricane Katrina, whose floodwaters put most of New Orleans underwater and left more than 1,800 people dead.

The terrorist attacks in New York and Pennsylvania revolutionized the way American government coordinated disaster response. Katrina stimulated a new and robust conversation about the power of natural disasters, and, more specifically, forced Americans to rethink the growing threats from floodwater.

These issues have become central themes for government in recent years, and Richard Serino, a former deputy administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said he was not surprised that the response to the storms thus far has gone relatively well.

“It’s no accident,” he said. “We’ve been training people for this for the last 16 years.”

These events, and other disasters before and after, have fed into the collective knowledge of how a modern nation should respond to hurricanes, serving as catalysts for improvements in weather forecasting, evacuation policies and hurricane-resistant building practices.

Experts said all of them most likely played a role in keeping the death tolls lower than expected in the last few weeks. The planning and response also benefited from a few lucky turns in the weather, the growing sophistication of personal technology — the iPhone did not exist when Katrina struck — and a public dialed in to the internet and tuned into 24-hour television news.

The deadly problems posed by hurricanes are at once ancient and rather new: Hal Needham, a coastal hazard scientist who runs a private consulting business in Galveston, Tex., notes that it was not until after World War II that populations began to soar in the hurricane-vulnerable states of Texas and Florida. The rise of satellite-based meteorology came only in the 1960s. Before that, hurricanes could still come as a surprise.

Today, lawmakers enjoy better weather forecasts, but now face the problem of what to do with millions of people who may lie in a storm’s path. Mr. Wolshon does not agree with all of the evacuation decisions made in the face of Harvey and Irma, but he said they were made with an evolving and increasingly sophisticated understanding of the challenges.

In Houston, Mayor Sylvester Turner and other local officials decided not to call for a mandatory evacuation before the arrival of Harvey, in part because of the nature of the threat to the area. Harvey, by the time it reached Houston, was not expected to bring storm surge or high winds, so much as pounding, extended rains. In this case, it was difficult to know which areas would flood and which would not. So officials decided to encourage people to stay put.

It was a marked difference to the strategy of Gov. Rick Scott of Florida, who announced Thursday to 6.5 million people: “Leave now, don’t wait.”

Dr. Needham said that the move was probably the right one. “When Irma was bearing down on Southeast Florida it did appear several days out that we could potentially see Category 5 winds in the metro Miami area,” he said. “When you have a massive flood event, if you can you just go up, if you’re in a condo or an apartment.”

But in whipping, hurricane-force winds, sheltering in place probably would not have been as safe as hitting the road. Evacuation also

made sense given the threat of huge storm surges, experts said.

Miami did not end up experiencing extreme winds, though much of South Florida did take a beating. Lives may have been saved because of the drastic overhaul of South Florida building codes after Hurricane Andrew in 1992. That massive storm damaged or destroyed 125,000 homes in the area, and the new codes have forced developers to build structures that could better withstand hurricane-force winds.

Houston, too, has learned from its tragic past. In July 2001, southeast Texas was hit hard by Tropical Storm Allison, which caused serious flooding. It prompted officials at Houston’s Texas Medical Center, billed as the largest medical complex in the world, to undertake a \$50 million upgrade that included installing flood doors and putting generators high enough that they could not be inundated.

Dr. Needham said that these changes probably helped keep the death toll down in Texas. “If the power goes out in a hospital with premature babies and elderly people on ventilators, you can really see an increase in the loss of life,” he said.

Both Texas and Florida probably also benefited from the growth and sophistication of the federal Department of Homeland Security, and the training that even tiny communities have undergone since the Sept. 11 attacks.

The storms also unfolded at a time when government disaster response has grown more sophisticated, an evolutionary process that did not necessarily begin with the Sept. 11 attacks: James Witt, the FEMA director under President Bill Clinton, recalls going to Congress to fund a modern operations center after discovering what passed for one at FEMA headquarters up to that point.

“The operations center was so bad that they had telephone wires

hanging out of the ceiling and foldup chairs and tables," he said.

But the federal disaster-response system grew markedly after 9/11. And while the Homeland Security Department has been criticized as being expensive and bloated, it has also insured a system in which local, state and federal officials are insured to the idea of working and communicating together.

**The
Washington
Post**

After Irma, a once-lush gem in the U.S. Virgin Islands reduced to battered wasteland (UNE)

CRUZ BAY, U.S. Virgin Islands — The Asolare restaurant is gone, practically blown off its cliff, along with its world-famous carrot ginger soup. The facade of Margarita Phil's is a junkyard of yellow and vermilion planks. Multimillion-dollar homes and aluminum huts alike lie in ruins.

On the island of St. John, that was only Irma's beginning. Once a lush gem in the U.S. Virgin Islands, a chain steeped in the lore of pirates and killer storms, this 20-square-mile island is now perhaps the site of Irma's worst devastation on American soil.

Six days after the storm — some say several days too late — the island finally has an active-theater disaster zone. Military helicopters buzz overhead and a Navy aircraft carrier is anchored off the coast, as the National Guard patrols the streets.

The Coast Guard is ferrying the last of St. John's dazed tourists to large cruise ships destined for Miami and San Juan, Puerto Rico. More than a few locals, cut off from the world with no power, no landlines and no cellular service — other than the single bar you might get above Ronnie's Pizza — are leaving, too, some of them in tears.

The streets of Cruz Bay, the largest town of this island of roughly 5,000, were a bizarre tableau of broken businesses and boats on sidewalks. Beyond belief, the Dog House bar had not only a generator but satellite TV, and folks streamed in and out, some stepping over debris holding beers.

A drive up formerly picturesque mountain roads reveals a landscape of such astonishing devastation that it looks as if it were bombed. Entire houses have disappeared. Others are tilting on their sides. Horizons of waxy-green bay leaf trees on jade-colored hills have turned to barren wastelands, as if the world's largest weed whacker had hedged the entire island.

Still, few observers were openly celebrating the government response to the storms in the United States. The damage was too vast, not just in Texas and Florida but also in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The response continues, with the rebuilding likely to last years. And everyone knows that Texas and Florida had some good fortune beyond the scope of human influence: The big winds never hit the major urban areas,

"Hurricanes? We've been through hurricanes — lots of them. But nothing, nothing, like this," said Jerry O'Connell, a Chevy Chase, Md., native turned St. John developer.

And that's just damage from the weather.

In the days following the storm, lawlessness broke out — here and on other Caribbean islands. Thieves hit a string of businesses. Houses were burgled, entire ATM machines stolen.

In the information vacuum after the storm, rumors flew like Irma's raindrops. Prisoners had broken free on nearby Tortola, in the British Virgin Islands, seized guns and formed armed gangs.

Left largely unprotected and with no way to call the police, some locals began sleeping in shifts. One local blogger, Jenn Manes, called for help on her island blog — help that finally arrived in force Monday. Others jumped on her for sullyng the island's name, because tough times can bring communities together, but they can also divide.

"I know some people were not happy with my telling the truth — that I was scared, that people here were scared," said Manes as she lined up Tuesday to catch a Coast Guard boat off the island. "It doesn't mean I won't be back. We're going to rebuild."

Surviving Harvey: A long and fraught recovery

On late Wednesday morning when Irma hit, the Virgin Islands, a haven for cruise ships and those in search of a good piña colada, were supposed to get lucky. A former Danish colony purchased by the United States in 1917, the small island cluster had had more than its fair share of cyclones. Their names read like a litany of salty villains: Marylyn, Irene, Hugo.

Irma was supposed to veer to the north, or so thought Joe Decourcy, a Canadian businessman who

and in Florida, capricious Irma did not deliver a storm surge as devastating as some had predicted.

"While thankfully the impact on people injured or killed was low, this is largely a factor of luck," said Ahmad Wani, chief executive of One Concern, a California-based company that seeks to use new technologies to create "next-generation disaster response" systems.

moved to St. John in 2001. Instead, the storm slammed the island at full intensity, its Category 5 winds of 150 mph racking it from coast to coast. Irma also hit neighboring St. Thomas, devastating the local hospital and homes and businesses across the island. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, only St. Croix was largely spared.

Decourcy, owner of Joe's Rum Hut, holed up that night in the formidable villa of a friend. Even the multimillion-dollar home could not hold Irma back. They sheltered on the first floor after second-floor windows were sucked out, causing massive flooding.

"The pressure was insane. It felt like our heads were going to explode," he said.

When the slow-moving storm cleared, Decourcy emerged with other shell-shocked locals to post-apocalyptic scenes of shattered homes, of cars, boats and sides of homes in the street. "We walked around like 'The Walking Dead,'" he said.

A sailboat named Windsong had landed in the street in front of Joe's Rum Hut. Islanders quickly banded together, he said, sharing food, supplies. But by Friday, the "vibe," he said, "started to change."

The island was virtually cut off. No cell reception. No power. No WiFi. It also meant there was no way to call the island's police, and some began to realize it.

Friday morning, Decourcy arrived to start cleaning up in earnest, only to discover the chains to the bar had been cut by bolt cutters. Inside, the registers were smashed open, the safes ajar. He had banked the bar's cash before the storm. But who knew what else was missing — he did not have the stomach to do an inventory.

At least four other businesses in a mall he runs also were hit. A gas station was robbed, as was Scoops, the island's ice cream parlor. The burned-out husk of an ATM and

Mr. Serino said that Harvey had introduced another cutting-edge idea: relying on residents, not just government workers, to make significant contributions to hurricane response. "Now we've seen images of neighbors helping neighbors," he said. "They're the real emergency medical workers."

safe, which thieves apparently tried to open with a blowtorch, sit in the town's police station.

Many residents were outraged it took so long for the National Guard to arrive.

"No structure, no police presence, no National Guard," Decourcy said. "It got really tense, to the point where business owners were asking, 'How do I get firearms? How do I get off the island? Are they coming for us?' I mean, this is supposed to be U.S. territory. And yet people were just running around breaking into residences and stores."

Devida Damron, 38, a 10-year island resident who works at the local veterinary clinic, was leaving St. John on Tuesday with her boyfriend and her dog, French Fry. She said she saw a man with a machete in the street Friday yelling, "It's looting time."

At the same time, a cluster of do-gooders, mostly launching from the Puerto Rican coast, were starting to ferry the old and infirm off St. John. Nils Erickson, a 42-year-old Gaithersburg, Md., native and part time St. John resident, rushed down Friday after he began hearing pleas from islanders on a Facebook page.

"People were begging for help," he said.

With the aid of a local boat company, a GoFundMe account and credit cards to finance the rest, Erickson began running supply mission and evacuations. Since Friday — three days before large-scale official efforts — they managed to get 600 people off the island.

So many boats came to aid that the locals began to call it the "Puerto Rican Navy."

"It was our own Dunkirk," said Sgt. Richard Dominguez of the Virgin Islands Police Department. "They took their own boats before official means were available. They didn't wait."

Kenneth Mapp (I), governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, insisted in a telephone interview that there had been no pillaging at all on St. John, despite evidence to the contrary.

"I am sympathetic, and I understand the people's fear and desire for more resources on the island as quickly as possible," Mapp said. "But there was no looting, no abuse of folks."

President Trump, Mapp said, called him Monday and was due to survey the Virgin Islands damage this

week. He would find, the governor said, an efficient response. Those in dire need of assistance were carried off St. John and St. Thomas by authorities via helicopter. On Monday and Tuesday, the bulk of stranded tourists — some 3,500 — were rescued by two massive cruise ships. And the emergency WiFi service was up and running Tuesday night.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Mapp conceded that it may take "months, months, months" before power is restored to the island but said the delay in mobilizing the National Guard to St. John was unavoidable. The harbor was filled with overturned boats, making landings difficult. He managed to get to the island himself, he said, via helicopter.

"It's a matter of deployment of assets," he said. "This was a Cat-five event."

And yet, the citizens here are indeed pulling together. The Dog House is offering free food. Meaghan Enright, 34, a marketing manager on the island who suddenly finds herself jobless, has found a new reason for being the de facto relief organizer.

"St. John has a singular ability to pull together in a crisis," she said.

**The
Washington
Post**

Hurricane Irma: After deadly storm, millions in Florida could be without power for days and weeks (UNE)

CAPE CORAL, Fla. — Millions of Floridians grappled with the aftermath of Hurricane Irma on Wednesday, confronting a sweltering reality: More than 40 percent of Florida still lacked electricity, and for some of them, the lights might not come back on for days or even weeks.

"We understand what it means to be in the dark," said Robert Gould, vice president and chief communications officer for Florida Power and Light (FPL), the state's largest utility. "We understand what it means to be hot and without air conditioning. We will be restoring power day and night."

But, he acknowledged: "This is going to be a very uncomfortable time."

Across the nation's third most-populous state, that discomfort played out in homes that were silent without the usual thrum of perpetual air-conditioning. It meant refrigerators were unable to cool milk, laundry machines were unable to clean clothes and, for the particularly young and old, potential danger in a state where the temperatures can range from warm to stifling.

[Irma's final danger: Flooding in the Southeast]

Even for those who had power, some also were struggling to maintain cellphone service or Internet access, sending Floridians into tree-riddled streets in an effort to spot a few precious bars of signal to contact loved ones.

"It's a mess, a real mess. The biggest issue is power," said Bill Barnett, mayor of Naples, on Florida's Gulf Coast. "We just need power. It's 92 degrees and the sun is out and it's smoking out there."

Utility companies made progress as they undertook a massive recovery effort, restoring power to some. At its peak, the Department of Homeland Security said about 15

million Floridians — an astonishing three out of four state residents — lacked power.

By early Wednesday, state officials gradually lowered the number of customers without power, dropping it to about 4.4 million from 6.5 million on Monday. Because each power company account can represent multiple people, the sheer number of residents without electricity was massive: Going by the Homeland Security estimates, at one point Irma had knocked out power to one out of every 22 Americans.

It would take some time before all of them had electricity again. Duke Energy Florida said it would restore power to most customers by Sunday, a week after Irma made its first landfall in Florida. Some harder-hit areas could take longer due to the rebuilding effort.

Gould said that FPL, which powers about half of the state, expected customers on Florida's East Coast to have power back by the end of the weekend. People in western Florida, closer to Irma's path, should have it back by Sept. 22. That estimate does not include places with severe flooding or tornado damage, he said, and those areas could also face a longer wait to be able to switch on the lights.

17-month-old Lena was born with a defective diaphragm and needs a ventilator to breathe. Her family moved across the country in 2016 so she could get the best care available, and only recently settled into their own apartment after almost a year spent in the hospital. But Hurricane as Irma moved in, they took shelter back at the hospital, knowing a power cut could endanger Lena's life. Irma evacuees seek shelter in a hospital to save their child's life (Whitney Shefte, Christopher Rish/The Washington Post)

17-month-old Lena was born with a defective diaphragm and needs a ventilator to breathe. Her family moved across the country in 2016 so she could get the best care available, and only recently settled into their own apartment after almost a year spent in the hospital. But Hurricane as Irma moved in, they took shelter back at the hospital, knowing a power cut could endanger Lena's life (Whitney Shefte, Christopher Rish/The Washington Post)

Floridians reacted to the outages eclectically. Some welcomed the absence of perpetual air-conditioners. Others flocked to their local malls for a respite from the heat.

"There's no power at home, so we might as well just stay here and stay cool," Amanda Brack, who was with her son, Gavin, said while walking through a Brookstone at the Galleria shopping mall in Fort Lauderdale.

Blake Deerhog had walked to the mall from his powerless and steamy apartment in nearby Victoria Park, trekking some 20 minutes in the stifling heat and humidity after he Googled and learned it would be open.

"This is definitely better than being back at my apartment," he said, adding that he planned to spend the afternoon there.

[Florida Keys are battered but bouncing back]

The outages also caused rising alarm in some places. Here in Cape Coral, an assisted care facility for patients with dementia and memory impairment that sheltered in place during the storm went without power for three days, as elderly patients suffered in the rising heat.

The southwest Florida facility, Cape Coral Shores, had 20 patients stay during the storm as part of an agreement with state and local officials because the emergency

shelters it would normally use were both evacuated as Irma approached. Power at the facility went out, and it stayed out, even as homes and businesses all around it saw their lights come back on.

As the indoor temperature climbed to the mid-80s Wednesday morning, humidity made the hard-surfaced floors slick with condensation. Patients gathered in a small day room to catch a slight breeze from screened windows. A handful of small fans powered by a borrowed generator were all that kept the situation from devolving into a medical emergency, said Dan Nelson, Cape Coral Shores' chief operating officer.

"People here are fragile," Nelson said, adding that air-conditioning in such facilities is a medical necessity. "This is not just about comfort, it's about safety. We have magnet door locks that don't work, fire suppression equipment whose batteries have run out, assisted bed lifts that don't work. And the temperatures today and tomorrow are headed back to the mid-90s."

A state emergency official said Wednesday afternoon he had found a large generator and 50 gallons of gas for the facility, but there was no need: The power came back on.

[Most of Florida lost power in Hurricane Irma. Here's what it looks like from space.]

While the Sunshine State was the hardest hit by the outages, they extended to the other states Irma raked as it headed north. Hundreds of thousands lost power in the Carolinas, Alabama and Georgia, where at one point 800,000 were experiencing outages on Tuesday, though that number declined during the day.

The deteriorating storm once known as Hurricane Irma — classified Tuesday as a post-tropical cyclone — grazed onward through the

Mississippi Valley, losing essentially all of its prior strength but still drenching some areas with rainfall.

Across the southeast, even as people acknowledged that they had dodged the worst possible hit from Irma, they were still left to contend with destroyed homes, flooded cities, swollen rivers, canceled flights and debris in the streets.

The city of Jacksonville, Fla., remained flooded after the St. Johns River overflowed so severely the day before that it forced residents from their homes. Charleston, S.C., city officials said the intense flooding there on Monday closed more than 111 roads, most of which had reopened Tuesday.

Authorities said they were investigating several fatalities that came since the storm made landfall, though it was not clear how many were directly due to the storm.

Among them were a 51-year-old man in Winter Park, Fla., outside Orlando, who police said was apparently electrocuted by a downed power line in a roadway. In Georgia, the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office said a 67-year-old woman was killed when a tree fell on her car; the mayor of Sandy Springs said a 55-year-old man was killed when a tree fell on the bedroom where he was sleeping. In other cases, fatal car crashes claimed lives as the storm loomed.

[Why Irma wasn't far worse]

In Key West, it remained unclear when power, cellphone service or supplies would be available again.

"What you have on hand is rationed to make sure you can get through," said Todd Palenchar, 48, noting that his supplies of food and water are designed to last for a week. "You don't know how long it's going to be."

Palenchar said he is used to camping and roughing it, but his main concern right now is his property.

"I've already posted signs where I'm at, 'Looters will be shot, no questions asked,'" he said as he pulled up his shirt to reveal a .380

caliber pistol.

As Irma tore through the Caribbean and approached the Keys last week, authorities had ordered millions in Florida to evacuate and, in some cases, ordered them to hit the road again as the storm's path wobbled. On Tuesday, officials slowly began letting those people return home.

An aerial and on-the-ground look at the Florida Keys after Hurricane Irma. An aerial and on-the-ground look at the Florida Keys after Hurricane Irma. (Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

An aerial and on-the-ground look at the Florida Keys after Hurricane Irma. (Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

In Monroe County, which includes the Florida Keys, and other places that let residents back, officials warned that many areas are still without power, cellphone reception is questionable and most gas stations remain shut.

Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez said about half of the county's traffic signals were out. Broward County Mayor Barbara Sharief said the number was closer to 45 percent of traffic signals there. Across the state, the explanations for the outages were visible alongside the road.

"It's a lot of trees and power lines and snapped poles," said Kate Albers, a spokeswoman for Collier County, which stretches across southwestern Florida and includes Marco Island, where Irma made her second landfall.

"I can tell you from driving around you see lines down all over the place," Albers said. "You see trees thrown through power lines and you'll see an occasional pole."

The high number of outages across Florida were due largely to the storm's massive size, said Ted Kury, director of energy studies for the Public Utility Research Center at the University of Florida.

"For a significant period of time, the entire state was under a hurricane warning," Kury said. "Normally it

comes through, sometimes it comes through fast and sometimes it comes through slowly. But this one hit pretty much everybody."

With millions in Florida without electricity, White House national security adviser Tom Bossert described "the largest ever mobilization of line restoration workers in this country" on Sept. 11, but cautioned that power could be down in homes for weeks. Tom Bossert described "the largest ever mobilization of line restoration workers in this country," but cautioned that power could be down for weeks. (Reuters)

With millions in Florida without electricity, White House national security adviser Tom Bossert described "the largest ever mobilization of line restoration workers in this country" on Sept. 11, but cautioned that power could be down in homes for weeks. (Reuters)

Kury was among those who did not lose power but did lose Internet, cable and cellphone service, so he and his wife had to walk to the next development before his wife got enough signal to text their oldest son and her parents.

Storms that rip down power lines are frequently followed by questions about why more power lines are not buried underground, away from punishing winds.

Cost is one factor. A 2012 report for the Edison Electric Institute, a trade association representing investor-owned electrical utilities, found that it can be five to 10 times more expensive to put lines underground — otherwise known as "undergrounding" — than to hang them overhead.

The utilities also weigh issues such as how much cost they can pass on to their customers and the aesthetics of overhead wires, Kury said, noting that there is no uniform policy for power companies because diverse regions have different needs.

"It's kind of a misstatement when folks say undergrounding power lines protects them from damage," Kury said. "What it really does is insulates them from damage from

wind events and flying debris. But it makes them more susceptible to things like flooding and things like storm surge."

He added: "If you're in an area where your biggest risk to the infrastructure is storm surge and flooding, putting the lines underground can actually make them more susceptible to damage and not less."

[Richard Branson urges "Marshall Plan" for Caribbean after Irma]

Florida utility companies embarked upon a massive response effort to get the lights back on. Gould, the spokesman for FPL, said the company had dispatched 20,000 workers to work day and night restoring power, first to critical care infrastructure — like hospitals and 911 systems — and then to feeders that send juice to the most customers. Finally, they get to individual neighborhoods.

In St. Petersburg, where gas-powered generators had growled through the night, residents lit their way with battery-powered lanterns, flashlights and tea lights.

Act Four newsletter

The intersection of culture and politics.

"We've run out of power before," said Jeanne Isacco, 71, reaching for her walker to stand and punctuate her point. "Why do you think we live here? Excuse me! We know it's hot."

Berman and Zezima reported from Washington. Darryl Fears in St. Petersburg, Leonard Shapiro in Fort Lauderdale, Camille Pendley in Atlanta, Dustin Waters in Charleston, Kirk Ross in Raleigh, Scott Unger in Key West, Fla., and Brian Murphy, Angela Fritz and Carol Morello in Washington contributed to this report, which was updated throughout the day.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Herculean Task as Crews Race to Restore Power Cut by Irma (UNE)

Cameron McWhirter, Erin Ailworth and Arian Campo-Flores

Block by block and city by city, utilities face one of the largest power restoration challenges in U.S. history as they bring back electricity to more than 15 million people affected by Hurricane Irma.

Almost 60,000 utility workers from the U.S. and Canada are descending on Florida and other states hard hit by the storm, with more line crews and contractors expected soon, according to the Edison Electric Institute, an industry group. They are painstakingly repairing electrical substations, power poles, transmission lines and

other parts of the grid knocked out by winds and floodwaters.

The aim is to restore power to hospitals and other critical facilities first, then bring the lights back to most residents as quickly as possible. But utility and government officials acknowledge it will take days or even weeks for the herculean effort. Restoring full

power after superstorm Sandy in 2012 took more than a month.

More than six million U.S. customers remained without power as of Tuesday afternoon, according to the U.S. Energy Department, including roughly 4.8 million, or 48% of the state's total customers, in Florida; 932,000, or 22%, in

Georgia; and 141,000, or 6%, in South Carolina.

Florida Power & Light Co., the state's largest investor-owned utility with nearly five million customers, said Irma at one point cut off power to roughly 4.4 million of them, and that 2.7 million remained out as of Tuesday afternoon.

FPL estimated Tuesday that most residents in the eastern part of its territory would have power restored by the end of the weekend, while those on the western side, where the storm made landfall, would see power back by Sept. 22.

Duke Energy Corp., Florida's second-largest investor-owned utility with 1.8 million customers, also said Irma caused significant damage to its transmission system. Duke said it expects to complete restoration to the western portion of its service area by the end of Friday and by the end of Sunday for its central and northern areas. Restoration in two hard-hit counties, Hardee and Highlands, may take longer, it said.

Irma is a critical test of efforts in recent years to make the power grid more storm-resilient by replacing wind-damage-prone equipment such as wooden poles with concrete versions, placing the poles closer together to lessen the chance that debris could pull them down, and installing water gauges in substations to monitor flooding.

Utilities, which have spent billions in Florida alone on storm preparation, now have to assess whether those efforts were worth the money, and where they should perhaps be expanded.

Eric Silagy, chief executive of FPL, a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Inc., said the \$3 billion his company invested to upgrade its network after seven hurricanes in 2004 and 2005 helped lessen the destruction from Irma.

"Without this storm-hardening, we would have seen much more

prevalent structural damage—many more poles down, thousands and thousands, in my opinion," he said.

The utility says it is fixing outages at a much faster rate than it did after Hurricane Wilma in 2005. After just one day, workers restored 40% of outages from Irma, he said, compared with 4% for the same period after Wilma, according to FPL spokesman Robert Gould.

Irma was the first storm to hit all 27,000 square miles of FPL's service territory, Mr. Silagy said. To recover, the company has called in some 20,000 repair workers from utilities across the country and staged them at 30 locations around Florida, including the Daytona International Speedway, home to the Daytona 500, which had been turned into an impromptu pit stop for emergency crews.

Likening the effort to a military operation, he said each staging site is a mini-city outfitted to house and feed workers, who will go through an estimated 30,000 gallons of water and 200,000 gallons of fuel a day.

FPL will first focus on taking stock of the company's electricity-generating facilities to make sure they are operating correctly. Next, workers will check the transmission lines, which Mr. Silagy called the "interstates of electricity," to make sure they are transporting power as they should.

After that, work will focus on getting power back to critical facilities such as police and fire stations and storm shelters, and then power-delivery systems that feed large communities. Last will be individual streets and homes.

In Sarasota, Fla., FPL transformed the 65-acre Sarasota Fairgrounds into an encampment affectionately dubbed "Hotel Sarasota" for about 1,000 workers helping to restore power along Florida's west coast. On Tuesday, it was lined with rows of 50 windowless trailers that sleep 28 on bunks, mobile shower units

and mobile bathrooms, with more due to arrive from 29 states, spanning California to Massachusetts.

On Tuesday, large trucks arrived carrying spools of cable and stacks of transformers, while gasoline tankers lined up to help refuel the fleet of bucket trucks being dispatched in waves throughout the day.

Workers left for their 12-to-16-hour shifts with boxed lunches, planning to return to a large hall to eat dinner and then set out again after eight hours of downtime to fulfill a singular mission.

"Get the power back up," said Tom Pitera, the logistics commander for the site. "That's the name of the game."

Wearing an FPL cap and sweating in 85-degree heat, Mr. Pitera said he lost his own power Saturday. His friends have been texting him to get service restored for their neighborhood. "I'm waiting like everyone else," he said.

The problems the crews face are enormous. In a remote area of pine trees and scrub near Southwest Florida International Airport in Lee County, workers Tuesday were trying to repair concrete poles carrying main transmission lines that were broken or knocked over. The lines provided backup energy to the airport, as well as power to other areas.

But the FPL contractors couldn't get to the poles, because the area was inundated with water. One workman tried to walk out, but stopped when the water reached his chest. Workers sent a drone into the swampy area and shot video of the downed poles, but could do little else.

"This is Florida," said Jose Labrador, a company spokesman at the scene. "I don't know if there are gators back there. I don't know if there are snakes. Anything is possible."

Other utilities in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina were engaged in similar recovery efforts.

Scott Aaronson, director of security at Edison Electric Institute, said the industry's response to Irma will be a historic effort when factoring in the full extent of the storm, which hit the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, as well as all 67 counties in Florida, all 159 counties in Georgia and parts of Alabama and the Carolinas.

The peak number of outages so far was 7.8 million customers, Mr. Aaronson said, less than the 8.5 million attributed to Sandy, which affected 11 states, including the New York metro area.

Bettina Abascal said the power went out at her house in southern Miami-Dade County around 5 a.m. Sunday, just as the storm was starting to build. In the aftermath, the biggest concern for the single mother, who lives alone with her 1-year-old son, Ignacio, was how he would fare in the heat.

Ms. Abascal, a 40-year-old agent for TV directors, used a solar-powered generator to drive a fan at night, but was afraid to take her son outside due to the possibility of looters or other criminals.

Nearby, Ifi Ibennah and his girlfriend, Amaya Rodrigues, were trying to stay cool by drinking plenty of water and staying outside, though by Tuesday afternoon it was 89 degrees and humid.

Ms. Rodrigues's mother, Esther Rodrigues, said she worried that because their neighborhood wasn't near any vital businesses, it could take weeks before FPL restores power.

"It's going to be a long time," said the elder Ms. Rodrigues, 61.

Wilhelm : Hillary Infinite Jest

THE HILL

Heather

Wilhelm

In *What Happened*, Hillary Clinton's new 512-page recollection of what was perhaps the most painful and awkward election in American history, the former secretary of state recounts an infamous debate moment she shared with Donald Trump:

We were on a small stage, and no matter where I walked, he followed me closely, staring at me, making faces. It was incredibly uncomfortable. He was literally breathing down my neck. My skin crawled.

In her mind, Clinton recounts, she weighed two options:

Do you stay calm, keep smiling, and carry on as if he weren't repeatedly invading your space? Or do you turn, look him in the eye, and say loudly and clearly, "Back up, you

creep, get away from me, I know you love to intimidate women but you can't intimidate me, so *back up*."

Option B, as the kids like to say, would have escalated things rather quickly, with the added bonus of seeming a teeny bit unhinged. Hillary, of course, chose the more repressed Option A: "I kept my cool, aided by a lifetime of dealing with difficult men trying to throw me off."

Ah, yes. It's difficult to pinpoint the most painful Hillary Clinton moment

of the many painful Hillary Clinton moments that populate *What Happened*, but this one certainly comes close. Think about it: Even now, after months of time to reflect and ruminate and engage in self-soothing techniques like downing Chardonnay and "one-nostril breathing," Hillary Clinton is completely oblivious to what any decent politician would have realized, if not in the heat of the moment, at least in hindsight: There was an obvious Option C.

I'm referring, of course, to one of my favorite moments in presidential debate history, when a rather creepy Al Gore sidled up to a cheerful George W. Bush, looking as if he may or may have been considering a duel or a gentlemanly bout of fisticuffs. The year was 2000, and the heated topic that catapulted Gore's blood pressure skyward — brace yourself, for in the scope of today's tabloid-splashed politics, this will seem rather quaint — was the details of the "Dingell-Norwood Bill." Gore edged closer, quietly lurking, deadly serious. After ignoring him for a few moments, Bush turned, acted mildly surprised to see him, and greeted him with a bemused, dismissive nod.

The audience broke into laughter. They loved it. Gore did not.

Well, as we all know, Hillary Clinton is no George W. Bush. She is also, as *What Happened* strains to remind us over and over and over again, no Donald Trump. And while many Americans might wonder why on earth anyone would spend their free time reading a book rehashing what should be fairly obvious by now — Hillary Clinton is not a very good politician — *What Happened* does manage to offer some

valuable insights. Unfortunately, they're not the ones the author intends.

What Happened does manage to offer some valuable insights. Unfortunately, they're not the ones the author intends.

Let's talk about David Foster Wallace, shall we? Hillary Clinton does, bringing up his famous "This Is Water" commencement speech in her chapter entitled "On Being a Woman in Politics." She's referring to the deeply moving and widely read address in which Wallace discusses human nature and life's various struggles, noting that "the most obvious realities are often the ones that are the hardest to see and talk about." The speech opens with an anecdote about two fish who fail to recognize that they are completely immersed in water.

This, according to Clinton, "sums up the problem of recognizing sexism — especially when it comes to politics — quite nicely."

When I read this, I briefly looked around the room, aghast, hoping to share my astonishment. Alas, I had no company, save for the battered

ghost of irony silently popping pills in the corner. For heaven's sake, Hillary Clinton! Wallace was talking about self-centeredness and about our frail human tendency to cast our own obsessions and cloistered view of reality — our "lens of self" — on the world. You know, like a certain failed politician's annoying habit of blaming sexism and misogyny for at least 80 percent of anything that goes south.

Through Hillary's lens, Elizabeth Warren's problem isn't that she's a kooky socialist who could single-handedly send the economy careening off the cliff. It's that she's seen as a "shrill woman." Most of Hillary's problems were completely self-made, and yet here she is, explaining away: "The Puritan witch hunts might be long over, but something fanatical about unruly women still lurks in our national subconscious." Well, it lurks in someone's subconscious, certainly.

Between cutesy stories about counting the calories in Flavor Blasted Goldfish and sitting on Quest bars "to warm them up" — no, I have no idea what this means, either — and occasional eruptions of disdain toward people who weren't inspired by her desperately

uninspiring campaign, a larger thread unspools throughout the pages of *What Happened*. Government, in Clinton's view, can solve almost every issue, from child-raising to microeconomic trends to playground interpersonal relations. ("Many kids asked what I would do about bullying, which made me want to be president even more. I had an initiative called Better Than Bullying ready to go.")

Which brings us back to David Foster Wallace and the end notes of his "This Is Water" speech: "There is no such thing as not worshipping," he told the students of Kenyon College. "Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship." For many, that choice turns out to be government, or politics, or political power. One wonders whether Clinton read the full "This Is Water" speech; one also wonders whether Clinton is earnest when she writes that "the White House is sacred ground." It certainly makes for awkward reading — just like the whole of 2016.

— Heather Wilhelm is a National Review Online columnist and a senior contributor to the Federalist.

**The
Washington
Post**

Milbank : What it took for Republicans finally to feel betrayed by Trump

Republican Rep. Duncan Hunter, an early and loyal Trump enthusiast, gave an uncommonly candid assessment of the president to a group of young Republicans at home in California recently.

"He's an a--hole," Duncan said, "but he's our a--hole." So reported his hometown San Diego Union-Tribune.

That's close to a perfect summary of Republicans' relationship of convenience with President Trump.

Act Four newsletter

The intersection of culture and politics.

Trump gave succor to neo-Nazis, boasted of groping women, attacked the integrity of the judicial system, fired the FBI director to stymie the Russia probe, boasted about his genital size on national television, attacked racial and religious minorities and labeled women all manner of vulgarities.

And, through it all, Republicans stuck with Trump.

President Trump's decision to back Democrats' plans for raising the

debt ceiling and permanently removing Congress's debt ceiling requirement is frustrating Republicans, and especially conservatives. President Trump's decision to back Democrats' plans for raising the debt ceiling and permanently removing Congress's debt ceiling requirement frustrate the GOP. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

President Trump's decision to back Democrats' plans for raising the debt ceiling and permanently removing Congress's debt ceiling requirement is frustrating Republicans, and especially conservatives. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

But this time, some Republicans say he went too far. He made a deal with Democrats.

It's not a big deal, mind you, just a procedural agreement to postpone budget wrangling for three months. But because Trump sided with Chuck and Nancy over Mitch and Paul, combined with his tweeted attacks on the Republican Senate leader and Stephen K. Bannon's threat to back primary challenges to Republican senators, there is suddenly talk of civil war within the GOP.

Republican lawmakers booed Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney

when they tried to sell Trump's deal with the Democrats. "It's just a betrayal of everything we've been talking about for years as Republicans," former senator Jim DeMint, an influential conservative, told Politico.

In article headlined "Bound to No Party, Trump Upends 150 Years of Two-Party Rule," Peter Baker of the New York Times quoted conservative writer Ben Domenech: "This week was the first time he struck out and did something completely at odds with what the Republican leadership and establishment would want him to do in this position."

The first time!

If this is the first time Trump has been completely at odds with what the Republican leadership and establishment want him to do, let's review the various things Trump has done as president that must have been consistent with what they wanted. If his deal with Chuck and Nancy is a "betrayal of everything," let's recall all those things that were not such betrayals of Republicanism:

Firing James B. Comey in an effort to thwart the FBI's Russia probe.

Dictating a misleading statement explaining his son's campaign interaction with Russians.

Moving slowly to fire national security adviser Michael Flynn after being told by the Justice Department that Russia could potentially blackmail Flynn.

Inventing the false charge that he was wiretapped by his predecessor.

Shoving aside a European prime minister to make his way to the front of a photo.

Talking with the Japanese prime minister about how to respond to North Korea while dining alfresco among members of the public at Mar-a-Lago.

Mocking the abilities of U.S. intelligence agencies to an overseas audience.

Sharing sensitive Israeli intelligence with the Russians.

Initially failing to affirm NATO's collective-security guarantee.

Gratuitously antagonizing European and Asian allies.

Raising the temperature in the North Korea nuclear standoff with a threat of "fire and fury."

Encouraging a blockade of U.S. ally Qatar.

Issuing a ban on entry by members of certain Muslim countries that was struck down in court and had to be rewritten.

Attacking “so-called” federal judges and saying they should be blamed for terrorist attacks.

Launching a false social-media attack on the Muslim mayor of London.

Declaring the media “enemies of the American people.”

Disparaging MSNBC’s Mika Brzezinski for supposedly “bleeding badly from a facelift.”

Claiming he lost the popular vote only because millions of people voted illegally and appointing an

election fraud commission in an attempt to prove it.

Saying there were “fine people” marching among neo-Nazis in Charlottesville.

Moving to end protection from deportation for hundreds of thousands of immigrant “dreamers.”

And that list, of course, doesn’t include the many things Trump did before assuming office: the “Access Hollywood” video, the “birther” campaign, calling Mexican immigrants rapists, countenancing

violence at his rallies and all the rest.

Why do so many Republicans who tolerated so much now howl about civil war over a deal with Democrats? I’m skeptical this will turn out to be a real break (Trump’s dealmaking was clearly impromptu), but to the extent it does, it’s not about principle but partisan tribalism. Republicans can stomach just about anything as long as Trump remains a member in good standing of the tribe. But if he favors enemy tribesmen over his own, that’s taboo.

Heading into the 2018 midterms, Republicans increasingly have an incentive to make people think they’re different from the unpopular Trump and that he’s independent of the two-party system. But if Republicans disown Trump now, they still own all the previous Trump actions over which they failed to break with him in any meaningful way.

He’s their you-know-what.

POLITICO Teflon Don confounds Democrats

Democrats tried attacking Donald Trump as unfit for the presidency. They’ve made the case that he’s ineffective, pointing to his failure to sign a single major piece of legislation into law after eight months in the job. They’ve argued that Trump is using the presidency to enrich himself, and that his campaign was in cahoots with Russia.

None of it is working.

Story Continued Below

Data from a range of focus groups and internal polls in swing states paint a difficult picture for the Democratic Party heading into the 2018 midterms and 2020 presidential election. It suggests that Democrats are naive if they believe Trump’s historically low approval numbers mean a landslide is coming. The party is defending 10 Senate seats in states that Trump won and needs to flip 24 House seats to take control of that chamber.

The research, conducted by private firms and for Democratic campaign arms, is rarely made public but was described to POLITICO in interviews with a dozen top operatives who’ve been analyzing the results coming in.

“If that’s the attitude that’s driving the Democratic Party, we’re going to drive right into the ocean,” said Anson Kaye, a strategist at media firm GMMB who worked on the Obama and Clinton campaigns and is in conversations with potential clients for next year.

Worse news, they worry: Many of the ideas party leaders have latched on to in an attempt to appeal to their lost voters — free college tuition, raising the minimum wage to \$15, even Medicaid for all — test poorly among voters outside the base. The people in these polls and focus groups tend to see those proposals as empty promises, at best.

Pollsters are shocked by how many voters describe themselves as “exhausted” by the constant chaos surrounding Trump, and they find that there’s strong support for a Congress that provides a check on him instead of voting for his agenda most of the time. But he is still viewed as an outsider shaking up the system, which people in the various surveys say they like, and which Democrats don’t stack up well against.

“People do think he’s bringing about change, so it’s hard to say he hasn’t kept his promises,” said Democratic pollster Celinda Lake.

In focus groups, most participants say they’re still impressed with Trump’s business background and tend to give him credit for the improving economy. The window is closing, but they’re still inclined to give him a chance to succeed.

More than that, no single Democratic attack on the president is sticking — not on his temperament, his lack of accomplishments or the deals he’s touted that have turned out to be less than advertised, like the president’s claim that he would keep Carrier from shutting down its Indianapolis plant and moving production to Mexico.

Voters are also generally unimpressed by claims that Trump exaggerates or lies, and they don’t see the ongoing Russia investigation adding up to much.

“There are a number of things that are raising questions in voters’ minds against him,” said Matt Canter, who’s been conducting focus groups for Global Strategy Group in swing states. “They’re all raising questions, but we still have to weave it into one succinct narrative about his presidency.”

Stop, Democratic operatives urge voters, assuming that what they think is morally right is the best politics. A case in point is Trump’s

response to the violence in Charlottesville. The president’s equivocation on neo-Nazis was not as much of a political problem as his opponents want to believe, Democratic operatives say, and shifting the debate to whether or not to remove Confederate monuments largely worked for him.

“He is the president. The assessment that voters will make is, is he a good one or not? While Democrats like me have come to conclusions on that question, most of the voters who will decide future elections have not,” Canter said.

Many of the proposals Democrats are pushing fall flat in focus groups and polling.

The call for free college tuition fosters both resentment at ivory tower elitism and regret from people who have degrees but are now buried under debt. Many voters see “free” as a lie — either they’ll end up paying for tuition some other way, or worse, they’ll be paying the tuition of someone else who’ll be getting a degree for free.

Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Gerstein Bocian Agne Strategies conducted online polling of 1,000 Democrats and 1,000 swing voters across 52 swing districts for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Their advice to candidates afterward: Drop the talk of free college. Instead, the firms urged Democrats to emphasize making college more affordable and reducing debt, as well as job skills training, according to an internal DCCC memo.

“When Democrats go and talk to working-class voters, we think talking to them about how we can help their children go to college, they have a better life, is great,” said Ali Lapp, executive director of House Majority PAC, which supports Democratic House candidates. “They are not interested. ... It’s a problem when

you have a growing bloc in the electorate think that college is not good, and they actually disdain folks that go to college.”

Medicare-for-all tests better, but it, too, generates suspicion. The challenge is that most voters in focus groups believe it’s a pipe dream — they ask who will pay for it and suspect it will lead to a government takeover of health care — and therefore wonder whether the politicians talking to them about it are being less than forthright, too. Sen. Bernie Sanders is scheduled to release a single-payer bill on Wednesday, with Sens. Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris, Cory Booker and Tammy Baldwin among those joining him.

Health care is one bright spot for Democrats. Obamacare is less unpopular than it used to be, and voters generally want the law to be repaired. Data also show that voters trust Democrats more than Republicans on the issue: Voters rated Trump and Democrats about equally on health care at the start of his term, but Democrats now have a large double-digit lead, according to DCCC polling.

But attacking Republicans on the issue is tricky. The specifics of GOP alternatives are unpopular, but most voters don’t realize Republicans had a plan, so it’s hard to persuade them to care about the details of something that never came to be.

Raising the minimum wage to \$15 is as unpopular as it was when the Obama White House tried to make it Democrats’ rallying cry in the 2014 midterms. Participants in battleground-state focus groups said they see that rate as relatively high and the issue in general as being mostly about redistributing money to the poor.

The DCCC memo urges candidates instead to talk about a “living wage,” or to rail against outsourcing jobs.

"What you're seeing is this thing that Democrats cannot seem to figure out — this notion that somehow if we just put the words together correctly that'll be the winning message and we'll win," Kaye said. "That is the opposite of how the electorate is behaving."

On immigration and trade, voters remain largely aligned with Trump. Data show that voters believe that the economy is moving in the right direction and resent Democrats attacking its progress.

Late last month, Democratic pollster Peter Hart ran a 12-person focus group in Pittsburgh that shocked him for how quickly and decisively it turned against the president. But he came away wary of Democrats who take that as evidence that attacking Trump will win them elections — even as DCCC and other polling shows voters are turned off by members of Congress who vote with the president

90 percent of the time or more.

"People would like more of a sense of reassurance ... than we've had so far," Hart said. "For the Democrats, part of that is recognizing that it's not that there's an overwhelming agenda item on the part of the American public — it's not the economy or health care or some single issue — but it is the sense that somehow things are very out of sorts, and it touches so many different issues."

That's the main difference between 2018 and 2006, when Democrats' strategy primarily consisted of running against an unpopular president, George W. Bush, and an unpopular war.

"It may have worked then," said former Rep. Steve Israel, the DCCC chair in the 2012 and 2014 cycles and the leader of messaging for House Democrats last year. "I'm not sure it's going to work now,

because the middle class is clamoring for help. Just saying we're not Trump isn't going to help."

More and more, Democratic operatives are gravitating toward pushing for an argument that Trump is just out to make his rich friends richer, at the expense of everyone else. They believe they could include all sorts of attacks on his decisions under that umbrella, from stripping regulations on credit cards to trying to end Obamacare to pushing for corporate tax breaks.

DCCC polling showed that on the question of who "fights for people like me," Trump and Democrats were split at 50 percent each in February but that Democrats are now ahead by 17 points.

"Everything is a trade-off," said Guy Cecil, reflecting polling done by his Priorities USA super PAC. Republicans "want to give tax cuts to the rich, and they want to screw

the rest of us. This is a quintessential question of whose side are you on."

Bill Burton, a former Obama aide now at SKDKnickerbocker, said he's worried Democrats are still not making a convincing argument on economic issues.

But he sees some cause for optimism.

"The question has to be what counts as working — the guy's approval ratings are in the mid-30s," Burton said of Trump. "So the other way of looking at this is, everything is working."

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**The
Washington
Post**

Trump's push for tax cuts is coming up against a familiar challenge: Divided GOP (UNE)

White House officials trying to jump-start work on the GOP's top fall priority — tax cuts — are coming up against the same obstacle that has vexed President Trump all year: divided Republican lawmakers.

Trump advisers and top congressional leaders, hoping to assuage conservatives hungry for details, are working urgently to assemble a framework that they hope to release next week, according to White House aides and lawmakers. But after months of negotiations, the thorniest disagreement remains in view: how to pay for the giant tax cuts Trump has promised.

Negotiators agree with the goal of slashing the corporate income tax rate and also cutting individual income taxes. But they have yet to agree about which tax breaks should be cut to pay for it all.

In private talks, Trump advisers are pressing to eliminate or reduce several popular tax deductions, including the interest companies pay on debt, state and local income taxes paid by families and individuals, and the hugely popular mortgage interest deduction.

Several officials from the White House and Capitol Hill confirmed that those options are being considered — and that they are pushing to release broad outlines in about a week.

President Trump unveiled his tax plan on April 26, after months of pledging to make drastic changes to the tax code. The Post's Damian

Paletta explains why tax reform is so complicated. The Post's Damian Paletta explains why tax reform is harder than it looks. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

President Trump unveiled his tax plan on April 26, after months of pledging to make drastic changes to the tax code. The Post's Damian Paletta explains why tax reform is so complicated. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

But that is where the agreement ends. Congressional leaders, for instance, believe the mortgage deduction is too popular to cut, according to several officials familiar with the discussions.

All of it has forced negotiators to consider scaling back their vision. And that is before any plan has even been presented to the rank and file.

"It is always difficult, because it means what do you cut?" said Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah). "Everything on the books has a constituency, and that's one of the problems."

White House officials are still hopeful that they can lower the centerpiece of their effort, the corporate rate, from 35 percent to 15 percent. Many congressional Republicans, however, think that goal is ambitious.

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) said at a forum hosted by the New York Times last week that individual deductions for mortgage

interest, health insurance premiums and charitable donations should all be preserved. "We see those more as broad-based, important things that should be encouraged," he said.

That leaves negotiators with limited options to pay for the tax cuts they all seek.

Underlying the whole endeavor is the unresolved tension over whether it will constitute the sort of "tax reform" that Ryan has championed for years — an effort to reduce rates while maintaining federal revenue by eliminating "loopholes." A straight tax cut, meanwhile, could leave the loopholes intact but add trillions of dollars to the national debt.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) spoke about the Democrats' "preferred path" for tax reform on Aug. 1. "The best tax reform is bipartisan tax reform aimed at helping the middle class," he said. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) spoke about the Democrats' "preferred path" for tax reform on Aug. 1, and called for a bipartisan reform effort. (The Washington Post)

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) spoke about the Democrats' "preferred path" for tax reform on Aug. 1. "The best tax reform is bipartisan tax reform aimed at helping the middle class," he said. (The Washington Post)

Ryan and GOP allies have long promised "reform" in the spirit of the bipartisan 1986 rewrite of the tax

code, which after three decades of revisions allows individuals and corporations to claim more than \$1.6 trillion in tax breaks each year. But in recent months, key players have discussed something closer to the temporary, deficit-exploding tax cuts pushed by President George W. Bush in his first term.

"Just looking at all the promises that were made, you cannot do all those promises," said Mark Mazur, a former head of research, analysis and statistics at the Internal Revenue Service who was later the top tax official in the Obama administration. "Some things will have to get dialed back. They overpromised on a lot of things."

[Ryan offers much different tax rate target than Trump]

The process has taken on new urgency with Trump's recent exhortations to expedite what he has called the largest tax cut in U.S. history. He has traveled to Missouri and North Dakota in recent weeks to deliver speeches; in Missouri, he promised to reduce a "crushing tax burden on our companies and on our workers."

The White House and Republican leaders are trying a different approach than they used with the failed effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act, hoping for more agreement upfront rather than risk late defections that doom the entire process.

Marc Short, the White House legislative affairs director, said administration officials have met

with “more than 250 members,” including Democrats, to discuss tax reform. “Our outreach has been extensive,” he said.

National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin huddled with key GOP lawmakers on Capitol Hill on Tuesday afternoon to discuss next steps on the budget and taxes, according to Republicans familiar with the plans.

They discussed plans for a 2018 budget blueprint — a necessary first step before tax legislation can be taken up. And they drilled down with House and Senate negotiators on tax cuts.

Mnuchin also told a conference in New York on Tuesday that negotiators were still considering a number of unresolved issues. He said, for example, that they had not decided whether to cut tax rates for all 2017 income or just income in 2018 and beyond. He also said Republicans would assume that their tax cut plan would create hundreds of billions of dollars in new revenue just based on economic growth, an assertion that many budget experts have said is suspect.

Mnuchin also suggested Tuesday that companies could be treated variously under the GOP’s tax proposal. He said, for example, that he favored charging a higher tax rate for accounting firms as opposed to manufacturing firms, which he says create jobs.

Later Tuesday, the president hosted a bipartisan dinner with three senior Republican members of the Senate Finance Committee and three conservative Democrats from states Trump won whose votes the president is courting for tax legislation. Each of the Democrats who attended said in statements afterward that they were willing to work with Trump — under certain conditions.

Still, congressional GOP leaders are planning to use special budget procedures that would allow them to pass the tax bill with only Republican votes, skirting a potential filibuster

from Senate Democrats. But they have made little progress in passing a key prerequisite, the budget blueprint, thanks to partisan infighting.

In the House, hard-line conservatives have demanded a more detailed tax plan before ponying up votes for a budget, which has created a chicken-and-egg problem for GOP leaders. In the Senate, the complication is a Budget Committee where Republicans have a single-vote majority, empowering any single GOP senator on the panel to negotiate the parameters of the tax bill.

House Freedom Caucus Chairman Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) said it is “critically” important to have a better sense of what the emerging tax reform plan will look like before voting on a budget blueprint. He said he was hopeful about seeing more specifics “in the next couple of weeks.”

There is also talk among some Republicans of what happens if GOP leaders are unable to work out their differences. One, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to speak candidly, speculated that the White House is lying in wait to cut a deal with Democrats if Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) are unable to pass a budget.

[Debt-ceiling shift signifies a remarkable political evolution for Trump]

Democrats, meanwhile, have launched a campaign called “Not One Penny” aimed at pressuring Republicans to avoid sending more relief to corporations and the wealthy than to the middle and lower classes.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Tuesday that Democrats would be willing to discuss tax proposals with Republicans — just not the ideas that GOP leaders are currently discussing.

“Trickle-down economics is what they have out there,” Pelosi said. “It has nothing to do with tax reform. It

only has to do with their warmed-over stew.”

A key element of Trump’s blueprint would drastically reduce rates for businesses and individuals, changes that could eliminate more than \$5 trillion in government revenue over 10 years. The president also wants to reduce the number of tax brackets for families and individuals from seven to three — and essentially to lower rates for these earners.

Complicating matters is the fact that two of the largest tax breaks eyed by the White House — eliminating the deduction for state and local taxes, and scaling back the mortgage interest deduction — have powerful interest groups that have made it more difficult for the GOP to coalesce around a plan.

Eliminating the state and local tax deduction would raise \$700 billion in new taxes over 10 years, mostly from a handful of states including California, New York and New Jersey. On the mortgage interest deduction, negotiators are looking at lowering the mortgage cap that people can claim from \$1 million to a level that would depend on average home prices in particular regions.

Despite Trump’s goal of cutting the corporate tax rate to 15 percent, negotiators are looking at options that would lower it to around 23 percent, with a 28 percent rate for small businesses that file their taxes differently, said several individuals briefed on the discussions.

The White House has not proposed eliminating a specific corporate tax loophole to offset the rate cut.

Other goals under discussion include eliminating the estate tax and the alternative minimum tax, and doubling the standard deduction that many Americans can claim when they file their taxes.

Tax experts believe it would be difficult if not impossible to follow through on all of these proposals without adding trillions of dollars to the national debt — even with the elimination of numerous tax breaks.

Negotiators are considering making some of the tax changes permanent and allowing others to expire after several years to conform with Senate rules governing expanding the deficit.

Pushing legislation through without relying on Democrats for support would require them to use a budget mechanism known as reconciliation.

But reconciliation comes with a strict rule that any tax change must not increase the deficit after 10 years. Many budget experts believe Trump’s current plan would violate the rule.

Republicans control just 52 of the 100 Senate seats, giving them a very slim margin that just three defections would imperil.

The Energy 202 newsletter

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That margin makes Trump’s goal of driving down the corporate tax rate as low as he can all the more challenging — and helps explain why negotiators are scrounging for ways to raise new revenue. The White House also is counting on a rosy estimate of how much future economic growth can be presumed.

Mnuchin has said the majority of the new tax revenue they plan to raise will come from economic growth, but House and Senate leaders have suggested that such inflated assumptions won’t pass muster with the Joint Committee on Taxation, a congressional body that provides a crucial review of all tax proposal.

“Tax reform is hard and hasn’t happened for 31 years for a reason,” said Doug Holtz-Eakin, a Republican and former director of the Congressional Budget Office. “If you are doing tax reform through reconciliation, it’s like doing tax reform on a tightrope. There’s just not a lot of room for maneuvering.”



Smick : The Republican Tax Plan Better Be Audacious

David M. Smick

does enough to help average workers.

The big question on tax reform is President Trump : Can Republicans really trust him, in the end, to go along with their plan? Or will he pivot at the last minute and play nice with “Nancy” and “Chuck,” his two new friends on Capitol Hill? The answer might depend on whether the GOP plan

So far the effort on tax reform seems off kilter. Yes, reducing the corporate tax rate to improve American competitiveness makes sense. So does inducing companies to repatriate—and then put to work—the \$2.5 trillion they have sitting idle offshore. Still, on tax policy the GOP has become like a

boxer leading with his chin. Republicans appear a bit too concerned with CEOs and not enough with the wage earners who have been the big losers of the 21st century.

Since the financial crisis, American companies have fared well. Leveraging the Federal Reserve’s low interest rates, they have bought back their own stock at an

extraordinary clip. Since hitting bottom in March 2009, the Standard & Poor’s 500 index has risen 265%. Meanwhile, wage earners haven’t had a meaningful raise in real terms in decades.

Although Congress could help, the quirky way financial legislation is normally passed in the Senate—via reconciliation, which requires only 51 votes—means it probably won’t.

Imagine that President Trump announces, as promised, a “beautiful” plan that includes a permanent “big league” tax cut for middle-class families. The GOP’s razor-thin Senate margin and the vagaries of reconciliation mean the Trump plan would have little chance of becoming long-term policy. At best, working families would get a temporary tax cut. More likely would be a repeat of what happened with the attempt to replace ObamaCare: A small group of Republican outliers in the Senate would say “no.”

Fearing this outcome, Republican leaders are being tempted to play small ball. They might suggest modestly lowering the corporate tax rate. They might propose allowing full expensing of business investment, to be scaled back after several years. To help the middle class? They’ll throw in a modest hike to the standard deduction. Anything to get something done.

Which brings us back to President Trump. After watching the country tear itself apart politically, economically and socially during more than a decade of mediocre GDP growth, can the GOP trust the president to play small ball? Or will the transactional Mr. Trump try to “triangulate” and undermine the Republican position? If the GOP plan is not bold enough in helping

the little guy, my bet is the latter.

This is a unique moment in America’s economic history. Wage earners are being held back by a combination of globalization and technological advancement. A tax reform geared toward middle-class families would help, but Republicans would do well to explore a third cause of the problem: Large multinational corporations, the institutions Washington favors most, are chilling wage gains in their relentless drive to lower consumer prices and grab market share.

Republican reformers are quick to counter that any corporate tax cut will include the “pass throughs,” those smaller enterprises—including partnerships, LLCs and S-Corps—that use the personal tax code. What they don’t say is how difficult it would be to cut the “pass through” rate for legitimate small businesses without opening the tax system to widespread abuse. Every billionaire could declare himself a one-man S-Corp, hoping to be taxed at the lower rate. That’s why Congress needs a mini-Manhattan Project of tax specialists to figure out quickly how to help mom-and-pop businesses without inviting abuse and creating a revenue-losing free-for-all.

Ultimately, Republicans are being forced to play small ball because a group of GOP deficit hawks worry that a big tax reform would undermine the budget. This fear seems out of proportion. Since 2000, under a Republican president and then a Democratic one, the national debt has soared from \$5 trillion to nearly \$20 trillion. The fiscal situation will only worsen with the coming entitlement-funding nightmare. Fretting about the deficit now is like worrying about a flickering candle in the front parlor when the entire house is on fire and the roof is about to cave in. Besides, true tax reform would eliminate deductions just as boldly as it slashes rates, achieving revenue neutrality.

Republicans shouldn’t play small ball. Their goal should be a tax-reform plan that will create robust economic growth, which in turn will help heal a bitterly divided nation. What would such a plan look like? Helping wage earners via tax policy is not a simple matter. People who earn less than \$50,000 a year pay an average effective income-tax rate of 4.3%. What’s killing them is the payroll tax combined with the rising cost of health care. At minimum, the standard deduction should be tripled. But reformers also need to think creatively. Tax reform, entitlement reform and health-care

reform cannot be considered in isolation. Working families need relief across the board.

That requires a bigger play than what some on Capitol Hill have in mind. But in the end, growth is everything. As he was preparing to run for president in 1980, Ronald Reagan was warned in a strategy meeting I attended about John Connally, a fellow candidate in the Republican primary. Connally, a former Texas governor, was raising big bucks from big business. By comparison, Reagan’s campaign coffers were lean. The future president’s response was aggressive. “Let him have the Fortune 500,” Reagan shouted. “I’ll take Main Street over Wall Street.”

This kind of “lunch pail” capitalism won Reagan the election and transformed the GOP—and the country. Isn’t it time for more “lunch pail” policy-making from Washington?

Mr. Smick’s latest book is “The Great Equalizer: How Main Street Capitalism Can Create an Economy for Everyone” (Public Affairs, 2017). He was chief of staff to Rep. Jack Kemp from 1979-84 and advised on both the 1981 and 1986 tax reforms.

The New York Times Bernie Sanders: Why We Need Medicare for All

This is a pivotal moment in American history. Do we, as a nation, join the rest of the industrialized world and guarantee comprehensive health care to every person as a human right? Or do we maintain a system that is enormously expensive, wasteful and bureaucratic, and is designed to maximize profits for big insurance companies, the pharmaceutical industry, Wall Street and medical equipment suppliers?

We remain the only major country on earth that allows chief executives and stockholders in the health care industry to get incredibly rich, while tens of millions of people suffer because they can’t get the health care they need. This is not what the United States should be about.

All over this country, I have heard from Americans who have shared heartbreaking stories about our dysfunctional system. Doctors have told me about patients who died because they put off their medical visits until it was too late. These were people who had no insurance or could not afford out-of-pocket costs imposed by their insurance plans.

I have heard from older people who have been forced to split their pills in half because they couldn’t pay the outrageously high price of prescription drugs. Oncologists have told me about cancer patients who have been unable to acquire lifesaving treatments because they could not afford them. This should not be happening in the world’s wealthiest country.

Americans should not hesitate about going to the doctor because they do not have enough money. They should not worry that a hospital stay will bankrupt them or leave them deeply in debt. They should be able to go to the doctor they want, not just one in a particular network. They should not have to spend huge amounts of time filling out complicated forms and arguing with insurance companies as to whether or not they have the coverage they expected.

Even though 28 million Americans remain uninsured and even more are underinsured, we spend far more per capita on health care than any other industrialized nation. In 2015, the United States spent almost \$10,000 per person for health care; the Canadians,

Germans, French and British spent less than half of that, while guaranteeing health care to everyone. Further, these countries have higher life expectancy rates and lower infant mortality rates than we do.

The reason that our health care system is so outrageously expensive is that it is not designed to provide quality care to all in a cost-effective way, but to provide huge profits to the medical-industrial complex. Layers of bureaucracy associated with the administration of hundreds of individual and complicated insurance plans is stunningly wasteful, costing us hundreds of billions of dollars a year. As the only major country not to negotiate drug prices with the pharmaceutical industry, we spend tens of billions more than we should.

The solution to this crisis is not hard to understand. A half-century ago, the United States established Medicare. Guaranteeing comprehensive health benefits to Americans over 65 has proved to be enormously successful, cost-effective and popular. Now is the time to expand and improve Medicare to cover all Americans.

This is not a radical idea. I live 50 miles south of the Canadian border. For decades, every man, woman and child in Canada has been guaranteed health care through a single-payer, publicly funded health care program. This system has not only improved the lives of the Canadian people but has also saved families and businesses an immense amount of money.

On Wednesday I will introduce the Medicare for All Act in the Senate with 15 co-sponsors and support from dozens of grass-roots organizations. Under this legislation, every family in America would receive comprehensive coverage, and middle-class families would save thousands of dollars a year by eliminating their private insurance costs as we move to a publicly funded program.

The transition to the Medicare for All program would take place over four years. In the first year, benefits to older people would be expanded to include dental care, vision coverage and hearing aids, and the eligibility age for Medicare would be lowered to 55. All children under the age of 18 would also be covered. In the second year, the eligibility age would be lowered to 45 and in the

third year to 35. By the fourth year, every man, woman and child in the country would be covered by Medicare for All.

Needless to say, there will be huge opposition to this legislation from the powerful special interests that profit from the current wasteful system. The insurance companies, the drug companies and Wall Street

will undoubtedly devote a lot of money to lobbying, campaign contributions and television ads to defeat this proposal. But they are on the wrong side of history.

Guaranteeing health care as a right is important to the American people not just from a moral and financial perspective; it also happens to be what the majority of the American

people want. According to an April poll by The Economist/YouGov, 60 percent of the American people want to "expand Medicare to provide health insurance to every American," including 75 percent of Democrats, 58 percent of independents and 46 percent of Republicans.

Now is the time for Congress to stand with the American people and take on the special interests that dominate health care in the United States. Now is the time to extend Medicare to everyone.

**The
Washington
Post**

Sanders will introduce universal health care, backed by 15 Democrats

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) will introduce legislation on Wednesday that would expand Medicare into a universal health insurance program with the backing of at least 15 Democratic senators — a record level of support for an idea that had been relegated to the fringes during the last Democratic presidency.

"This is where the country has got to go," Sanders said in an interview at his Senate office. "Right now, if we want to move away from a dysfunctional, wasteful, bureaucratic system into a rational health-care system that guarantees coverage to everyone in a cost-effective way, the only way to do it is Medicare for All."

Sanders's bill, the Medicare for All Act of 2017, has no chance of passage in a Republican-run Congress. But after months of behind-the-scenes meetings and a public pressure campaign, the bill is already backed by most of the senators seen as likely 2020 Democratic candidates — if not by most senators facing tough reelection battles in 2018.

The bill would revolutionize America's health-care system, replacing it with a public system that would be paid for by higher taxes. Everything from emergency surgery to prescription drugs, from mental health to eye care, would be covered, with no co-payments. Americans under 18 would immediately obtain "universal Medicare cards," while Americans not currently eligible for Medicare would be phased into the program over four years. Employer-provided health care would be replaced, with the employers paying higher taxes but no longer on the hook for insurance.

During a campaign rally in May 2016, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) called for health coverage for all Americans. "Health care is a right for all people," he said. During a campaign rally in May 2016, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) called for health coverage for all Americans. "Health care is a right for all people," he said. (AP)

During a campaign rally in May 2016, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) called for health coverage for all Americans. "Health care is a right for all people," he said. (AP)

Private insurers would remain, with fewer customers, to pay for elective treatments such as plastic surgery — a system similar to Australia, which President Trump has praised for having a "much better" insurance regime than the United States.

But the market-based changes of the Affordable Care Act would be replaced as Medicare becomes the country's universal insurer. Doctors would be reimbursed by the government; providers would sign a yearly participation agreement with Medicare to remain with the system.

"When you have co-payments — when you say that health care is not a right for everybody, whether you're poor or whether you're a billionaire — the evidence suggests that it becomes a disincentive for people to get the health care they need," Sanders said. "Depending on the level of the copayment, it may cost more to figure out how you collect it than to not have the copayment at all."

As he described his legislation, Sanders focused on its simplicity, suggesting that Americans would be happy to pay higher taxes if it meant the end of wrangling with health-care companies. The size of the tax increase, he said, would be determined in a separate bill.

"I think the American people are sick and tired of filling out forms," Sanders said. "Your income went up — you can't get this. Your income went down — you can't get that. You've got to argue with insurance companies about what you thought you were getting. Doctors are spending an enormous amount of time arguing with insurers."

Republicans, bruised and exhausted by a failed campaign to repeal the Affordable Care Act, were giddy about the chance to attack Democrats and Sanders. At Tuesday's leadership news conference, Sen. John Barrasso (R-

Wyo.), a medical doctor, crowed that Sanders's bill had become "the litmus test for the liberal left" and that Americans would reject any costly plan for universal insurance coverage.

"Bernie Sanders's home state had passed a similar plan," Barrasso said, referring to a failed 2014 campaign for universal health care in Vermont. "They realized they would have to double the taxes collected on the people of that state to pay for it because it was so financially expensive."

Sanders acknowledged that the plan would be costly but pointed to the experience of other industrialized countries that provided universal coverage through higher taxes. The average American paid \$11,365 per year in taxes; the average Canadian paid \$14,693. But the average American paid twice as much for health care as the average Canadian.

"Rather than give a detailed proposal about how we're going to raise \$3 trillion a year, we'd rather give the American people options," Sanders said. "The truth is, embarrassingly, that on this enormously important issue, there has not been the kind of research and study that we need. You've got think tanks, in many cases funded by the drug companies and the insurance companies, telling us how terribly expensive it's going to be. We have economists looking at it who are coming up with different numbers."

In 2016, when Sanders challenged Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination, high cost estimates and the idea of wiping out private insurers kept many Democrats from embracing universal health care. While support for Sanders's proposal has risen from zero to 15, several Senate Democrats are proposing alternate plans for Medicare or Medicaid buy-ins, and Democratic leaders caution that their party will take no one-size-fits-all position.

"I don't think it's a litmus test," said House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) of Medicare for All.

"I think to support the idea that it captures is that we want to have as many people as possible, everybody, covered, and I think that's something that we all embrace."

Many supporters of Sanders have contradicted Pelosi, portraying his plan as popular — 57 percent of Americans support Medicare for All, according to Kaiser Health News — and efficient. Our Revolution, founded by Sanders, has urged Democrats to sign on; Justice Democrats, created after the election to challenge Democrats in primaries if they bucked progressive values, has asked supporters to call their senators until they endorse the bill. And a web ad paid for by Sanders's 2018 Senate campaign, asking readers to "co-sponsor" his bill, attracted more than half a million names.

The Finance 202 newsletter

Your daily guide to where Wall Street meets Washington.

As of Tuesday night, just one senator from a swing state had done so. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), who as a member of the House had backed Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.)'s Medicare for All bill, wrote a Tuesday op-ed for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel to confirm that she was on board. The Republican Party of Wisconsin, which has struggled to find a first-tier challenger for Baldwin next year, was quick with a statement: "Senator Tammy Baldwin Embraces Radical \$32 Trillion Health Care Takeover."

The \$32 trillion figure was based on the Urban Institute's analysis of Sander's 2016 campaign plan. The new bill was different — and so was the confidence Democrats had as they embraced it.

"With this reform, we would simplify a complicated system for families and reduce administrative costs for businesses," Baldwin wrote.

Galston : The Single-Payer Siren Song

William A. Galston

There must be something special in the waters of Lake Champlain. In 2011 newly elected Vermont Gov. Peter Shumlin announced his intention to shift his state to a single-payer health-care system. He pursued that goal until late 2014, when a study by his staff and consultants projected that it would require imposing a payroll tax of 11.5% and raising the personal income tax by as much as 9.5 percentage points. "The risk of economic shock is too high," Mr. Shumlin concluded as he withdrew his proposal.

There were political considerations as well. Despite successfully campaigning on a single-payer platform in 2010 and winning reelection in 2012 and 2014, Mr. Shumlin never succeeded in persuading a majority of his constituents to support his signature idea. An April 2014 survey found Vermont split down the middle, with 40% of residents approving and 39% disapproving. Perhaps the prospect of increasing the state budget by 45% gave Vermonters reason to doubt the wisdom of an abrupt shift to single-payer health care.

Vermont is not some random canary in the mineshaft. The Green Mountain State is among the most liberal in the country. Barack

Obama prevailed by 37 percentage points in 2008 and 36 points in 2012. Hillary Clinton's snake-bitten 2016 campaign managed a 26-point victory. The state is ethnically homogeneous, with a median household income above the national average. It is hard to think of a state better positioned to embrace single-payer health care, yet a determined governor couldn't get close to pushing it through.

But now Democratic presidential aspirants are rushing to endorse Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders's soon-to-be-released national single-payer plan. Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris already back it. Sens. Cory Booker and Kirsten Gillibrand have announced plans to co-sponsor it as well.

From the perspective of the contest for the Democratic nomination in 2020, this strategy is easy to understand. Mr. Sanders came closer to upsetting Mrs. Clinton than most observers thought possible. For now, the progressive wing of the party is energized, and the party's ideological center of gravity has shifted.

In 2000, when Al Gore defeated Bill Bradley for the Democratic presidential nomination, 44% of Democrats regarded themselves as moderate and only 28% as liberal. By 2008, when Mr. Obama narrowly prevailed over Mrs. Clinton, the moderates' share had fallen to 41%

while the liberal share had increased to 33%.

Since then, the pace of ideological change has accelerated. Today, liberals make up the largest share of Democrats—48%. Moderates have fallen further, to only 36%. And the conservative wing, nearly one-quarter of the total in 2000, now amounts to barely one-seventh of the party.

If you want to win the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, it might seem, the best strategy is to emerge as the champion of its newly dominant progressive faction, and coming out for single-payer might seem the best way to do it.

Whether this is the best formula for winning a general election contest is another matter. Sens. Warren, Harris, Booker and Gillibrand are coastal Democrats from bright-blue states. Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown, a veteran populist from a swing state that Donald Trump carried by a stunning eight points in 2016, has conspicuously declined to endorse the Sanders bill, preferring to build bipartisan support for a more modest proposal to allow Americans to buy into Medicare when they reach 55. Democrats should ask themselves which of their elected officials better understands how to win back the Midwestern states that made Mr. Trump president.

This is not just a political calculation. From a policy

standpoint, the danger is that "Medicare for All" will become the Democrats' "repeal and replace ObamaCare."

In May 2016, the Urban Institute—not previously known as a hotbed of conservatism—released its analysis of the Medicare for All proposal Sen. Sanders offered during his presidential campaign. The study found that if the plan were enacted into law, the federal government would absorb the bulk of the current spending by states, localities, employers and households. Federal spending would rise by \$2.5 trillion in the plan's first year, and by \$32 trillion over the first decade.

A parallel study conducted by the bipartisan Tax Policy Center found that Mr. Sanders's revenue proposals would raise only \$15.3 trillion over the first decade, leaving a gap of \$16.6 trillion between expenditures and revenues. "The proposed taxes," the Urban Institute observed, are "much too low to fully finance the plan," and "additional sources of revenue would have to be identified."

It will be interesting to see whether Sen. Sanders's new proposal can meet these objections. Even if it does, Democrats interested in regaining a national majority should look before they leap.

The New York Times

Editorial : How Not to Sustain Prosperity

President Trump clearly inherited an economy on the upswing, according to the 2016 Census report, with income, health coverage and poverty levels having all improved in the past two years.

The question is whether his administration and the Republican-controlled Congress will sustain the momentum, or even reverse it.

The Census report, released on Tuesday, showed median income, adjusted for inflation, grew by 3.2 percent from 2015 to 2016, to \$59,039, as employers added jobs and hours and even, in some cases, gave raises. At the same time, the poverty rate decreased by 0.8 percentage points, or 2.5 million people, to 12.7 percent. Both measures are now at or near their prerecession levels in 2007, a hard-fought recovery.

On health care, the data show that the ranks of the uninsured fell last

year by 900,000 people, to an all-time low of 8.8 percent of the population. The decline is a result of the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. The 32 states and District of Columbia that participate in the A.C.A.'s expansion of Medicaid for low-income families had larger declines in their uninsured populations than states that do not participate. Massachusetts, for example, a pioneer in broad coverage, has the lowest uninsured rate in the nation, 2.5 percent, while Texas, which rejected Medicaid expansion, has the highest, 16.6 percent.

The data also show the success of federal safety-net programs. If not for tax credits for low-income workers, an additional 8.2 million people would have been classified as poor last year. Similarly, food stamps and low-income housing aid lifted 3.6 million and 3.1 million people, respectively, out of poverty last year.

For all the improvement, however, broad prosperity remains elusive. For income gains to meaningfully raise living standards, they would have had to exceed the peak from before the recession, not merely met it. One in eight Americans, 40.6 million people, are still poor. Some 28.1 million are still without health coverage.

And yet, Republican policy makers seem determined to undo the progress that has been made. The Trump administration has opposed Obama-era rules to update the nation's overtime-pay protections for salaried workers, arguably the single most important policy option to raise middle-class pay. President Trump and the House Budget Committee have both issued budget proposals for 2018 that call for deep spending cuts to safety-net programs. This week, the Republican senators Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina plan to introduce yet

another draconian bill to end Obamacare.

Those giant steps backward would all shift income up the economic ladder. They would also create fiscal room for big tax cuts for the rich, a grail of Republican policy, despite the poor job and wage growth after the tax cuts of the George W. Bush era.

The result would be greater income inequality, the one measure that did not improve in the new Census data. Income gains at the top far outstripped those at the bottom.

Republicans' policies would undermine the gains of average Americans. Incompetence and public opposition have limited their success so far. They will not give up, though, so neither can the opposition.

U.S. middle-class incomes reached highest-ever level in 2016, Census Bureau says (UNE)

By Heather Long

The incomes of middle-class Americans rose last year to the highest level ever recorded by the Census Bureau, as poverty declined and the scars of the past decade's Great Recession seemed to finally fade.

Median household income rose to \$59,039 in 2016, a 3.2 percent increase from the previous year and the second consecutive year of healthy gains, the Census Bureau reported Tuesday. The nation's poverty rate fell to 12.7 percent, returning nearly to what it was in 2007 before a financial crisis and deep recession walloped workers in ways that were still felt years later.

The new data, along with another census report showing the rate of Americans lacking health insurance to be at its lowest ever last year, suggest that Americans were actually in a position of increasing financial strength as President Trump, who tapped into anger about the economy, took office this year.

Yet the census report also points to the sources of deeper anxieties among American workers and underscores threats to continued economic progress.

Middle-class households are only now seeing their income eclipse 1999 levels.

Inequality remains high, with the top fifth of earners taking home more than half of all overall income, a record. And yawning racial disparities remain, with the median African American household earning only \$39,490, compared with more than \$65,000 for whites and over \$81,000 for Asians.

Economists and policy experts wonder whether the gains will continue. The median income had surged since 2014 because millions more Americans found full-time jobs, but there is little evidence that

employers are rushing to offer raises to those who already are employed. Without more wage gains, momentum could slow.

Meanwhile, the rate of people without health insurance declined only slightly last year, to 8.8 percent, the Census Bureau said.

The Trump administration is widely expected to cut back on programs that promote enrollment under the Affordable Care Act, meaning that the ranks of the 28.1 million uninsured Americans might grow.

"There's a danger that this is as good as it gets," said Peter Atwater, president of Financial Insights. "We are already at a 16-year low in unemployment. The likelihood of significant job growth from here is limited."

Trump promised that a combination of tax cuts, infrastructure investment packages, renegotiated trade deals and the repeal of Obama administration regulations would deliver a burst of job creation and attendant economic growth.

So far, no such boom can be found.

President Trump has a tendency to say he is responsible for job growth, rather than U.S. businesses or the American people. President Trump has a tendency to say he is responsible for job growth, rather than U.S. businesses or the American people. (Meg Kelly/The Washington Post)

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In Trump's first seven months, the U.S. economy has added about 25,000 fewer jobs per month than it did during the last seven months of Barack Obama's presidency. In a more positive sign, the gross domestic product grew at an annual rate of 3 percent in the second quarter of 2017, according to a federal report issued in late August.

Much of Trump's agenda remains pending, however, either awaiting action by his administration or bogged down in Congress. And while most economists think it is too early in Trump's term for his administration to have a measurable effect on the economy, there are real doubts about whether he will be able to enact his agenda, particularly after his health-care effort died in the Senate. Both his tax reform and infrastructure efforts face significant hurdles in Congress.

"Where is the extra progress going to come from? You have growing uncertainty that Washington will be able to create any sort of tax relief or infrastructure plan," Atwater said.

For now, though, the economy is returning to pre-recession levels, as indicated by several benchmarks. The national unemployment rate was 4.4 percent in August, just about the same as pre-recession levels. And in July, U.S. employers had generated enough jobs to restore national employment to where it stood before the recession started in 2007, even after accounting for population growth in the intervening decade.

The household earnings are welcome news for the middle class, which, after leaps forward in the 1990s, struggled amid the slow overall growth of the early 2000s and was devastated by the recession.

The income increase extended to almost every demographic group, Census Bureau officials said. The figure the agency reported Tuesday was the highest on record. The agency reports that in 1999, median household income, adjusted for inflation, was \$58,655. Agency officials cautioned that the bureau changed its methodology in 2014, complicating an exact historical comparison.

Julian West, of Phoenix, is one of the many Americans whose lives improved dramatically last year.

For much of the recovery, he could find only "dead-end" minimum-wage jobs at carwashes and discount stores.

"I was really struggling," said West, 44, who was forced to move back in with his parents.

In 2016, he went to a temp agency in Phoenix and landed a job that paid \$18 an hour. It did not last, but the recruiter called again and moved him to the job he has now at BB&T Bank monitoring car-loan payments and repossessions. The job pays \$16 an hour, with ample opportunity for overtime pay, he said.

"I'm slowly saving and paying off bills," West told The Washington Post. He recently moved into a small studio apartment, now that he's earning \$35,000 a year. "I'll be middle class again if I keep my spending to bare bones."

West credits Obama with bringing the economy back. He did not vote for Trump, but he hopes someone with the business experience of the president can help the working poor.

Many Americans are optimistic, as West is, that their fortunes will continue to improve. A Gallup poll released Tuesday found that 64 percent of Americans think their "standard of living" is improving, the highest percentage since the financial crisis, while only 19 percent feel their standard of living is declining.

"Today's census report is unambiguously good news: on income, on poverty and on health insurance," said Bob Greenstein, the founder and president of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a left-leaning think tank. "The goal should be to continue this progress."

Editorial : The Supreme Court should strike down Wisconsin's gerrymandering

THE SUPREME COURT has long kept a distance from arguments over gerrymandering, that most American practice of redrawing the lines of legislative districts in order to tip elections toward the party in power. But early next month, the justices will hear a challenge to the 2011 redrawing of Wisconsin's state

legislative map by Republican lawmakers — a demonstration of how increasingly powerful technology allows partisan mapmakers to distort representation with ever-greater precision. Using computer modeling, Wisconsin's Republican-controlled legislature produced districts so unbalanced

that, in 2012, Republicans won a supermajority in the state assembly even after losing the popular vote. And the state GOP continued to entrench that hold in 2014 and 2016, even after winning only slim majorities of the vote.

Given that the case, *Gill v. Whitford*, concerns an egregious abuse of power to the advantage of Republicans, it's heartening to see officials of that same party condemn Wisconsin's map. In a series of recently filed legal briefs before the Supreme Court, high-profile Republican politicians — including

Sen. John McCain (Ariz.) and Ohio Gov. John Kasich — stand shoulder to shoulder with Democrats to report from the “political front lines” on the destructive effects of gerrymandering.

The legal arguments against extreme partisan gerrymandering focus on the practice’s offensiveness to constitutional promises of equal protection and free expression: Voters packed into skewed districts have less of a voice in the political process and are arguably penalized for their party affiliation. And in cases such as Wisconsin’s, technology allows legislators to create maps that essentially immunize the party in power from ever being voted out.

The bipartisan briefs make clear how a practice designed to undercut democratic competition further degrades American politics by weakening public faith in government and pushing lawmakers away from compromise, especially in the House of Representatives. This is not an issue of one party’s advantage over another — Democrats have also used gerrymandering against Republicans when convenient, most notably in Maryland — but a matter of bipartisan concern.

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In the past, the Supreme Court has been reluctant to intervene against partisan redistricting for fear of becoming entangled in political disputes. But the court should take seriously the testimonials of both Republican and Democratic officials as to gerrymandering’s destructiveness to democracy — and should strike down Wisconsin’s skewed map.

While the question of just where to draw the line between acceptable and unconstitutional partisan gerrymanders may be far from simple in many instances, Wisconsin’s is an extreme case. And with many politicians unwilling

to give up the ability to draw their own districts, gerrymandering is uniquely resistant to political solutions. Establishing standards for judicial oversight would help deter overeager lawmakers from hijacking the redistricting process to cement their hold on power.

Gerrymandering has contributed to a “crisis of confidence in our democracy,” reads the brief filed by Mr. McCain and his Democratic colleague Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (R.I.). The judiciary cannot and should not be the sole solution to this crisis, but it has a valuable role to play in reassuring Americans that their votes matter.



The Disturbing Paradox of Presidential Power

Benjamin Wittes

“The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America.” — *Article II, Section 1, U.S. Constitution*

Debates over executive authority generally take place at the margins of the president’s powers. Our collective understanding of the limits of executive power flows from an iterative process: Presidents test the boundaries of their authority and either successfully expand those boundaries in the process or get batted back by other branches of government. Other branches encroach on presidential authority and either get away with it — and thereby narrow the president’s power — or not.

Our understanding of the boundaries of presidential authority flows from Abraham Lincoln suspending habeas corpus on his own and then going to Congress for ratification. It flows from Harry Truman trying to seize the steel mills and having the Supreme Court block him. It flows from presidents over time going to war on their own authority and Congress letting it happen.

Two centuries of experience with this approach to defining the parameters of the presidency have taught us that a certain vigilance in policing the outer bounds of presidential power is necessary — particularly when those outer bounds involve the coercive authorities of the office. So when a man who wears his propensity to abuse power on his sleeve was elected president last November, many commentators and critics instinctively knew to treat his enthusiastic remarks in favor of torture and certain war crimes as potentially more than mere words.

They knew, without being told, to be concerned about the possibility of intelligence abuses. They worried about what he might do with drones. They worried about which “bad dudes” he might bring to Guantánamo Bay.

Eight months of Donald Trump’s administration, however, suggest that — for this president, anyway — our collective anxiety has been at least somewhat misplaced.

Eight months of Donald Trump’s administration, however, suggest that — for this president, anyway — our collective anxiety has been at least somewhat misplaced. Trump’s presidency has been abusive in the extreme, but the authorities he is abusing do not lie at the margins of presidential power. They lie at its core. And they thus raise a different question from the one we have taught ourselves over the centuries to ask.

Consider that since Trump has taken office, the fights over the major issues of presidential power that have divided Americans since 9/11 have largely disappeared from view. There’s a reason for that. For all the fretting about Trump’s noxious comments on torture, interrogation policy hasn’t changed. Neither has detention policy — at least not yet. The authorities of the intelligence agencies to collect and process information have not increased under this administration. And, ironically, the person most vocal in complaining about alleged intelligence abuses has been Trump himself, whose complaints of illegality on the part of the intelligence community — from his predecessor “wiretapping” him to his gripes about “unmasking” — few commentators other than his core loyalists have taken seriously.

Trump’s abuses, rather, have almost uniformly occurred in areas where the president’s power is not contested, areas at the very heart of what the Constitution calls “the executive Power.”

Few serious constitutional scholars, after all, doubt the president’s power to “appoint ... Officers of the United States” — and thus to remove them. This is what Trump did to FBI Director James Comey. It is also what his tweets and interviews portend with respect to Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. And, of course, it would be by forcing the firing of special counsel Robert Mueller that Trump might ultimately threaten the Russia investigation. The power to hire law enforcement officers who will act in his personal interests is certainly corrupt, but it’s a corrupt use of an undisputed authority.

Nor is there any serious debate over the president’s power to direct his administration to take action based on bad information and no coherent process. No language within the Constitution requires Trump to follow a process of any kind before directing the executive branch in some course of action or another. Rather, it gives him the authority to require written opinions from his cabinet officers on subjects related to their duties. If he wants to circumvent them before issuing fateful executive orders, he gets to do that.

Even the president’s power to spill highly classified information to foreign adversaries is pretty clearly established. The Constitution makes clear that “he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers.” And the elaborate system of classification of national security information is almost entirely a creature of executive

orders designed to protect the information the president chooses to protect. So if he wants to receive ambassadors in the Oval Office and blow secrets to them there, well, they’re Trump’s secrets to blow.

And, of course, the president’s authority to speak his mind, including on Twitter, is likewise beyond any serious question. Many of the abuses of authority in which Trump has engaged have taken the form of tweets — from maligning people in a fashion that would almost certainly be legally actionable were Trump not president to announcing new military policies on transgender service members without first establishing an official change in procedure.

But the president has the right to say what he wants. In fact, the Constitution actually requires that he “shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.” It doesn’t specify that he should do so in a speech rather than, say, in a tweet.

The paradox here is that this most abusive of presidents is engaging in his abuses without needing to make robust assertions of executive power.

And this suggests that we may have spent too much energy policing the marginal powers of the presidency relative to the energy we have spent policing its discretionary core.

And this suggests that we may have spent too much energy policing the marginal powers of the presidency relative to the energy we have spent policing its discretionary core.

Trump is forcing us to confront the question of what minimum

standards, if any, Congress — office. That is, he's forcing us to President of the United States" and strangely uncharted constitutional which has the power to impeach and remove the president — should think about the true meaning of the "preserve, protect and defend the waters. demand of a president in the obligation to "take Care that the Constitution of the United States." After more than two centuries and exercise of the central discretionary Laws be faithfully executed" by a person who has taken an oath to 44 presidents, these remain judgments associated with the "faithfully execute the Office of