



# The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDITION | FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2017

## In Germany, a first lady conundrum

Anna Sauerbrey  
Contributing Writer

### OPINION

**BERLIN** In a way, Elke Bündenbender is the exact opposite of Melania Trump. Being married to Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the new German head of state, she has given up her job as a judge at the Berlin Administrative Court to fully devote her time to the job of first lady. Mrs. Trump, on the contrary, refuses to be first lady, in order to, well, to continue to do pretty much nothing.

Still, however different the two women may be, Germany is having the same discussion as the United States: Are we still in for a first lady in the 21st century? Is a first housewife still an

**Like America, we're faced with the question: Does she represent who we are, or who we want to be?**

appropriate representative of the nation we are? And does she represent the nation we'd like to be?

As for the nation we'd like to be, the German answer is quite simple: No, she does not.

Most Germans like to think of women's equality as a mission accomplished and would probably agree that the role model that lives on at the Schloss Bellevue, the president's residence, has outlived its time.

Germany has never had a female president, which may be why it has never modernized the roles of its first couple. At the Schloss Bellevue, the 1950s have survived, turning it into a museum of social history, a "Mad Men" caricature of the domestic, patriarchal past, just plusher and less cool, exuding the stale smell of a Sunday roast gone cold waiting for Daddy to return to the familial home.

The German first lady, not unlike her American counterpart, is the woman "at his side," as many media outlets like to put it. She is active, but in a way that postwar Germany would have approved of, too. Traditionally, she's the patron of the Müttergenesungswerk, a charitable organization founded by Elly Heuss-Knapp, Germany's first first lady, which is dedicated to the health of mothers. Horst Köhler, the president from 2004 to 2010, and his wife, Eva Luise, for example, started a foundation for rare diseases. The first lady is in charge of organizing the president's New Year's reception and other tasks that comply with traditional female role requirements such as caretaking, tending and accommodating.

All of this is based on mere convention. The first lady has no constitutional role. The fact that she is acting

SAUERBREY, PAGE 15



Jehovah's Witnesses gathered in a house in the village of Vorokhobino, north of Moscow, where they meet for services. The denomination is under pressure by the authorities.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES HILL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

## Pacifist, but seen as threat

VOROKHOBINO, RUSSIA

**Jehovah's Witnesses face ban in Russia for activities viewed as 'extremist'**

BY ANDREW HIGGINS

A dedicated pacifist who has never even held a gun, Andrei Sivak discovered that his government considered him a dangerous extremist when he tried to change some money and the teller "suddenly looked up at me with a face full of fear."

His name had popped up on the exchange bureau's computer system, along with those of members of Al Qaeda, the Islamic State and other militant groups responsible for shocking acts of violence.

The only group the 43-year-old father of three has ever belonged to, however, is Jehovah's Witnesses, a Christian denomination committed to the belief that the Bible must be taken literally, particularly its injunction "Thou shalt not kill."

Yet, in a throwback to the days of the Soviet Union, when Jehovah's Witnesses were hounded as spies and malcontents by the K.G.B., the denomina-



The Jehovah's Witnesses elders Vyacheslav Stepanov, 40, left, and Andrei Sivak, 43, are facing trial on new charges of extremism. A municipal court acquitted them last year.

tion is at the center of an escalating campaign by the authorities to curtail religious groups that compete with the Russian Orthodox Church and that challenge President Vladimir V. Putin's efforts to rally the country behind traditional, often militaristic patriotic values.

The Justice Ministry on March 30 put the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, an office complex near St. Petersburg, on a list of the bodies banned "in connection with the carrying out of extremist activities."

Last month, the ministry asked the

Supreme Court to outlaw the religious organization and stop its more than 170,000 Russian members from spreading "extremist" texts. The court began hearing the case on Wednesday.

Extremism, as defined by a law passed in 2002 but amended and expanded several times since, has become a catchall charge that can be deployed against just about anybody, as it has been against some of those involved in recent anticorruption protests in Moscow and scores of other cities.

Several students who took part in demonstrations in the Siberian city of Tomsk are now being investigated by a special anti-extremism unit, while Leonid Volkov, the senior aide to the jailed protest leader Aleksei A. Navalny, said he himself was detained last week under the extremism law.

In the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, the putative extremism seems to derive mostly from the group's absolute opposition to violence, a stand that infuriated Soviet and now Russian authorities whose legitimacy rests in large part on the celebration of martial triumphs, most notably over Nazi Germany in World War II but also over rebels in Syria.

Jehovah's Witnesses, members of a denomination founded in the United

RUSSIA, PAGE 4

## Freedom for the U.S. military carries risks

PENTAGON MEMO  
WASHINGTON

**New command style may increase the potential for civilian casualties**

BY HELENE COOPER

President Trump has let the military know that the buck stops with them, not him. The Pentagon, after eight years of chafing at what many generals viewed as micromanaging from the Obama White House, is so far embracing its new freedom.

Officials say that much of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis's plan to defeat the Islamic State group, which Mr. Mattis delivered to the White House in February but has yet to make public, consists of proposals for speeding up decision-making to allow the military to move more quickly on raids, airstrikes, bombing missions and arming allies in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. Commanders argue that loosening restrictions — as Mr. Trump has already done for American operations in much of Somalia and parts of Yemen — could lead to a faster defeat of Islamic State militants in not only the Middle East but also the Horn of Africa.

Yet with the new freedoms come new dangers for the military, including the potential of increased civilian casualties, and the possibility that Mr. Trump will shunt blame for things that go wrong to the Pentagon. Mr. Trump already did that after the botched raid in Yemen in January, which led to the death of Chief Petty Officer William Owens, a member of the Navy SEALs known as Ryan, despite having signed off on that raid himself.

"They explained what they wanted to do, the generals, who are very respected," Mr. Trump told Fox News after the raid. "And they lost Ryan."

Beyond that, many foreign policy experts point out that giving the military freedom over short-term tactics like

MILITARY, PAGE 5



WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

**Defense Secretary Jim Mattis will have more independence in decision-making.**

**AN UNCLEAR STANCE ON NORTH KOREA**

The Trump administration's limited pronouncements on Pyongyang have left allies confused. PAGE 5



COLE WILSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The music producer Steve Lillywhite, who has worked with U2, the Killers and the Rolling Stones, selects the music sold on CDs at the KFC outlets in Indonesia.

## Get your fried chicken with a side of music

**A U2 producer takes his talents to Indonesia to create CDs for KFC**

BY JON REGEN

Steve Lillywhite knows a thing or two about making music that sells. That six-time Grammy-winning producer has worked on multiplatinum recordings with artists including U2, the Killers and the Rolling Stones.

Now Mr. Lillywhite is proving he knows how to sell music, too, although in a very unexpected way. He is the chief executive of Jagonya Music & Sport Indonesia, a company in Jakarta, Indonesia, that bundles recorded CDs with fast food at Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants throughout that country.

At a time when the United States music industry has seen physical CD sales in free-fall — according to the latest re-

port from the Recording Industry Association of America, 99.4 million full-length discs were sold in the United States in 2016, the fewest since 1986 — Mr. Lillywhite's company, a subsidiary of KFC in Indonesia, sells 500,000 CDs a month alongside menu items like the Chick 'N Fillet sandwich and the Colonel Yakiniiku Rice box.

"My job is basically like running a record label, except this record label also happens to sell chicken," said Mr. Lillywhite, 62, who acts as a curator, choosing the music that goes into the Indonesian KFCs. (At the moment, the songs come exclusively from Indonesian artists, though he hopes to expand.) "Record companies pitch artists to me and I'll say either 'yes' or 'no.' Or I'll approach an unsigned artist and say, 'I will guarantee you a slot in KFC if you sign directly with us,'" he said in an interview at Electric Lady Studios in Manhattan, while listening to

MUSIC, PAGE 2

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Issue Number  
No. 41,700



PAGE TWO

Saving a pockmarked palace

KABUL JOURNAL  
KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

A locals-only project  
is restoring an Afghan  
landmark scarred by war

BY ROD NORDLAND

Nothing symbolizes the wrack and ruin of Afghanistan and its four decades of war better than Darulaman Palace, a once-magnificent edifice visible on its hillock perch for miles around.

The palace has been pummeled and pockmarked by every conceivable caliber of weapon fired by nearly every faction in the country's recent wars, with the possible exception of the Americans and their allies, because it was too damaged by the time they arrived to provide much useful cover.

Yet, like Afghanistan itself, the palace never quite totally collapsed, its four domed towers still in place, although the building beneath was so ruined it seemingly defied gravity.

Now much of Darulaman Palace is obscured behind scaffolding and green netting, its mangled trusses and battered Corinthian columns visible only in snatches. Huge lettering hangs from the scaffolds, in Dari and Pashto, reading, "We Can Do It."

Significantly, there is no such sign in English. Not only is Afghanistan restoring its most emblematic building, it is doing so entirely by itself. Funding is Afghan, and so are its architects, engineers and workers — even its technical advisers. Moreover, a surprising percentage of the professional staff are women, 25 percent, despite the lack of any gender quotas imposed by international donors — of which there are none.

The price tag, too, is Afghan: \$20 million has been budgeted for the four-year project to rebuild the three-story, 107-foot-high palace. A few years ago, according to Omara Khan Masoudi, the former head of the National Museum, the United States carried out a feasibility study that calculated a \$200 million cost for rebuilding the 150-room building, using foreign contractors, and the idea was rejected as impossibly costly.

When the project first got underway in 2016, according to Nilofar Langar, spokeswoman for the ministry of urban development, the first job was cleaning 600 tons of debris from the vast building, everything from human and animal waste to casings from rifle and artillery rounds. A foreign company bid \$1 million to do the initial cleanup; a gang of Afghan laborers, led by women employed by the ministry, did it for \$30,000, Ms. Langar said. "We saved \$970,000."

President Ashraf Ghani has championed the project as an exercise in national pride, visiting the site three times to check on its progress. He has pointedly refused any international help — although some donors may well note that because they underwrite most of Afghanistan's budget, it is arguably international money in the end.

The idea to restore the palace has been one of Mr. Ghani's most popular initiatives. In a fractious coalition government that took two years to agree on a defense minister, the Darulaman project has enjoyed an unusual level of bipartisan support.

"I'm very happy to see the president pay attention to the reconstruction of this palace," Mr. Masoudi said. "It's really important. The media now is celebrating this as the land of terrorism, Al Qaeda and Taliban. This is something different."

The goal is to get the palace ready for the centenary of Afghanistan's independence from Britain in 1919. Darulaman Palace is a lot more than an unpretty face, a result of its last four dissolute



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM HUYLEBROEK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Darulaman Palace in 2015, about a year before the restoration work started. The palace has been pummeled and pockmarked by every conceivable caliber of weapon fired by nearly every faction during decades of war.

decades: It encompasses the sweep of almost nine decades of Afghan history.

The palace never actually served as a palace, for any king or head of state. King Amanullah, who ordered its construction, was deposed before it was finished, by a revolt led by conservative mullahs against his modernizing rule in 1929. (He introduced girls' schools and discouraged the wearing of burqas, among other efforts not seen again for a half-century.)

Designed by French and German architects, mixing neoclassical European styles with Moghul and Eastern influences, the palace was not only possibly Afghanistan's biggest building, it was also one of its first to get central heating and running water.

In the years to come, it was everything but what it had been built to be, serving as the medical school for Kabul University, a warehouse for raisins (a lot of raisins), the seat of various ministries and finally the Ministry of Defense.

It burned down and was rebuilt by King Mohammad Zahir Shah in the 1960s. During the civil war years of the 1980s and 1990s it became a base for various mujahedeen factions, was set afire again by the Taliban, then became a refugee settlement and a nomad camp (with goats residing in the grandiose Oval Room). In the last decade it was a battalion headquarters for the army.

During those decades of civil conflict, it was much prized for its massive walls and commanding position on a hill controlling approaches to the city from the south. The consequences are only too evident.

In just one typical square yard of wall on the northeast tower, for instance, it is



The project's professional staff inside the palace. About 25 percent of the professional staff are women, even though there are no internationally imposed gender quotas.

possible to count 105 bullet, shrapnel and artillery holes. That wall is about 150 square yards in area, and it is one of four such walls on each of four towers, all of which are dwarfed by the rest of the palace's expanse, and most of which is similarly perforated.

Do the math: An estimate in the millions of holes would not be unreasonable. "If there's one thing you can't count in Afghanistan, it's war and bullet fire," said Zabihullah Rahimi, the deputy site manager. "No one can count the bullet holes; they're countless."

Even interior rooms are shot full of holes, and covered in graffiti by various factions, in an assortment of dialects.

Masouma Delijam, 28, a senior architect on the project, went from a job for a private contractor to her job here for the Afghan government, at half the pay. "We are all very proud to be part of this," she said. "Our salary is not much, but it is worth it to be part of this project."

That is especially true, she said, because it is being done by Afghans themselves. "It is so good that we have been able to find the capacity in ourselves for this," she said.

That should come as no surprise, said Ajmal Maiwandi, head of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, which provides technical advice on the project (from its Afghan experts). "It's been more than a



Laborers at work at the Darulaman site. The government has budgeted \$20 million for the four-year project, far less than a \$200 million estimate using foreign contractors.

decade and a half. If the capacity doesn't exist to deal with a project of this nature, it would be surprising all around."

For Ms. Delijam's entire life, the ruined Darulaman Palace was a reminder of what had become of the country. "It affected us, we saw it every day, and now people will see us rebuilding it, and they will get hopeful about the future of Afghanistan."

Not everything is rosy about the project's future. Some of the laborers complained they had not been paid their \$150-a-month salaries in four months.

"I admit there was a delay," said Ms. Langar, attributing it to administrative problems, not financial ones, and vow-

ing that all salaries will soon be up-to-date. She also said the project was already a year behind schedule, though there is still hope of making it in time for the centenary.

Cost overruns and repeated delays have long been a feature of Afghanistan's many foreign-run projects, sometimes with disastrous results (the Kajaki Dam is still unfinished after a half-billion-dollar American investment). This time, Ms. Delijam said, Afghans will have no one to blame — or to thank — but themselves.

*Jawad Sukhanyar contributed reporting from Kabul.*

In Indonesia, get your fried chicken with a side of music

MUSIC, FROM PAGE 1

a new U2 song he's producing. The company orders CDs from a distributor and pays a percentage of the sales to KFC, as well as royalties to the artists.

Mr. Lillywhite's journey from Englishman known for championing soaring choruses to creative guru of the Indonesian fried-chicken music market began six years ago, when he was asked to give a speech at a 2011 music festival in Singapore. He met some people who later invited him to produce music for the Indonesian band Noah. When he traveled to the band's home to work on songs with them, "I immediately fell in love with the country," he said.

"I loved the food, the people and the way they saw music as an experience. My synapses were overloading," he added. "I imagined I would stay a year. I had nothing planned — I just thought I'd investigate the music."

Mr. Lillywhite moved from Hollywood to Jakarta in 2014 and produced albums for artists like Iwan Fals, whose music he describes as "a mix of Springsteen and Dylan."

In March 2016, a mutual friend introduced him to Ricardo Gelael, director of PT Fast Food Indonesia, which owns 570 KFC outlets throughout Indonesia,



COLE WILSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Steve Lillywhite's company sells 500,000 CDs a month in KFC outlets. While streaming accounts for most of the music consumed in America, CDs are still popular in Indonesia.

as well as Jagonya Music & Sport, the company that places music in those restaurants. "He was looking to solidify and expand his company's connection between CDs and chicken, as he realized

he had become the new king of music distribution," Mr. Lillywhite explained. When Mr. Gelael offered him a job to run and expand the company, Mr. Lillywhite immediately accepted.

"Steve has a proven track record in music as well as a love of Indonesia," Mr. Gelael said in a text message. "So I thought he'd be the perfect person for the job."

In the United States, most listeners consume music via streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music. The story is quite different in Jakarta.

"CDs are still the No. 1 way to get music in Indonesia," Mr. Lillywhite said, noting that a small percentage of the population has credit cards and internet connections are slow, hindering streaming. "In Indonesia, CDs are \$4," he continued. "And since nearly all of the record stores have closed down due to the cheap influx of pirated CDs, KFC is really the only place to buy them these days. People no longer go out to buy CDs on their own, but they do go out to buy chicken. And now buying a CD has become part of that experience. We even do concerts at KFC with some of our artists. So music and chicken have become intertwined."

KFC has a more upscale reputation in Indonesia, where the flagship restaurants "are more like Hard Rock Cafes than fast-food outlets," Mr. Lillywhite said. Stores keep a display featuring 10 to 15 CDs on hand for browsing, and the

cashier asks customers if they want a CD bundled with their meal. Mr. Lillywhite estimates that 98 percent of their music sales "are to people who go in to buy chicken but see the CDs and say, 'Ooh, I'll have a CD too!'"

When selecting music for KFC, Mr. Lillywhite draws on what he has learned "makes people's emotions go wild." He explained: "They love ballads, they love smooth jazz and they love to cry. I also always offer a kids' album, as well as releases by big Indonesian artists like 19-year-old pop singer Rizky Fabian, the legendary rock band Slank and compilation albums, too."

He is considering a "duets" album pairing Indonesian and Western artists and a venture into streaming is also in the works. A smartphone app is starting this year.

Kasey Mathes of KFC public relations in Louisville, Ky., said that the company "doesn't have any plans to bring this to the U.S. at this time."

Whether this business model would work stateside is up for debate. "This is reminiscent of when quick service restaurants in the U.S. sold CDs of popular artists and compilations at a value price," said Larry Katz, a music industry lawyer and the former senior vice presi-

dent for business affairs at EMI Records, who once brokered a deal between EMI and McDonald's that sold millions of CDs over a 30-day period in the mid-1990s. Considering the dominance of streaming in the United States, "Selling CDs at fast food restaurants here is likely a thing of the past," he said, "but it's not surprising that it still works in other areas of the world."

John Burk, president of Concord Records — which experimented with placing CDs in Starbucks — said the concept "certainly has worked," but also cited the rise of digital music as a deterrent now. "If you want to buy an album and put it on your phone, which is what most people want to do, it's easier just to download it," he said.

These days, while Mr. Lillywhite still takes the occasional trip to produce bands like U2, he is content in his new surroundings. "When I go into something, I go in feet first, with all my enthusiasm," he said.

And what do the members of U2 think of his new venture?

"They think I'm barking mad," he said. "Bono is obsessed with it. He's always telling people: 'Do you know what Lillywhite's doing? He's working for KFC!'"



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# World

## France’s far right courts Jewish voters

THE INTERPRETER  
PARIS

BY AMANDA TAUB

For years, France’s far-right National Front was synonymous with anti-Semitism. Its founder, Jean-Marie Le Pen, was notorious for anti-Semitic outbursts — including a comment that the Holocaust was just a detail of history.

But since Mr. Le Pen’s daughter Marine took over the party’s leadership in 2011, the National Front has attempted a remarkable about-face: Today, the party positions itself as a champion of French Jews.

Although Ms. Le Pen, one of the front-runners in the coming presidential election, still alludes to anti-Semitic stereotypes on the campaign trail, she now promises that her party will be the protector of French Jews.

It is a surprising twist that has resonated with some French Jews who feel abandoned by what they see as the government’s tepid response to the anti-Semitic violence that has plagued the country for years.

But experts say the National Front’s shift may be intended more as a message to non-Jewish voters looking for moral cover in supporting a party that vilifies their primary sources of fear and anger: Muslims and immigrants.

The National Front has long been widely viewed in France as toxic, but by declaring itself a shield for French Jews, it may have found an effective way to allow many voters to justify breaking a taboo. That reflects a concept known as “moral license.” Framing the party as a champion of one minority enables voters to justify supporting its agenda in suppressing another.

The result is not a more racially tolerant National Front, but rather a party that has found success in persuading mainstream voters — many of whom may be quietly sympathetic to its anti-immigrant agenda — to embrace far-right ideas once considered off-limits.

“They are instrumentalizing us,” said Jonathan Arfi, vice president of the Council of Jewish Institutions in France, which goes by the French acronym CRIF. “We are a small minority,” he said, “but we have an important symbolic role to play.”

**BECOMING A ‘NORMAL’ PARTY**

Mr. Arfi can point to the precise month when the new age of anti-Semitism began in France: September 2000, the beginning of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising. That brought about attacks on Jews in France, particularly those who lived in poorer neighborhoods on the outskirts of large cities — areas that had gradually become dominated by Muslim immigrants from North Africa and their families. Since then, anti-Semitic violence has remained high.

But the French government and civil society were slow to respond to the attacks, Jewish leaders felt. For many years, Mr. Arfi said, politicians were in denial about the attacks, preferring to see them as an “imported conflict” rather than as resurgent French anti-Semitism, although he was careful to



Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Front, in Paris last month. While still alluding to anti-Semitic stereotypes, she is trying to reposition her party as a defender of Jews.

note that the response had improved in recent years.

“It was uncomfortable for them to see that in France, the country of human rights, you had anti-Semitism coming up again,” said Simone Rodan-Benzaquen, the director of the American Jewish Committee’s advocacy in Europe.

That the attacks came from immigrant and Islamist communities, Ms. Rodan-Benzaquen said, deepened that discomfort: “It requires admitting that a population that suffers racism also harbors it.”

The situation created an opportunity for the National Front. The anti-Semitic attacks tracked with its narrative about the dangers of Muslim immigration: Mainstream parties had allowed the Islamist threat to grow by refusing to admit it was happening, and only the National Front could undertake the harsh measures needed to solve the problem.

It was also a way for the National Front to delegitimize charges of racism against Muslims, Mr. Arfi said. “They are trying to say ‘these people are committing anti-Semitic attacks, so they cannot be victims of anything.’”

**“There are anti-Semitic personalities in the party, but it happens in every political party.”**

**READING ‘BETWEEN THE LINES’**

In 2014, Ms. Le Pen summarized her message to France’s Jews in an interview with the French magazine Valeurs Actuelles. Her party, she argued, “is without a doubt the best shield to protect you against the one true enemy, Islamic fundamentalism.”

In early 2016, the party began to publicize the support it had received from a new group, the Union of French Jewish Patriots. It is not legally affiliated with the National Front, but was founded by Michel Thooris, a National Front city councilor in Carros and a member of the party’s central committee.

Mr. Thooris said that he had made his peace with the National Front’s legacy of anti-Semitism. “There are anti-Semitic personalities in the party,” he said, “but it happens in every political party.”

He had decided to support the party, Mr. Thooris said, because he believed it would offer protection from anti-Semitic violence. “It’s the only political party that actually offers to fight against insecurity, the rise of radical Islamism,” he said.

Still, no mainstream Jewish organization in France has endorsed the National Front, whose support among Jewish voters remains relatively low. But the group’s message may be about more than recruiting Jewish voters.

“By saying they will protect the Jews against anti-Semitism, people



An armed patrol outside a Jewish school in Paris in 2015. Some French Jews feel abandoned by what they see as the government’s tepid response to the anti-Semitic violence.

understand that they mean they will be tough with the Muslims,” Mr. Arfi said. “Everything is between the lines.”

This message enabled Ms. Le Pen to retain the loyalty of the party’s base, which remains drawn to anti-Semitism, said Cécile Alduy, a Stanford University professor who studies the discourse of the French far right and has written a book about Ms. Le Pen’s speeches and language.

When Ms. Le Pen attacks “international finance” or “globalized money,” she is referring to common tropes of anti-Semitism, Ms. Alduy said. “She doesn’t need to say anything against the Jewish community,” she said. “Her rhetoric still nourishes and revitalizes these stereotypes.”

“It’s the best of both worlds in a way for the National Front,” Ms. Alduy said. “They don’t have to play dirty because

their audience understands them between the lines.”

**A ‘MORAL LICENSE’**

A more important reason for the National Front’s new stance on Jews may be its desire to attract mainstream voters who would otherwise consider it taboo to support the party.

To understand how this works, experts say, it helps to think about an unexpected analogue: the way people behave when they are trying to lose weight.

People on diets will say things like “Well, I was good yesterday, so I can cheat a little bit today,” said Daniel A. Effron, a professor at London Business School who studies the psychology of moral behavior.

Social psychologists call that a licensing strategy, meaning that once people convince themselves they are “good,” they can bend the rules in the future without losing that virtuous status.

**GIVING PERMISSION**

Ms. Le Pen’s emphasis on defending Jews — while retaining the party’s core message of fear and anger — may have helped to overcome one of the European far right’s greatest problems: not that its message is unappealing — evidence suggests anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant attitudes are quite prevalent — but that voters feel uncomfortable openly embracing that message.

By recasting the National Front as a vote in defense of Jews rather than a vote to suppress Muslim immigrants, Ms. Le Pen is giving mainstream voters a way to embrace racial supremacist politics without feeling racist.

In order to convince the general public that times have changed and that the National Front is no longer taboo, Ms. Rodan-Benzaquen joked that the party needs “the kosher stamp.”

In the last few years, the party has won more support than nearly any other far-right movement in Western Europe. Ms. Le Pen is tied for first in the presidential election polls, though she is projected to lose in a second-round runoff. And she is coming off remarkable success in the 2015 regional elections, in which National Front candidates won nearly a third of the votes nationwide.

Nicolas Bay, the party’s general secretary, was up front about why he visited Israel last January. One goal of the trip, he said, was to “erase every ambiguity about the accusations of anti-Semitism against our party” by emphasizing its “special attentions for Jewish people.”

I asked Mr. Thooris, the National Front central committee member who founded the Union of French Jewish Patriots, about the moral license theory.

Did he think that the party’s moral credentialing on Jewish matters — including the public support of groups like his — had helped dispel the broader public taboo against voting for the National Front?

“Yes,” he replied. “It is undeniable.”

Pamela Rougerie contributed reporting.

## Pacifist, Christian and threatened by a Russian ban

**RUSSIA, FROM PAGE 1**

States in the 19th century and active in Russia for more than 100 years, refuse military service, do not vote and view God as the only true leader. They shun the patriotic festivals promoted with gusto by the Kremlin, like the annual celebration of victory in 1945 and recent events to celebrate the annexation of Crimea in March 2014.

Mr. Sivak, who says he lost his job as a physical education teacher because of his role as a Jehovah’s Witnesses elder, said he voted for Mr. Putin in 2000, three years before joining the denomination. He added that while he had not voted since, he had not supported anti-Kremlin activities of the sort that usually attract the attention of Russia’s post-Soviet version of the K.G.B., the Federal Security Service, or F.S.B.

“I have absolutely no interest in politics,” he said during a recent Jehovah’s Witnesses Friday service in a wooden country house in Vorokhobino, a snow-covered village north of Moscow. Around 100 worshippers crammed into a long, chilly room under fluorescent lights to listen to readings from the Bible, sing and watch a video advising them to dress for worship as they would for a meeting with the president.

“From the Russian state’s perspective, Jehovah’s Witnesses are completely separate,” said Geraldine Fagan, the author of “Believing in Russia — Religious Policy After Communism.” She added, “They don’t get involved in politics, but this is itself seen as a suspicious political deviation.”

“The idea of independent and public religious activity that is completely outside the control of — and also indifferent to — the state sets all sorts of alarm bells ringing in the Orthodox Church and the security services,” she said.

That the worldwide headquarters of

Jehovah’s Witnesses is in the United States and that its publications are mostly prepared there, Ms. Fagan added, “all adds up to a big conspiracy theory” for the increasingly assertive F.S.B.

For Mr. Sivak, it has added up to a long legal nightmare. His troubles began, he said, when undercover security officers posed as worshippers and secretly filmed a service where he was helping to officiate in 2010.

Accused of “inciting hatred and disparaging the human dignity of citizens,” he was put on trial for extremism along with a second elder, Vyacheslav Stepanov, 40. The prosecutor’s case, heard by a municipal court in Sergiyev Posad, a center of the Russian Orthodox Church, produced no evidence of extremism and focused instead on the insufficient patriotism of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

“Their disregard for the state,” a report prepared for the prosecution said, “erodes any sense of civic affiliation and promotes the destruction of national

and state security.”

In a ruling last year, the court found the two men not guilty, and their ordeal seemed over — until Mr. Sivak tried to change money and was told that he had been placed on a list of “terrorists and extremists.”

He and Mr. Stepanov now face new charges of extremism and are to appear before a regional court this month. “There is a big wave of repression breaking,” Mr. Stepanov said.

In response to written questions, the Justice Ministry in Moscow said a year-long review of documents at the Jehovah’s Witnesses “administrative center” near St. Petersburg had uncovered violations of a Russian law banning extremism. As a result, it added, the center should be “liquidated,” along with nearly 400 locally registered branches of the group and other structures.

For the denomination’s leaders in Russia, the sharp escalation in a long campaign of harassment, previously driven mostly by local officials, drew

horrifying flashbacks to the Soviet era.

Vasily Kalin, the chairman of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Russian arm, recalled that his whole family had been deported to Siberia when he was a child. “It is sad and reprehensible that my children and grandchildren should be facing a similar fate,” he said. “Never did I expect that we would again face the threat of religious persecution in modern Russia.”

In Russia, as in many countries, the door-to-door proselytizing of Jehovah’s Witnesses often causes irritation, and their theological idiosyncrasies disturb many mainstream Christians. The group has also been widely criticized for saying that the Bible prohibits blood transfusions. But it has never promoted violent or even peaceful political resistance.

“I cannot imagine that anyone really thinks they are a threat,” said Alexander Verkhovsky, director of the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, which monitors extremism in Russia. “But

they are seen as a good target. They are pacifists, so they cannot be radicalized, no matter what you do to them. They can be used to send a message.”

That message, it would seem, is that everyone needs to get with the Putin program — or risk being branded as an extremist for displaying indifference, never mind hostility, to the Kremlin’s drive to make Russia a great power again.

“A big reason they are being targeted is simply that they are an easy target,” Ms. Fagan said. “They don’t vote, so nobody is going to lose votes by attacking them.”

Attacking Jehovah’s Witnesses also sends a signal that even the mildest deviation from the norm, if proclaimed publicly and insistently, can be punished under the anti-extremism law, which was passed after Russia’s second war in Chechnya and the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

Billed as a move by Russia to join a worldwide struggle against terrorism,

the law prohibited “incitement of racial, national or religious strife, and social hatred associated with violence or calls for violence.”

But the reference to violence was later deleted, opening the way for the authorities to classify as extremist any group claiming to offer a unique, true path to religious or political salvation.

Even the Russian Orthodox Church has sometimes fallen afoul of the law: The slogan “Orthodoxy or Death!” — a rallying cry embraced by some hard-line believers — has been banned as an illegal extremist text.

To help protect the Orthodox Church and other established religions, Parliament passed a law in 2015 to exempt the Bible and the Quran, as well as Jewish and Buddhist scripture, from charges of extremism based on their claims to offer the only true faith.

The main impetus for the current crackdown, however, appears to come from the security services, not the Orthodox Church. Roman Lunkin, director of the Institute of Religion and Law, a Moscow research group, described it as “part of a broad policy of suppressing all nongovernmental organizations” that has gained particular force because of the highly centralized structure of Jehovah’s Witnesses under a worldwide leadership based in the United States.

“They are controlled from outside Russia, and this is very suspicious for our secret services,” he said. “They don’t like having an organization that they do not and cannot control.”

Mr. Sivak, now preparing for yet another trial, said that he had always tried to follow the law and that he respected the state, but could not put its interests above the commands of his faith.

“They say I am a terrorist,” he said, “but all I ever wanted to do was to get people to pay attention to the Bible.”



Left, Jehovah’s Witnesses arriving at a Friday evening service in Vorokhobino, Russia. Right, the service was led by Vyacheslav Stepanov, an elder of the community.



# U.S. stance on North Korea has allies confused

WASHINGTON

Limited pronouncements have left nation's strategy and goals unclear

BY DAVID E. SANGER AND MARK LANDLER

When North Korea launched a medium-range missile on Tuesday evening, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson issued a statement so cryptic that it left much of Washington confused.

“North Korea launched yet another intermediate-range ballistic missile,” it began. “The United States has spoken enough about North Korea. We have no further comment.”

In fact, the Trump administration has said very little about North Korea, apart from some Twitter posts and Mr. Tillerson's own statements in Seoul, South Korea, two weeks ago — when he said the United States would negotiate with North Korea only after it gave up its nuclear weapons and missiles. And that is unlikely to happen.

A comprehensive policy review, ahead of the visit of China's president, Xi Jinping, to the United States this week, came to an unsurprising conclusion: The administration would greatly intensify economic and military pressure on the North for the foreseeable future, and assure the Chinese that, once that pressure was in place, it would consider “engaging” the North Koreans. That is, the United States would negotiate with them, presumably before they have given up their nuclear weapons and missiles, despite Mr. Tillerson's earlier statements.

Mr. Tillerson has made clear he will be a secretary of few words, preferring to do his deals behind closed doors and open himself to as little probing of the strategy as possible. But in the absence of much public comment, American allies seem confused about the administration's strategy of coercive diplomacy.

It is unclear whether the goal is to force the North Koreans to surrender their arsenal, as Mr. Tillerson suggested, or just freeze missile and nuclear tests and open a negotiation. And many of those allies wonder how in-



Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, next to President Trump, at the White House. He has made clear he will be a secretary of few words, preferring to do deals behind closed doors.

creasing pressure is likely to succeed when directed against a country that has survived financial cutoffs, trade sanctions and the presence of surrounding military forces for more than six decades.

The tactics appear to have strong similarities to past efforts. In the 1994 nuclear crisis with North Korea, which former Secretary of Defense William J.

Perry later called the closest the two countries have come to war since the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War, President Bill Clinton built up the American military presence in the South.

President George W. Bush closed down transactions at a bank in Macau where Kim Jong-il, the predecessor and father of the current North Korean

leader, kept his money. (He reluctantly ended those sanctions under pressure from the South Korean government.) President Barack Obama periodically flew B-2 stealth bombers to South Korea, as a reminder that America's nuclear weapons could easily reach Pyongyang.

Each of those administrations tried to use the economic and military pres-

sure to start negotiations. Mr. Clinton was the most successful, but even that won only a few years' respite, as the North secretly began a nuclear enrichment program that was revealed during the Bush administration. A deal the Bush administration struck in its final year fell apart early in the Obama years.

Mr. Tillerson has not explained how

the strategy he and Mr. Trump plan to present to the Chinese will be substantially different.

“Poor Tillerson,” Jeffrey Lewis, a nonproliferation expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, wrote in The Washington Post after the secretary declared in Seoul two weeks ago that the era of “strategic patience” was over.

“Someone forgot to tell him that a new administration promising a new approach it can't quite articulate is, in fact, the old approach,” Mr. Lewis

**“North Korea launched yet another intermediate-range ballistic missile. The United States has spoken enough about North Korea.”**

wrote. “Previous administrations even used the same words, calling North Korea's actions ‘unacceptable’ and pointing to a different ‘path.’ ”

At the heart of the talks on Thursday and Friday at Mar-a-Lago will be an effort to get the Chinese to step up their pressure.

It will not be the first time: At various points, the Chinese have signed on to United Nations Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions, and the State Department — under Mr. Tillerson's predecessors — has said the North would be more isolated than ever.

As Robert S. Litwak, the director of international security studies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, said recently, “The conundrum is that North Korea never acts except under pressure, but pressure never works.”

The subtext of Mr. Tillerson's comment that “the United States has spoken enough about North Korea” is that action will speak louder than words. In the conversation with Mr. Xi, Mr. Trump is expected to describe a military buildup that could include significantly more missile defense in the Pacific — which the Chinese believe is secretly directed at them — unless China cuts off the North.

But there is no reason to believe that the Chinese will press the North so hard that the viability of the Kim dynasty is threatened.

## New freedom for military

MILITARY, FROM PAGE 1

raids and strikes means little without a long-term strategy for the region, including what will happen after the Islamic State is routed, as the Pentagon expects, from Iraq and Syria.

“Moving decision-making on small tactical issues from the White House to commanders in the field is positive, but commanders' autonomy doesn't help accomplish strategic goals,” said Jon B. Alterman, director of the Middle East Program for the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

During the Obama administration, the military had to follow standards set by the president in 2013 to carry out airstrikes or ground raids in countries like Somalia, where the United States was not officially at war. Those rules required that a target had to pose a threat to Americans and that there be near certainty that no civilian bystanders would die. Under the Trump administration's new rules, some civilian deaths are now permitted in much of Somalia and parts of Yemen if regional American commanders deemed the military action necessary and proportionate.

The Obama administration process frustrated many in the military.

First there was the initial proposal from the Pentagon. From there it went to a policy coordinating committee, composed of lower-level officials from the Pentagon, State Department and White House, who reviewed the proposal's every aspect. Defense officials likened the process to a subcommittee review of a bill on Capitol Hill.

If the proposal cleared the policy committee, it then went to the National Security Council's deputies committee, composed of middle-level White House, State Department and Pentagon staff

members, who in turn decided if they would kick it up to their cabinet-level bosses, among them President Barack Obama's national security adviser, Susan E. Rice, who often sent proposals back with multiple questions.

Finally, the full National Security Council — with the president in attendance — met on the proposal. At that point, Mr. Obama often had his own questions to ask.

“We had limiting principles that applied to everything,” recalled Ben Rhodes, Mr. Obama's deputy national security adviser. “What were the risks to civilians on the ground? American service members? Overall national security interests?”

**“Moving decision-making on small tactical issues from the White House to commanders in the field is positive.”**

Sometimes the arguments over proposed military strikes went in circles. Derek Chollet, an assistant defense secretary during the Obama administration, recalled the debate about whether to provide lethal or nonlethal aid to the Ukrainian military after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. Wary of signaling a deeper American commitment to the war effort in Ukraine, which would most likely be viewed as a hostile move by Russia, the administration, after extended debate, decided it would send only “nonlethal” aid — clothes, food, medicine — to the Ukrainian military.

Officials even made sure not to send the aid in American military planes, for fear that television coverage of the planes landing at the airport in Kiev

would be “escalatory,” Mr. Chollet recalled.

“There was endless deliberation,” he said in an interview. “Then, lo and behold, at the Kiev airport, there were two gigantic U.S. Air Force C-17s” — an easily recognizable American military transport aircraft — on hand for a trip to plan a visit by Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., making a mockery of all the careful planning.

Fast forward to now. In the Trump administration, so far there have been few, if any, meetings of the policy coordinating committee, in large part because there are still vacancies across the government. Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, the national security adviser, is still building up his staff after Mr. Trump's first national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn, was fired in February. In the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, home to the National Security Council staff, it remains eerily quiet, and many nameplates next to office doors are empty.

Sheik Jamal al-Dhari, leader of the Iraqi Sunni tribe al-Zoba, said on Tuesday in Washington that he had been in the city for 10 days but had not been able to meet with anyone in the Trump administration to talk about what will happen in Iraq after the fight against the Islamic State is over. So he has focused his trip on visiting House and Senate leaders on Capitol Hill.

“Obviously it would be better to have meetings with the N.S.C.,” he told reporters. “But maybe during my next visit.”

In the meantime, General McMaster, a former military commander in both Iraq and Afghanistan, has indicated that he wants to push more decision-making authority to the Pentagon, although associates say he understands the limits and perils of military force.

Adm. James G. Stavridis, a former NATO commander who is now retired from the military, said it was unclear whether the new Trump rules would be effective.

“It is simply too early to make a judgment about whether they will go too far and end up conducting impulsive operations, or whether they will manage to find the sweet spot between excessive caution but also following the idea that fortune so often favors the bold in military operations,” he said.

Other analysts say Mr. Trump's new command style is already coming into focus.

“Obama was cautious, he was analytical, he always wanted to see all the sides of the story before he took any action — possibly to a fault,” said David Rothkopf, the chief executive and editor of the Foreign Policy Group and the author of “Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power.”

“I think Trump is the opposite of all those things,” Mr. Rothkopf said. “Also to a fault.”



Baptizing a baby in the West Bank. The Christian population in some parts of the world, such as Europe, is relatively old.

## Muslim babies set to outnumber rest

Trend finds population younger and concentrated in high-fertility-rate areas

BY NIRAJ CHOKSHI

For years, more babies were born to Christian women than to women of any other religion, but not for much longer: Islam is expected to take the global lead by 2035, according to a report documenting the coming ebbs and flows of world religions.

Even as they change rank, Christianity and Islam are projected to expand their hold on the world's newborn population from a combined 64 percent of all babies born from 2010 to 2015 to 71 percent of those born from 2055 to 2060, according to the report, prepared by the Pew Research Center and released on Wednesday.

That baby boom will largely be driven by regional trends in age and fertility, according to Alan Cooperman, director of religion research at Pew.

“It's really a geographic story,” he said.

From 2010 to 2015, Christian women gave birth to 223 million babies, about 10 million more than were born to Muslim women. But the authors of the Pew report predict a reversal of that pattern by 2060, when Muslim mothers are projected to give birth to 232 million babies, about six million more than their Christian counterparts.

That turnaround will be driven in part by the fact that the Christian population in some parts of the world, such as Europe, is relatively old, with deaths expected to outnumber births in the years to come.

The world's Muslim population, on the other hand, is relatively young and concentrated in regions with high fertility rates.

Still, the baby boom among Muslims and Christians is projected to help both religions capture a larger share of the global population by 2060, even as all other religions — and the unaffiliated population — lose ground.

The report's findings are drawn from the same projections behind a 2015 Pew report that found that the world's Muslim population will match its Christian population by 2070 and surpass it in the decades that follow.

Both rely on data collected over several years from more than 2,500 global censuses. The projections take into account trends in mortality, fertility, age, migration and religious switching.

The world's morphing population will most likely be affected by a number of factors, but the changes will be driven largely by where each religion is concentrated today, the authors found.

The population unaffiliated with any religion, for instance, is projected to shrink slightly in the coming decades thanks to being found largely in parts of the world with aging populations and low fertility rates, such as China, Europe, Japan and North America.

Sub-Saharan Africa, where fertility rates are high, will meanwhile be home to a growing share of the Christian and Muslim populations.

The share of the global Christian population that calls that region home is projected to rise to 42 percent by 2060 from 26 percent today. The share of the global Muslim population in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to rise to 27 percent from 16 percent over the same period.

Age will play a role, too. Today, the median age of Muslims is 24, compared with 27 for Hindus and 30 for Christians and the world overall. The median age for the world's remaining religions is higher still.

Muslims also have higher fertility rates than the adherents of any other religion, with an average of 2.9 children per woman. Christians rank second, with 2.6 children per woman, followed by Hindus and Jews with a rate of 2.3 each.

Faith, of course, is not hereditary and the switching of religions will play a role in the shifting religious composition of the world, albeit a role smaller than that of geography, age and fertility.

From 2015 to 2020, Christianity will suffer the greatest losses because of religious switching, gaining five million adherents while losing 13 million largely to the unaffiliated, Pew found. In the longer term, however, those gains to that unaffiliated population will be erased by other demographic factors.



Officials say that much of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis's plan to defeat the Islamic State group, not yet made public, consists of proposals for speeding up decisions.



WORLD

Surprising choices in first lady’s portrait

ON THE RUNWAY

BY VANESSA FRIEDMAN

This week, the White House released the first official portrait of the first lady, Melania Trump, currently displayed on her government web page. Though the picture at first seems bland enough, it is worth a second look — both for the image itself and for what Mrs. Trump chose to wear to represent the country for posterity.

A black tuxedo jacket with a foulard around her throat. From Dolce & Gabbana.

The White House declined to confirm or name the designer of the jacket Mrs. Trump is wearing, but Stefano Gabbana posted the official portrait on his Instagram feed with the words #DGwoman, #MelaniaTrump Thank you, and #MadeInItaly. The jacket, it turns out, is one of Dolce & Gabbana’s signature pieces.

It’s a surprising choice, not only because the official portrait is an occasion that has been considered an opportunity

Maybe she is saying: I’ll play this part, but only up to a point.

to promote national industry (as opposed to Italian industry) or because it seems to undermine her husband’s mission to get everyone to “buy American,” but also because it confuses what is otherwise a pretty straightforward visual message.

Taken by Regine Mahaux, a Belgian photographer who has worked with the first family for the past five years (her photographs of President and Mrs. Trump have appeared on the covers of Us Weekly, French Vanity Fair, Paris Match and Russian Tatler), the portrait depicts Mrs. Trump with her arms crossed and the beginnings of a smile on her face in front of a large decorative window in “her new residence at the White House.”

Along with the jacket, she is wearing an emerald-cut diamond ring on one hand (this has been identified, vari-



VIA THE WHITE HOUSE  
For her official portrait, Melania Trump appears to be wearing an Italian jacket.

ously, as 15 carats, 24 carats and 25 carats, so suffice it to say: It’s very big) and a diamond band on the other.

Her hair is loose. Her makeup is neutral. The focus is soft. She looks expensive and professional, less as if she is saying, “Hey, welcome to the people’s house!” than, “This is a job, and I am ready for it.”

The styling and setting create something of a riposte, in other words, to the suggestion that she has been, and may continue to be, a bit of an absentee first lady. They perpetuate the Trump narrative of winning and wealth and aspiration — despite the president’s assurances to working men and women that he feels their pain. And the symbols do so while visually at least placing Mrs. Trump pretty carefully in the traditional continuum of her predecessors.

She is wearing black, as Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton did. She is in a suit, like Laura Bush and Mrs. Clinton were. She is posed in front of the same window as Nancy Reagan in an early official White House photograph, and like Mrs. Reagan is wearing a bow of sorts around her neck. So far, so safe.

Admittedly, Mrs. Trump has eschewed the more relaxed attitude of Mrs. Obama and the usual flowers that often have peeked out from one side of the frame (flowers play a big part in first lady portraiture, perhaps because they are seen as included in the unofficial job description). And though the internet has gone into something of a frenzy, as the internet tends to do when it comes to anything Trump, over the apparent amount of airbrushing, the extent to which her facial lines have been erased is not really all that different from what came before.

It’s the brand that the digital squawkers should be focusing on.

This is not the first time Mrs. Trump has worn Dolce & Gabbana (she chose a black dress by the brand at the Mar-a-Lago New Year’s Eve party, causing another brouhaha), nor is it the first time she has worn a European label since her husband made his inaugural pledge to buy American. (She wore Givenchy and Christian Dior to events at Mar-a-Lago in February.) But this time she has worn a non-American brand on an occasion that has the sole purpose of immortalizing a public representation of her role.

Maybe she is making a subtle statement about the global nature of the world and the antiquated nature of that particular unspoken political rule. Maybe she is saying: I’ll play this part, but only up to a point. Maybe it was just a jacket she has owned for a while and wears when she wants to feel secure, so she shopped her closet to be her best self. Maybe she and others hoped no one would find out who made the jacket if the White House didn’t release the name of the designer — or that no one would care.

We don’t know because Mrs. Trump’s director of communications said the first lady’s office had no further statement about the portrait or the choices involved, besides the official quotation that came with the release: “I am honored to serve in the role of first lady and look forward to working on behalf of the American people over the coming years.”

The problem is, while sometimes a jacket is only a jacket, given the context, this particular official image is not one of those times.



Wang Ge, a business school student in Beijing, admires Ivanka Trump and aims to follow her schedule, waking at 6 a.m. and setting aside at least half an hour each day to read.

Ivanka Trump is a hit in China

BEIJING

U.S. president’s daughter adored as a role model for young women in Beijing

BY JAVIER C. HERNÁNDEZ

When Wang Ge, a business school student, wakes up, she often asks herself, “What would Ivanka do?”

That would be Ivanka Trump, the eldest daughter of President Trump, a woman Ms. Wang has never met but worships.

In the United States, Ms. Trump has become a controversial figure, battling persistent questions about business conflicts and criticism for not doing more to moderate her father’s policies toward women.

But in China, Ms. Trump is widely adored. Her lavish lifestyle and business acumen resonate with many young professionals who are hungry for fame and fortune in a society that often equates material wealth with success.

Ms. Wang keeps photos of Ms. Trump on her iPad. She counsels burned-out friends to read Ms. Trump’s self-help tips (“Find strength in others” and “Be an optimist”). And she models her day on Ms. Trump’s, waking at 6 a.m. to increase productivity and setting aside at least a half-hour to read.

“She’s pretty, she has her own career, she’s hardworking and she has a beautiful family,” said Ms. Wang, 26, a student at Cheung Kong Graduate School of

Business in Beijing. “She inspires me.”

While Mr. Trump, who was to meet President Xi Jinping of China in Florida on Thursday, has bluntly assailed China on issues like trade and North Korea, Ms. Trump has helped soften her father’s volcanic image.

She is called a “goddess” on social media. A video of her daughter singing in Mandarin went viral, attracting tens of millions of viewers. Working mothers have latched onto Ms. Trump’s brand of have-it-all feminism, even if most lack her financial resources, and entrepreneurs have studied her speeches for clues on making successful pitches.

Xinhua, the official news agency, weighed in last week, describing Ms. Trump as having an “elegant and poised style.”

“A lot of people think Ivanka is the real president,” said Li Moya, 31, who runs an app for renting venue space in Beijing. “We think she has the brains, not her father.”

Young Chinese women working in sectors like technology and finance have been especially taken by Ms. Trump, whom they see as an elegant symbol of power and ambition. They say they have sought to mimic her tenacity and confidence as they confront chauvinism and stereotypes in the workplace and in family life.

Many are also impressed by Ms. Trump’s decision to start her own fashion brand rather than simply focus on the family real estate business.

“She’s very independent,” said Wang Jiabao, 28, a reality television producer in Beijing. “She represents what we’re looking for — to marry into a decent

family, to look good, and to also have your own career.”

Some also believe Ms. Trump embodies Confucian values, pointing to her decision to convert to Judaism for her husband and her steadfast defense of her father, both seen as illustrations of a devotion to family.

In China’s stressed-out urban centers, Ms. Trump’s tips on leading a balanced life (“Don’t sleep with your BlackBerry next to your bed,” says one) have found a large audience.

On messaging apps, young professionals trade translations of her self-help guides, while working mothers share her advice on carving out time for loved ones.

Chinese companies have also tried to profit from Ms. Trump’s popularity, filing hundreds of trademark applications using her name — Yi Wan Ka in Chinese — on products and services such as shoes, spa treatments, plastic surgery and pottery.

Still, Ms. Trump has her critics. Some are skeptical of her father’s policies and disturbed by her decision to join his administration, in which she serves as assistant to the president. Others believe that as a child of privilege she is a poor role model for everyday Chinese people.

“She’s trying too hard and pretending too much,” said Shi Yixuan, 22, an administrative staff member at Peking University in Beijing.

But many women see recognizable Chinese attributes.

“Underneath her image are very traditional values,” said Dai Linjia, a communications consultant. “Her family is almost like a dynasty.”

While her father has threatened a trade war with China and criticized China’s efforts to build outposts in the South China Sea, Ms. Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, have embarked on a charm offensive with the country.

It helps that her daughter, Arabella, speaks Mandarin, which she began learning from her Chinese nanny. Ms. Trump and Arabella attended a Lunar New Year festival at the Chinese Embassy in Washington in February, an event broadcast on China’s prime-time news.

On Tuesday, two days before her father was to meet Mr. Xi, Ms. Trump posted a photo of her younger son, Theodore, playing with wooden blocks emblazoned with Chinese characters.

Analysts said Ms. Trump’s popularity could help ease the relationship between China and the United States at a tense time.

“Her father is a regular critic of China, so Ivanka’s moves sort of compensate for that,” said Shi Yinhong, a professor of international relations at Renmin University in Beijing. “The Chinese government will see there are both ugly and positive messages coming out of the U.S.”

Many younger Chinese will be watching this week’s meeting between Mr. Trump and Mr. Xi for signs of Ms. Trump.

Ms. Wang, the business school student, said she hoped that Ms. Trump could help improve China’s standing in the United States.

“She’s a very good role model,” she said. “I think she can help the two countries grow closer.”

Secret Service strained covering president’s family

WASHINGTON

BY NICHOLAS FANDOS

Eleven weeks into the Trump presidency, the Secret Service is grappling with how to constrain the rising costs and unexpected strain that have come with protecting a new first family as large, mobile and high-profile as any in modern American history.

To keep up, dozens of agents from New York and field offices across the country are being temporarily pulled off criminal investigations to serve two-week stints protecting members of the Trump family, including the first lady and the youngest son in Manhattan’s Trump Tower.

Others, already assigned to the highly selective presidential protective division, had hoped for relief after a grueling election year. That hope has evaporated as they work more overtime hours and spend long stretches away from home because of the Trump family’s far-flung travel.

And in Washington, agency leaders are already negotiating for tens of millions of dollars in supplemental funding to help offset the sky-high costs of securing Trump Tower and other high-profile family assets like Mar-a-Lago in Florida. It is a figure that will only continue to rise.

“They are flat-out worn out,” said Representative Jason Chaffetz, Republican of Utah, the chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The committee’s top-ranking Democratic member, Representative Elijah Cummings of Maryland, gave an analogy: “It’s like being on a bike that you never get off of.”

The assessment has become increasingly apparent as the Secret Service

grapples with what amounts to an increase of 40 percent more people under its protection compared to a noncampaign year. There are growing concerns among current and former officials in the Homeland Security Department and on Capitol Hill not only about how the Secret Service will keep up, but also what it might mean for its long-term recovery from the high attrition, low morale and spending caps that have plagued it in recent years.

“I think if you were resource rich, you’d absorb it,” said Douglas A. Smith, who served as an assistant secretary of homeland security under President Barack Obama. “It’s not that they aren’t

The Secret Service is down some 250 special agents and morale among employees has sunk to the lowest of any federal agency.

competent enough to do the job; it’s just they’re stretched too thin.”

Given its responsibilities and the no-failure nature of its protective mission, the agency has little option in the near term but to try to do more with less. Indeed, the agency maintains that it can weather any adversity.

“Regardless of the number of protectees or where the assignment takes us,” said Catherine Milhoan, a spokeswoman for the agency, “the Secret Service remains an expeditionary law enforcement agency that continues to adapt and evolve based on the mission at hand.”

It has not been without its missteps. On Wednesday, a Secret Service official confirmed that an off-duty agent who was assigned to Vice President Mike Pence’s security detail was arrested and

charged with soliciting a prostitute. The agent, who was not identified, has been suspended from duty, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to confirm a CNN report.

The agency is down some 250 special agents and 350 administrative and technical staff members compared with its peak at the beginning of the Obama administration. Morale among employees has sunk to the lowest of any federal agency, according to government surveys. And efforts to rebuild the work force — which Mr. Chaffetz said was short by 1,000 positions — have improved, but the agency continues to struggle to keep up with attrition.

Much of the work of reversing those trends will fall to the agency’s next director, who is expected to come for the first time from outside its ranks. The mandate will be to shake things up.

For now, the agency has begun to shift resources internally to make certain it can ensure the safety of the people it protects — which now include a rare first lady’s residence outside Washington, four adult children and a new, quite active former president and his family. Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump, the president’s two adult sons who run the family business, have already traveled to Uruguay, Vancouver, the Dominican Republic and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates this year, with their Secret Service details providing full protection.

In addition to the top officials and immediate family it is required by statute to protect, the agency is also providing round-the-clock protective details to the spouses and children of Mr. Trump’s adult children, as well as to several of his top aides, including Reince Priebus, H. R. McMaster and Kellyanne Conway, at the president’s request. The numbers are likely to ease a tiny bit this summer, when former Vice President Joseph R.



STEPHEN CROWLEY/THE NEW YORK TIMES  
President and Mrs. Trump arriving in West Palm Beach, Fla., for a recent trip to Mar-a-Lago. The county sheriff’s department spends \$60,000 a day in overtime when he visits.

Biden Jr. and his wife, along with Mr. Obama’s eldest daughter, are expected to lose regular protection.

With so many of the new people being protected living in New York, former Secret Service officials said the agency might eventually set up a fully staffed branch of the presidential protection division there, relocating agents from across the country.

For now, though, as it awaits a potential move to Washington by Mrs. Trump and Mr. Trump’s youngest son, Barron, the agency has elected instead to fly agents in from around the country, as it would during a campaign or for a large security event. Doing so for a routine nonelection detail is less common and means the agency is paying for hotel rooms, transportation and living expenses, the officials said.

The agency is also renting space inside Trump Tower for offices and temporary sleeping quarters, two officials said, though the details of the transaction have not been made public.

The New York field office appears to have been particularly hard hit. Of the dozens of agents based there, a third are involved in protection on a given day.

“Essentially the Secret Service is in a campaign mode all of the time right now,” said James F. Tomsheck, who left the agency in 2006 after 23 years. “It will greatly degrade the quality of life for most agents in the Secret Service, because of increased travel, protracted periods of time away from family.”

The Secret Service was already heavily taxed coming off a long and contentious campaign year, in which it secured about 6,000 stops on top of its nor-

mal workload. More than 1,000 agents maxed out their pay along the way, meaning that in the campaign’s final months they were working overtime without pay. Congress has approved making up for some of those lost funds but has yet to appropriate the money.

To alleviate concerns around payment for the extra hours, the agency’s acting director, William J. Callahan, announced Friday that he would waive a separate cap on overtime pay for “mission essential” employees to ensure compensation for the large workload.

Calculating the exact financial costs of the new measures is difficult. The Secret Service is famously tight-lipped about how it spends its money to avoid the politicization of presidential protection and travel. Other costs are shared by local governments that provide law enforcement and other resources.

In addition to the \$27 million it has requested for protection of Trump Tower and members of the first family in New York, first reported by The Washington Post, the agency is assessing the need for millions more for other costs, from new technology to staffing, according to the Office of Management and Budget. New York City said it spent \$300,000 a day protecting Trump Tower alone between Election Day and Inauguration Day. Protecting the building when Mr. Trump is not there costs less, between \$127,000 and \$145,000 a day, according to James P. O’Neill, the city’s police commissioner, but that does not account for other costs to the city.

In Palm Beach County, Fla., home to the Mar-a-Lago resort, the sheriff’s department says it is spending \$60,000 a day in overtime when the president is in town. Mr. Trump will return there this week for the sixth time since his inauguration, for a summit meeting with President Xi Jinping of China.



# Business

## What Trump misses on trade

NEWS ANALYSIS

An obsession with deficits ignores underlying causes for loss of American jobs

BY PETER S. GOODMAN

In the world according to President Trump, trade deficits are among the clearest indication that Americans have become habitual chumps in the global marketplace. The United States sells fewer goods and services than it buys from the rest of the planet, and this is supposedly evidence that Americans are getting rolled.

This is the central assumption behind Mr. Trump's repeated vow to take a meat cleaver to the North American Free Trade Agreement, redrawing the terms of commerce with Mexico. This is the spirit in which he has promised to confront China over its systematic job-killing machine, beginning this week as he greets the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

But Mr. Trump's portrayal of trade deficits entails crucial departures from economic reality.

In his accounting, international trade is a zero-sum affair, as if every country were jockeying for a share of forever limited amounts of business. An auto part made in Mexico and later included in a finished vehicle destined for a suburban driveway in California represents jobs hijacked from the Midwestern factory that should have employed American hands to build everything.

Trade is not zero-sum. Expanded trade has historically tended to support economic growth, which generates more spoils to be divvied up for all.

American factories have increased production over the years, in part by drawing on a global supply chain to get what they need. A construction machinery plant in Illinois may buy ball bearings from China, glass displays from South Korea, computer chips from Malaysia and other parts from Mexico, some of them forged with American-made steel.

Obsessing over the balance of trade with any single country misses all of that. It also distracts from the force that, by many accounts, is the real threat to employment: automation. The decisive problem facing American workers is that making more products has not translated into sufficient numbers of new jobs, leaving millions of people searching for full-time work at wages high enough to pay the bills.

Economists generally dismiss bilateral trade deficits as essentially meaningless, for reasons easily recognizable in the rest of everyday life. Most people surely run lopsided trade deficits with their dentists, handing these professionals their dollars without expecting them to purchase anything in return.

One may assume that successful dentists will distribute their profits throughout the economy — on marketing, accounting, laundry and streaming music services. One way or another, these dollars generate jobs and income for other people. So it is with countries.

China's trade surplus with the United States, which reached \$347 billion last year, does in part reflect dubious Chinese practices, including lavishing state credit on favored exporters and flooding world markets with low-cost goods to keep its laborers employed.

Yet even if China were a paragon of fair trading practices, it would almost certainly run a surplus with the United States. Despite tremendous economic advances, China remains a relatively low-income country, home to hundreds of millions of people who cannot afford the more sophisticated fruits of the American economy. Though wages have



Workers assembling micromotors for mobile phones in Huaibei, in China's northern province of Anhui. China's trade surplus with the United States reached \$347 billion last year.

Expanded trade has historically tended to support economic growth, which generates more spoils to be divvied up for all.

risen in recent years, China's fundamental advantage still involves making goods cheaply.

Trade imbalances with the world are a more complex matter, one that is subject to genuine debate among economists. But the story is different for every country, depending on its size, the maturity of its economy, the sorts of goods and services it tends to export, and the reason for the imbalance in trade at any moment in time.

In the case of the United States, trade deficits with the world have been a feature of economic life for more than three decades, a sweep of time that has seen economic booms, the worst downturn since the Great Depression and plenty of events in between.

"Trade deficits aren't a good barome-

ter," said Chad P. Bown, a trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington.

Fluctuations reflect a host of factors that have little to do with the fairness of trade terms. As the government on Tuesday reported that the American trade deficit contracted by nearly 10 percent in February, analysts noted that exports from the United States had been aided by a recent weakening in the value of the dollar, which makes American goods cheaper on world markets.

The only thing one can say with certainty is that the deficit reflects how Americans have consumed more than they have been willing to save, purchasing from foreigners who have in turn invested in the United States. To the degree that this is a problem — and opinions vary — most economists suggest that it is best addressed with tax policies and incentives to save, rather than by impeding trade.

The American trade deficit with the world contracted sharply in 2008 and 2009, but this was not the result of a sudden resumption of old-school saving. It

reflected a cratering of consumer spending in the midst of the Great Recession. Calling that progress would be like applauding a nation gripped by famine for limiting its intake of saturated fats.

But if trade deficits do not lend themselves to certain conclusions in the realm of economic policy, they have served as highly useful political fodder. Politicians use trade deficits — money departing the nation! — as a handy, if flawed, explanation for why paychecks are inadequate.

Back in the 1980s, it was Japan that played the boogeyman in the American political conversation, the goliath believed to be gobbling up American prosperity with every Sony Walkman it sent toward American shores. More recently, China has assumed that role.

Now, with Mr. Trump in the White House, much of human civilization has seemingly been cast as the predator class — Germany, Mexico, China, willfully fleecing Americans through a series of trade deals extended by a Washington elite too clueless to fight them.

Liberalized trade has proved punishing for lower-skilled factory laborers clustered in the American South and Midwest. Entire industrial communities have been upended by joblessness, mass foreclosure and attendant ills like substance abuse, domestic violence and depression.

But trade has proved a boon to bankers, executives and multinational corporations that harness low-wage labor in distant lands to make their products. Much of Walmart's business model was built on a reliance on Chinese factories. American consumers have grown accustomed to low prices for clothing, shoes and other goods.

None of this action gets captured in narrow obsessions over trade deficits.

"Trump hugely mis-frames it," said Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, who is a persistent critic of trade deals. "We have U.S. companies that are hugely profiting by having access to low-cost labor in China. Portraying that China won and we lost is 180 degrees wrong. Factory laborers are the losers."

## Ad industry takes a close look within



Farhad Manjoo

STATE OF THE ART

Digital ads are easy to hate.

Sure, they support much of today's media and technology business. They give us social networks and search engines and — oh, for the love of Pete, can you just let me watch my video already? Why are you making me sit through 30 seconds of some guy trying to sell me boat insurance?

What I'm saying is, people tend to fly off the handle when they contemplate the modern advertising industry.

This irrationality makes it difficult to talk soberly about what's really going on when the business of ads makes the news. It's especially difficult to take the nuanced position when you're talking about "programmatic ads" — ads that are purchased and placed according to algorithms that determine their relevance to you and that sometimes appear to follow you across your digital meanderings.

These ads have lately come under fire. The Wall Street Journal found that YouTube's advertising engine was placing ads from large brands on racist videos. In response, several large advertisers pulled their ads. Meanwhile, an experiment by JPMorgan Chase called into question the effectiveness of programmatic ads. The company significantly reduced the number of ads it shows, but didn't see a decline in response from users.

But let's take a deep breath before condemning programmatic ads.

On the one hand, there are some clear problems with how programmatic ads are placed. The industry is rife with complexity. This type of advertising is also quite new, so a lot of

People tend to fly off the handle when they contemplate the modern advertising industry.

the machinery that runs the ad market is still in the works.

But these problems are also fixable and should not obscure a larger truth: Even though they are far from perfect, in many ways programmatic

ads are creating a more efficient advertising market. And given that advertising pays for nearly the entirety of what we see and do online, the upside of all the hand-wringing is that we are now examining how all of that money gets spent — a process that should lead to better ads, and better media, too.

To understand what's at stake in the ad industry's shift toward programmatic ads, we need to first traipse through a brief history of media and advertising.

Once upon a time the ad business was dominated by size. Big companies with lots of money needed a way to convince Americans to buy their stuff. Luckily the people were easy to find: They were all watching or reading one of a handful of media offerings — three TV networks, some big glossy magazines and one or two newspapers in every town.

So it was all pretty simple. The companies paid men in Manhattan to come up with catchy songs to get people to buy soda and soap and razor blades. The men got to drink martinis at work, so few had any reason to complain.

But glamorous as it was, the ad business wasn't the best deal for the companies that were paying for the ads. The central problem was the conflation of audience and media outlet: When it ran an ad for razors, Gillette would have preferred to show the spot just to men who shaved regularly. But you couldn't target men who shaved regularly.

"It wasn't possible for us to be certain that we were reaching that audience, so we used the content of certain programming to define that audience," said Brian Lesser, the chief executive of GroupM, a division of the advertising giant WPP. In other words, instead of targeting men, they'd run ads on shows they thought men liked to watch — a good enough solution, except for all the women and non-shavers who were also watching.

Digital advertising fundamentally altered this model. Through profiling, now ad companies know — or, at least, aim to know — exactly who is reading a certain site or watching a certain video. So instead of buying ads tied to a certain piece of content, companies can buy ads targeted exactly to an audience. "Now we can get down to the level of an individual user and we can ADS, PAGE 8

## Pepsi drops ad accused of trivializing protesters

BY DANIEL VICTOR

Pepsi has apologized for a controversial advertisement that borrowed imagery from the Black Lives Matter movement, after a day of intense criticism from people who said it trivialized the widespread protests against the killings of black people by the police.

"Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace and understanding. Clearly, we missed the mark and apologize," the company said in a statement on Wednesday. "We did not intend to make light of any serious issue. We are pulling the content and halting any further rollout."

The ad, posted to YouTube on Tuesday, shows attractive young people holding milquetoast signs with nonspecific pleas like "Join the conversation." The protesters are uniformly smiling, laughing, clapping, hugging and high-fiving.

In the ad's climactic scene, a police officer accepts a can of Pepsi from Kendall Jenner, a white woman, setting off raucous approval from the protesters and an appreciative grin from the officer.

It was, activists say, precisely the opposite of their real-world experience of protesting police brutality.

In torrid criticism after the ad was posted, commentators on social media accused Pepsi of appropriating imagery from serious protests to sell its product, while minimizing the danger protesters encounter and the frustration they feel.

Elle Hearn, the executive director of the Marsha P. Johnson Institute and formerly an organizer for Black Lives Matter, said the ad "plays down the sacrifices people have historically taken in utilizing protests."

"No one is finding joy from Pepsi at a protest," she said. "That's just not the reality of our lives. That's not what it looks like to take bold action."

In a statement on Tuesday, Pepsi at first said the ad, which was produced by an in-house studio, "captures the spirit and actions of those people that jump in to every moment."

To many who saw the ad, it was a tone-deaf note. Bernice King, the daughter of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, was among those who drew the connection to past protests on social media. "If only Daddy would have known about the power of #Pepsi," she posted on Twitter.

The image of Ms. Jenner approaching a line of police officers was compared to a widely shared photo of Ieshia Evans, a



In an ad posted on YouTube, the TV star Kendall Jenner offered a Pepsi to a police officer. The ad was criticized for appropriating imagery from a serious protest.

black woman who stood firm while being charged by riot police during a protest against police brutality in Baton Rouge, La., in July.

"It has no relationship to the courage that that woman showed," Ms. Hearn said, referring to Ms. Evans. "That

woman standing in the middle of the street was not trying to be a peacemaker with the police. She was being defiant. She was actually resisting."

Pepsi also apologized on Wednesday to Ms. Jenner, a daughter of the television personalities Kris and Caitlyn Jen-

ner, and a half sister to Kim, Khloé and Kourtney Kardashian.

Ms. Jenner has in recent years harnessed her fame as a reality television star and social media eminence (she has more than 77 million followers on Instagram) to become a top model.

This is not the first time Ms. Jenner, who has been photographed for the cover of Vogue and is a mainstay on the runways during fashion weeks, has appeared in a high-profile advertising campaign. She has been featured in print and television ads for Estée Lauder, Marc Jacobs, Calvin Klein and Fendi. The Pepsi ad plays up the point by having Ms. Jenner's character arrive at the protest straight from what appears to be a fashion photo shoot. In so doing, the company is positioning Ms. Jenner as a successor to the supermodel Cindy Crawford, who appeared in a famous Pepsi ad in 1992.

Nor is it the first time Ms. Jenner has, intentionally or not, courted controversy. In 2015, some observers accused her of cultural appropriation for wearing her hair in cornrows, a historically black style.

Matthew Schneier contributed reporting.



BUSINESS



CLIFF OWEN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Janet L. Yellen, the Fed's chairwoman, at a conference in March. Fed officials have said it is on course to increase rates by at least an additional half a percentage point in 2017.

Fed likely to pare holdings

WASHINGTON

Huge investment assets are a legacy of the board's efforts to revive economy

BY BINYAMIN APPELBAUM

The Federal Reserve expects to start reducing its huge investment holdings later this year, unwinding a giant program undertaken in the wake of the financial crisis to revive the economy.

The holdings — which amount to more than \$4 trillion in Treasury and mortgage securities — are a legacy of the Fed's campaign to help the economy recover from the depths of a recession. The Fed, increasingly confident that the American economy is “at or near maximum employment,” is beginning to loosen its grip on the economy, according to an official account that the Fed published Wednesday.

Officials voted at the meeting in March to raise the Fed's benchmark interest rate — the third time since the financial crisis — to a range of 0.75 percent to 1 percent.

Since the meeting, Fed officials have said that it is on course to increase rates by at least an additional half a percentage point this year.

Both the low rates and the investments were intended to support growth by encouraging risk-taking and borrowing by consumers and businesses. Now the Fed is gradually reducing that support.

No decision was made about the timing or the details of any move to reduce the Fed's holdings.

The markets took the news with relative calm, suggesting that investors share the central bank's assessment that the economy is getting closer to walking without crutches. The yield on

the benchmark 10-year Treasury bond has traded in a narrow range since December, even as the Fed has raised rates twice.

Indeed, some analysts said the Fed might need to take stronger steps to end its stimulus campaign.

“Financial conditions remain very accommodative, and in our view the central bank has more work to do to minimize the risks of financial imbalances building up in worrisome ways,” said Bob Miller, the head of BlackRock's fixed income team.

The Standard & Poor's 500-stock index dipped after the Fed's account was published at 2 p.m. Eastern Time, closing at 2,352.95, down 0.31 percent on the day. But the index has climbed more than 5 percent so far this year.

Some Fed officials also are nervous about the stock market's climb, the account said. It noted that stock prices are “quite high relative to standard valuation measures,” and that some Fed officials saw a risk to the economy “if, for example, financial markets were to experience a significant correction.”

The Fed accumulated trillions in Treasury and mortgage securities in a series of campaigns after the 2008 financial crisis as part of its effort to put downward pressure on borrowing costs. It has maintained the size of those holdings by reinvesting the proceeds from maturing securities; it can shrink the portfolio by doing nothing — simply refraining from investing in replacement securities.

Accumulating the bonds forced other investors to compete for the remaining stock by accepting lower interest rates from borrowers. That amplifies the effect of the Fed's primary tool, its direct suppression of short-term rates. Shrinking the portfolio would gradually reduce the force of that effect, easing downward pressure on rates.

“It wouldn't surprise me if sometime later this year or sometime in 2018,

should the economy perform in line with our expectations, that we'll start to gradually let securities mature rather than reinvesting them,” William C. Dudley, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, told Bloomberg Television last week.

Mr. Dudley said the Fed might take a break from raising short-term interest rates as it begins to reduce the balance sheet so it can appraise the consequences.

The meeting account said that the Fed must decide whether to end reinvestment abruptly or gradually, and

“In our view the central bank has more work to do to minimize the risks of financial imbalances building up in worrisome ways.”

whether to deal with Treasury and mortgage bonds on the same timetable. The account said the discussion would continue at the Fed's next policy meeting, on May 2 and 3.

The meeting account also emphasized that the Fed's economic outlook has held steady in recent months. Fed officials have said they do not see evidence of an improvement in the nation's economic trajectory since the election of President Trump. But growth has remained strong enough to move forward with rate increases.

The Fed account said “nearly all participants” have concluded that the American economy is “at or near maximum employment.” The unemployment rate was 4.7 percent in February, a level consistent with the normal churn of hiring and firing.

Inflation, sluggish since the crisis, had also perked, though most Fed officials were not yet satisfied with this count. “Nearly all members judged that the committee has not yet achieved its

objective for headline inflation on a sustained basis,” the account said. The Fed wanted prices to rise about 2 percent a year.

The Fed, which predicted a continued improvement in economic conditions at the start of the year, has said that it expects to raise rates three times in 2017. It now appears that the Fed may take the additional step of beginning to shrink its investment holdings by the end of the year, somewhat earlier than expected.

The Fed has said its forecasts do not incorporate the potential impact of policy changes proposed by Mr. Trump. The central bank has adopted a wait-and-see posture. The account said most officials do not expect any impact before 2018.

“Members continued to judge that there was significant uncertainty about the effects of possible changes in fiscal and other government policies,” the account said, “but that near-term risks to the economic outlook appeared roughly balanced.”

Some Fed officials have said — in the weeks since the meeting — that it might be necessary to move more quickly. Eric Rosengren, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, said last week that the Fed should raise rates four times this year.

“The perception seems to be that the outcome of each FOMC meeting depends on nuances of incoming data, with the base case being no change in rates,” Mr. Rosengren said of the Fed's policy-making arm, the Federal Open Market Committee. “My own view is that an increase at every other FOMC meeting over the course of this year could and should be the committee's default.”

One official did worry that the Fed was moving too fast: Neel Kashkari, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, voted against raising interest rates, saying it was not clear how much slack was in the labor market, and that inflation remained weak.

China moves closer to food security goal

LONDON

European Union approves \$43 billion takeover of Syngenta by ChemChina

BY AMIE TSANG

The Chinese government wants to make sure its food supply is reliable and safe as it works to feed a rapidly growing middle class. So it was a coup when a Chinese company won approval to take over one of the world's largest suppliers of seeds and pesticides.

By clearing the deal with European Union regulators on Wednesday, China National Chemical Corporation is close to the \$43 billion takeover of Syngenta, the Swiss farm chemical and seed company.

It would be the largest Chinese takeover of a foreign company and is one of three proposed mergers in an international race seeking greater influence over the world's food supply.

“China has been trying to develop its own seed industry — and agricultural chemicals as well — for decades, and the progress has been slow,” said Fred Gale, a senior economist at the United States Department of Agriculture. “This is an attempt to upgrade productivity.”

The deal between China National Chemical Corporation, a state-owned company known as ChemChina, and Syngenta comes as trade relations between China and the West have become increasingly tense. The situation has been made worse by President Trump's sharp talk on the issue.

As President Trump hosts the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida this week, trade is certain to be on the agenda.

Syngenta's clearance from the European Union is part of an international competition that includes Dow Chemicals and DuPont, who are still working to close their merger. Though best known as chemical companies, Dow and DuPont, both based in the United States, also have huge agricultural businesses.

Bayer AG, the German industrial conglomerate, is also trying to complete its multibillion takeover of Monsanto. That deal would give Bayer control of the company most closely associated with the rise of genetically modified foods.

And ChemChina's takeover of Syngenta would give Beijing more influence over many of the seeds and chemicals it needs to feed its swelling population.

If all three deals are completed, they would reshape the global agricultural chemical business, reducing competition in the industry.

It is an important play for China, which has struggled to maintain and upgrade its food supply. China hopes to better feed its increasingly affluent population, but several food scandals have made Chinese citizens suspicious of domestic supply chains.

Those scandals have fueled anxiety about genetically modified food, even as China wants to use the science to increase production. Although China has poured money into research, it still bans cultivation of genetically modified food for human consumption, and knowledge about genetically modified organisms is limited.

The ChemChina deal could bolster China's efforts to become a major player in genetically modified food. But Mr. Gale said Chinese consumers would probably remain wary.

“The general public has become very suspicious of seeds,” he said. “That will be an obstacle to Syngenta becoming a pipeline for G.M.O. seeds in the China market.”

ChemChina will have to sell prized assets to take control of Syngenta.

To appease European officials, it must sell substantial parts of its European businesses that make pesticides and substances that stimulate or slow plant growth.

“It is important for European farmers and ultimately consumers that there will be effective competition in pesticide

markets, also after ChemChina's acquisition of Syngenta,” Margrethe Vestager, the European Union commissioner in charge of competition policy, said in a statement. “ChemChina has offered significant remedies, which fully address our competition concerns.”

The European Union granted its approval a day after ChemChina received the go-ahead from the United States Federal Trade Commission. The F.T.C.'s approval hinged on ChemChina selling parts of a subsidiary's business in the United States to an agricultural chemical company based in California. The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which focuses on national security issues and was also regarded as a significant potential obstacle, cleared the deal in August.

The ChemChina deal for Syngenta is part of a spate of consolidation in the agricultural chemical industry globally, as companies have tried to meet the challenge of falling crop prices.

Their efforts to win customers are being made more difficult by consumer resistance. Widespread suspicion of genetically modified foods in Europe means that protests against Monsanto can draw thousands, and several European countries ban their cultivation.

The approval of antitrust agencies would be seen as promising for others seeking deals, said Dale Stafford, the

The ChemChina deal could bolster China's efforts to become a major player in genetically modified food.

head of mergers and acquisitions for the Americas at Bain & Company, a business consultancy.

“This sends a strong signal that even though there needs to be concessions, with the right strategic deals, they can happen,” Mr. Stafford said.

The ability to complete another agricultural chemicals deal, however, could be diminished by the huge deals that have been done.

“As markets get more concentrated, the impact on competition gets amplified,” said Elai Katz, who leads the antitrust practice at the law firm Cahill Gordon & Reindel.

In recent years, Chinese companies have been on an acquisition binge, buying major strategic assets like copper mines and oil deposits, and investing in flashier, if less economically or geopolitically important, deals for marquee names like the Waldorf Astoria hotel in Manhattan.

Lately, there have been signs that the shopping spree might be ending. China has tightened limits on how much money it is allowing past its borders, and that has threatened purchases that some Chinese officials have criticized as frivolous.

Far fewer overseas acquisitions by Chinese companies have been announced this year than by this time a year ago. The value of these deals has also fallen to about \$31 billion this year compared with \$87 billion at the same point last year, according to Dealogic, the financial data company.

American and European companies alike have criticized China's ambitious plan to build up its own technology industries, which the overseas businesses worry could create global competitors and potentially weaken their business in the big Chinese market.

And in the United States, takeover watchdogs have blocked several deals that they say could affect national security, while some lawmakers are calling for even tighter reviews.

Yet Chinese companies have shown a willingness to be aggressive when it matters. And for China, food matters.

“On one hand they want to have the best technology, but at the same time they don't want their markets to be dominated by international companies like Monsanto, Dupont or Bayer,” Mr. Gale said. “So that's the fastest way to do it, buy the technology. That seems to be China's strategy now.”

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a - asked + - Offer Prices; N.A. - Not Available; N.C. - Not Communicated; o- New; S - suspended; S/S - Stock Split; \*\* - Ex-Dividend; \*\* - Ex-Rts; -@ Offer Price incl. 3% prelim. charge; \*- Paris exchange; ++ -Amsterdam exchange; e - misquoted earlier; x-not registered with regulatory authority. P.Middle of bid and offered price. E. estimated price; y: price calculated 2 days prior to publication; z: bid price.

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The data in the list above is the n.a.v. supplied by the fund groups to MORNINGSTAR. It is collated and reformatted into the list before being transmitted to the IHT. The IHT receives payment from fund groups to publish this information. MORNINGSTAR and the IHT do not warrant the quality or accuracy of the list, the data of the performance fides of the Fund Groups and will not be liable for the list, the data of Fund Group to any extent. The list is not and shall not be deemed to be an offer by the IHT or MORNINGSTAR to sell securities or investments of any kind. Investments can fall as well as rise. Past performance does not guarantee future success. It is advisable to seek advice from a qualified independent advisor before investing.

Ad industry takes a close look within

ADS, FROM PAGE 7

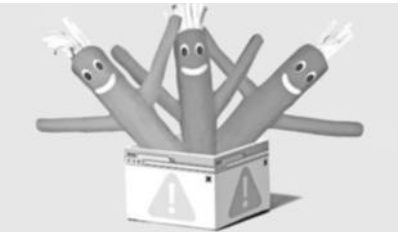
be certain that we're targeting an ad to the same user across multiple devices," Mr. Lesser said.

But it's deeper than that. Ad companies don't just know the user, but they also know the user's context — for instance, whether you're at work or at home, or whether you're in the mood for shopping or not. All of this comes together in a real-time calculation as you wander around the digital world, from app to website to social feed. The computers are watching what you do and deciding which ads to serve you when. Often the ads are sold dynamically in an auction — different companies offer to pay different amounts to get your attention at different times.

There are some obvious downsides to this model. It relies on the profiling of users, which makes many people uncomfortable, even if the ad companies say that they do all of this anonymously and without invading your privacy.

It also raises an issue for brands.

One consequence of this model is that it pays for a lot of content that wouldn't have been funded under the old model — now a teenager can attract a few million followers on YouTube, sign up for the company's revenue-sharing program and make money from all of the programmatic sponsors.



DOUG CHAYKA

That's a mixed blessing. It turns out there's a lot of crazy stuff on the internet. Some of it is popular, even if it's racist or otherwise objectionable. So suddenly a whole bunch of brands may be funding content that, in the old days of human-powered ad buying, they'd never in a million years have ventured

anywhere near.

The best way to think of this is as a supply-chain problem. Big, complicated industries that sell commodity goods often get tripped up on sourcing: you don't know who made your clothes, whether your diamonds are funding war or whether your shrimp may be complicit in slavery. The way to solve these externalities is through investigation and better documentation — to follow the money deep in the supply chain, to figure out who's ultimately getting it.

Something like that is now happening in the programmatic ad industry. It's rare to talk to someone in advertising who will tell you that things are working perfectly. They admit that there are holes in the system: Computers aren't yet great at figuring out what's racist and what's not, or what's fake news and what isn't.

But they're getting better, and the more activists push platforms like YouTube on this issue, the more incentive the platforms have to keep improving things.



Vin Diesel, the onetime bouncer turned star of the mega-grossing 'Fast and the Furious' franchise, used to play Dungeons & Dragons. Seriously.

BY BEE SHAPIRO

Improbable as it may seem, now that he is the anchor of three action franchises, Vin Diesel, 49, started out as an artsy downtown New York kid. He first hit the stage when he was 7, at the Theater for the New City in Greenwich Village.

Years later, after he filled out physically, he worked for a decade as a bouncer at the Tunnel and other clubs. But beneath the brawny surface was a Dungeons & Dragons enthusiast who idolized Sidney Lumet and wanted to dedicate himself to the arts.

Frustrated with his inability to make it past the gatekeepers, Mr. Diesel directed and starred in a short film, "Multi-Facial," which was shown at Cannes in 1995. His next effort as director and star, the full-length work "Strays," made the 1997 Sundance Film Festival. If his apprenticeship sounds more Lena Dunham than Arnold Schwarzenegger, Mr. Diesel would say you're exactly right.

“Multi-Facial” impressed Steven Spielberg, who cast him in “Saving Private Ryan.” Soon after that, Mr. Diesel’s career took off: He played the killer Riddick in “Pitch Black,” the street racer Dominic Toretto in “The Fast and the Furious” and the lethal superspy Xander Cage in “XXX.” All three have spawned sequels and video games.

The most recent “Fast and the Furious” film grossed more than \$1.5 billion worldwide, and the eighth installment, “The Fate of the Furious,” opens April 14 in the United States. The ninth and 10th editions are planned for 2019 and 2021.

Vin Diesel was born Mark Sinclair in Alameda County, Calif., in 1967. He says he does not know his biological father. His mother, Delora Sheeran Vincent, an astrologer, married Irving Vincent, a New York theater manager, director and acting teacher, who became Mr. Diesel's stepfather.

Mr. Diesel discussed his unlikely rise in a telephone interview from his home in Los Angeles, where he lives with his girlfriend, Paloma Jimenez, and their three children.

**When you first became an actor, what kind did you think you would be?**

I thought I was going to be a dramatic actor. I started acting when I was 7. I grew up in the city, in artist housing on the Lower West Side. My father was a theater director. When I first started acting, the whole idea of an action hero was relatively new. It didn't hit me even as my years as a bouncer were changing the way I looked. I was hellbent on working with Sidney Lumet.

**Eventually you went west. What was your first impression of Hollywood?**

Well, the first time I went to Hollywood, I couldn't even get an agent. I remember leaving my bouncing job and saying, "See you, suckers." They asked me, "What are you going to do?" I said: "I've been acting my whole life. I'm going to Hollywood to be a movie star." I got to L.A. and I auditioned a bunch, but I

**DIESEL, PAGE 10**

JAKE MICHAELS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Unlikely Rise** Vin Diesel, whose movie "The Fate of the Furious," opens April 14 in the United States, decided to make himself a movie star after Hollywood didn't give him a chance.



# RICHARD MILLE

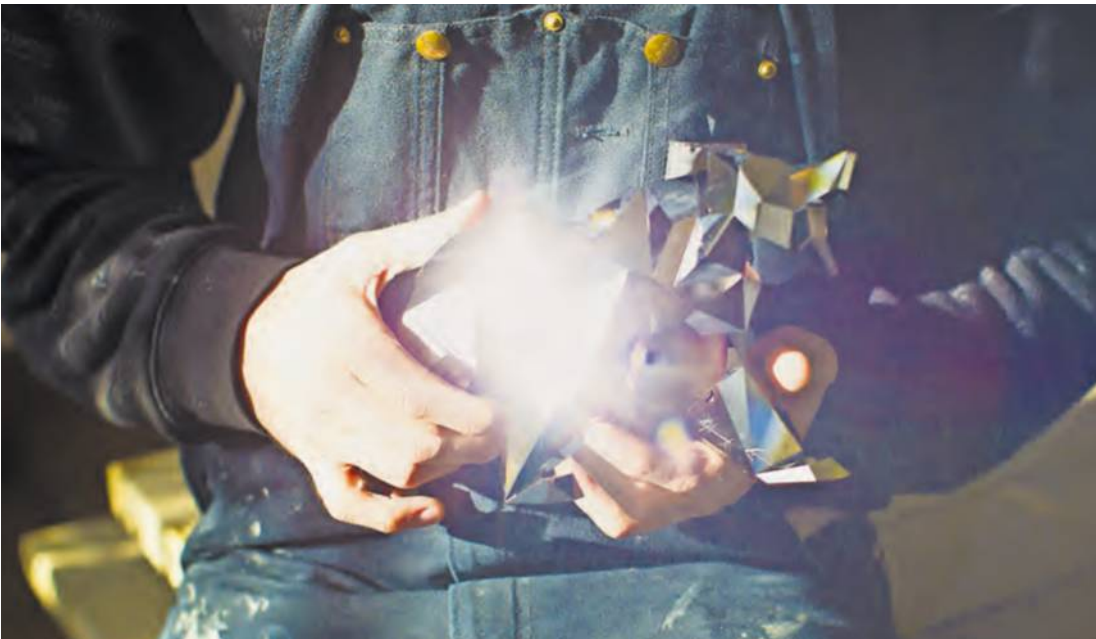
A RACING MACHINE ON THE WRIST

**CALIBER RM 63-01**  
**DIZZY HANDS**



# Pulse

This month's must-haves.  
By Alex Tudela



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAUREN FLEISHMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

## ASK AN ARTIST BEASTS FOR THE HOME

The British artist Arran Gregory, known for his mirrored sculptures of wolves, bears and jungle cats, has joined forces with the Austrian crystal and jewelry company Swarovski to create a collection of pieces made of crystal and chrome that will brighten a shelf or desk. Mr. Gregory kindly took a moment to talk about it.



**The intersection of geometric forms and animal imagery is a theme of your work. Why have you been interested in this combination?** The fact that my work is so graphic and geometric is a response to today's digital age, and I find that by applying this visual language to wild animals, it triggers something very relatable for us as humans.

**Your Swarovski figurines are more jagged and masculine than the average fragile**

**glass menagerie.** The animals I focus on are often very masculine, representing the alpha male, and this is probably because I'm looking at them from my own perspective. In the past, I think that most of Swarovski's collectors tended to be women, but I think this will open up the brand to a new male audience.

**Your usual personal style is streetwear. How does it relate to your artistic aesthetic?** I'm very interested in skateboarding, an activity that brings about a way of seeing where you are constantly analyzing angles and lines of architecture as you go. I think this is partly where my obsession with geometry and form began.

**You also wear beanies. Why?** I wear beanies because I'm bald and it's cold in England.  
*Swarovski Mirror Nature Collection, \$800 to \$1,500, at Swarovski stores worldwide. Arran Gregory photographed in London.*

## DEBUTS IT'S HAIDER ACKERMANN DAY AT BERLUTI

The designer Haider Ackermann, long a favorite of fashion critics, made his debut as the creative director of Berluti in January during the men's wear shows in Paris. His work for the French luxury label will finally trickle into stores on Saturday, when Berluti will stock its racks with four bomber jackets designed by Mr. Ackermann. Each has a distinct look,



like glossy lamb-skin and purple quilted velvet, and fine details, including crimson silk lining and emerald alligator-leather under-collars.  
One tip: Make sure your credit card is paid up.  
*Berluti bomber jackets, \$3,800 to \$8,950, at 677 Madison Avenue, 212-439-6400.*

## UNTRENDY THE TOD'S AESTHETIC

The Italian luxury brand Tod's is known for creating shoes, accessories and clothing that are immune to going out of style. Now the brand's chief executive, Diego Della Valle, is offering a detailed argument on behalf of his trend-averse aesthetic with a coffee-table book, "Timeless Icons."

Across 160 pages you will find images from the private and public lives of style kings such as Mick Jagger (in a straw hat, right) and Steve McQueen (in a suit and aviator sunglasses).

"Because of the digital age, attitudes and styles happen and change very rapidly in today's world," Mr. Della Valle said. "With this idea, I was inspired to create a book that celebrates the culture of iconic men and timeless style in a nonephemeral way."

The book is not Mr. Della Valle's main initiative in preserving things of beauty from the past. He has also pledged 25 million euros toward the restoration of the Colosseum in Rome.

*"Timeless Icons," \$70 (\$53.20 at bn.com), at Barnes & Noble.*



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

## FOUR QUESTIONS

## NO DRAMA. JUST A NICE PLACE TO SHOP.

The recently opened boutique Drama Club sits across from McGoirick Park in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, and its owner, Jack Sachs, is in love with the location. The 700-square-foot shop — painted tin ceiling, oak fixtures and a ceramic floor — is stocked with men's and women's clothing (by Robert Geller, A.P.C., Woolrich and other brands), as well as Tivoli Audio radios, Caran d'Ache pens, stuffed animals from Steiff, and books. "I don't know that it will get better than this," Mr. Sachs said. **MAX BERLINGER**

**Why did you want to open a store — and why right now?** I'm really trying to serve what I feel, honestly, is underserved for brick-and-mortar retail. The store is meant to be filled with things that I would personally want to buy for myself on the weekend, without leaving my neighborhood. I wanted to do this for 10 years, since I moved to New York. I live a couple of blocks away, and when I saw this lease, I held up my business plan and thought, "Can this work here?"

**What is it that you love about having a store?** I love the simplicity of it. When I open that door, my goal is to sell the stuff in the store. When I go to an appointment, my goal is to pick things that will sell. And that is sort of divine to me, because I don't have to worry if I'm doing the right thing or the wrong thing, so long as it's effective. I am happy to check my ego, to learn from



TAWN BANNISTER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

my customers, to get them what they want. I still get to edit it, it's still my store, but it's their store, too.

**What was your goal with this first assortment?** I just wanted to make sure I found a group of things that I couldn't live without. For me, it was about a collection of items that can build a wardrobe.

**Why did you name it Drama Club?** I moved to New York as an actor, and that has not been the through line of my New York experience — retail has. I realized the part of me that loves to be on stage and the part of me that loves to tell a story is the same part of me that likes to curate what I buy for the store and to talk to a customer. The storytelling of retail is part of that daily reality.



RETO

## AN AMERICAN CLASSIC, REFRESHED

A main character in "The Sandlot," a 1993 children's baseball movie set in the early '60s that has become an unlikely favorite of millennials, is able to run fast and jump high because of his PF Flyers. The American sneaker brand, which was started by B. F. Goodrich in 1933 and is now a part of New Balance, has released a new model inspired by one of its originals. With vintage details (iron-on ankle patch) and modern touches (foam insoles), the PF Flyers All-American is our retro pick of the season.

*PF Flyers All-American, \$70 (high-top) and \$65 (low-top), at pfflyers.com.*

## FROM THE COVER

# Action is just one piece

**DIESEL, FROM PAGE 9**  
couldn't get an agent. I ended up telemarketing — selling tools over the phone.

### Where did you go from there?

That was the beginning of the shoe-string film budget movement. When "El Mariachi" came out — Robert Rodriguez made it for \$7,000 — it was a gigantic breakthrough for me. I thought, I no longer have to go beg someone for a spot. I can go bouncing and save up \$3,000 and invest in my own story.

One Christmas I went home and my mother got me this book by Rick Schmidt: "Feature Filmmaking at Used Car Prices." In New York, I felt there were more resources. There were nonprofit organizations that would help you make a film. So I started putting together a feature, which later became "Strays."

But I couldn't get the money to make "Strays" then. This was 1995 and I did eventually complete it, and it was selected for competition at Sundance in '97. So I went by a phrase very successful people say: "If you can't do it all, do what you can." I wrote and filmed a short film called "Multi-Facial." It was, in essence, my story about how hard it was to get roles as a multiracial actor.

To write my first script, I went to an early electronics store called the Wiz that was on 14th Street. They had a policy where you could return anything within 30 days, no questions asked. So I went to the Wiz and bought this \$600 word processor on my student credit card. I stayed up all night, every night. And at the end of the 30 days I returned it.

Then I went out and rented a 16-millimeter camera on a Friday, because I did-

n't have to return it until Monday, so I was able to shoot for three days. Cut to my mom watching me roll an old 16-millimeter Steenbeck into my little room. I was cutting and splicing "Multi-Facial" old-school style. This was before computers, really. It was a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful time. A lot of people say they want to be successful, to be at the top. That's not where the fun is. The fun is the journey.

### When did you get your break? Or is there not really such a thing as one big break?

That's true, there wasn't just one break. One of my big breaks is "Multi-Facial."

In January of '95, I screened it at Anthology Film Archives. It was the only place that had a 16-millimeter projector. No one had ever seen my film. Everyone just thought I was the bouncer who did theater on Off Off Broadway. Then I showed the movie and 20 minutes later, when the movie ended, the whole audience never looked at me the same. Friends from my neighborhood, friends who bounced with me, even my own parents, they looked at me so differently. I can't even describe it.

Another break was after "Strays" played at Sundance. About a month after, I got a call from Steven Spielberg and he wrote a brand-new role for me in "Saving Private Ryan."

### Do you think you have been underestimated because of your looks?

Sidney Lumet used to say the same thing. While we were doing "Find Me Guilty," he told me: "You will suffer what beautiful women have suffered in this industry for 100 years. You will suffer for your action-hero physique."

### You're the first actor to have 100 million Facebook followers. Do you think social media enables others to see you in a more complex way?

Oh, definitely. Social media has allowed me to post a video of me singing to the mother of my children on Valentine's Day. How would you ever be able to see that before social media? Social media has documented some of the most challenging moments of life — when I lost my brother Pablo [the actor and "Fast and the Furious" co-star Paul Walker, who died in a crash in 2013]. There's wisdom that comes from an honest page.

My Facebook page is also where my relationship with Mark Zuckerberg started.

### Do you have a dialogue with Zuckerberg?

Of course! I love him. He's such a great guy and he's a fan of my work. He probably encouraged me more than anyone else to return to Xander Cage. We were hanging out up at Facebook about two years ago, and I was excited about "Fast 7." He said, "You know what movie I'd most like to see is the return of Xander Cage." It's at a point where if Mark and I are together and if I quote a line from a character I played and I do it slightly wrong, he'll correct me. It's embarrassing!

### What place do action heroes occupy in Hollywood?

Does the action hero really exist? That would be my question if we were killing it at a bar and getting really intense into the discussion. I feel like there are movies that have action in it and they might have comedy and romance moments as well. There isn't a school you go to to become an action hero. If you



JAKE MICHAELS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

had to go back to 1939, and you watch "Gone With the Wind," there was action there but you wouldn't call Clark Gable an action hero. Or if it's "Rebel Without a Cause," you're not going to call James Dean an action hero.

Maybe the term was invented by Hollywood, to focus on the physique of Arnold or something, as opposed to seeing whether he could credibly pull off a film in what was his second language. Does the term truly exist or is it journalist shorthand?

### For someone with questionable acting skills?

Yes! The best part of "Fast and Furious" is not the big explosions. It's the heart. When you think about the brotherhood of Dom and Brian, that's what carries through so many films. And no characters in history have carried on a love affair that is so captivating and kept your attention for as long as Dom and Letty.

It's to the point where a kiss from another woman — Charlize Theron in "Fast 8" — is the biggest action sequence in the trailer. "Fast 8" has the highest viewed trailer in history, meaning it's officially the most anticipated in film history. But what is the core of the trailer? It's something as familiar and simple as a kiss.

### Brains, Brawn and Heart

"Does the action hero really exist?" said Vin Diesel, seen at the Universal Studios lot. "That would be my question if we were killing it at a bar and getting really intense into the discussion."







TRADING UP

# Perfectly boring shoes

No flash or look-at-me sizzle here. Meet the introverts of the footwear world.

Sometimes all you want is a classic shoe to get you through the workday and into the evening. But finding something simple in a fashion climate where men’s designers keep trying to top one another is harder than it should be. These black derbies are so sturdy and trend-averse that almost no one will notice them.

ALEX TUDELA



Dries Van Noten polished-leather derby shoes, \$685, at mrporter.com.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC HELGAS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



John Lobb Croft shoes with medium lug sole, \$1,480, at johnlobb.com.



Tod's derby shoes, \$765, at tod's.com.



Prada round-toe derby shoes, price on request, at Prada boutiques.



Paul Andrew Samson bluchers, \$745, at Barneys New York.

STYLING



**Good Eye**  
Matthew Henson spent nearly six years at Complex before going out on his own.

ANDRE D. WAGNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

# The man who dresses ASAP Rocky and the Weeknd

Matthew Henson, a former fashion editor, is making his name as a celebrity stylist

BY MAX BERLINGER

ASAP Rocky was less than thrilled the first time the stylist Matthew Henson dressed him. The occasion was a 2012 cover for Complex magazine, where Mr. Henson worked as a fashion editor, and the rapper was to be photographed in the company of the designer Jeremy Scott.

What ASAP Rocky didn't know was that a deal had been struck between the magazine and Adidas to feature Mr. Scott's collaborations with the sneaker company.

ASAP Rocky seemed unimpressed

with the options available. "The pull's cool, but this is why I don't work with stylists," Mr. Henson said, recalling what the rapper had told him.

When Mr. Henson had another opportunity to style ASAP Rocky, this time for a music video, he felt he had something to prove. "I brought an airport hangar's worth of clothes," he said. "I was like, 'Here's what I can do.'"

Now he regularly styles ASAP Rocky and the pop star the Weeknd.

That means Mr. Henson has a say in the style of two of the most fashionable musicians working. ASAP Rocky, who sat front row at Raf Simons's debut show

for Calvin Klein during New York Fashion Week, is the star of recent Dior Homme campaigns. The Weeknd, who performed at the most recent Victoria's Secret Fashion Show, favors Valentino.

After nearly six years at Complex, Mr. Henson struck out on his own last June. "I wanted to try something new," he said recently at 180/Williamson, a showroom and retail space in TriBeCa, "and I knew if I waited any longer, the opportunity to do something on my own might not be there for me."

Now, in addition to styling musicians, he is working with the Los Angeles brand Stampd, the denim label DL1961

and Nike.

Mr. Henson, 32, was born and raised as an only child in Long Branch, N.J., where his parents work in the medical field. "They're very happy," he said of their reaction to his career, "but they're still like, 'What do you do, exactly?'"

With more than 22,000 Instagram followers and a fashion sense that has captured the attention of street style photographers, Mr. Henson is becoming a minor celebrity. But he said his look was not usually Instagram-worthy.

"You've got to turn it on at fashion week," he said. "But when I'm working, people are like, 'Are you a messenger?'"





# Opinion

## What was Lenin thinking?

In the shape of its first leader, the Russian Revolution had a strategic genius it never found again.

Tariq Ali

**LONDON** What was Vladimir Lenin thinking on the long journey to Petrograd's Finland Station in 1917? Like everyone else, he had been taken by surprise at the speed with which the February Revolution had succeeded. As he traveled from Zurich across Europe to Russia, on board a sealed train courtesy of Germany's kaiser, he must have reflected that this was an opportunity not to be missed.

That the weak liberal parties dominated the new government was to be expected. What worried him were the reports he was receiving that his own Bolsheviks were vacillating over the way forward. Theory had bound them, together with most of the left, to the Marxist orthodoxy that, at this stage, the revolution in Russia could be only bourgeois-democratic. Socialism was possible only in advanced economies like Germany, France or even the United States, but not in peasant Russia. (Leon Trotsky and his band of intellectuals were among the few dissenters from that view.)

Since the course of the revolution was thus preordained, all that socialists could do was offer support to the provisional government as it carried through the revolution's first phase and developed a full-fledged capitalist society. Once this was completed, then they could agitate for a more radical revolution.

This combination of dogmatism and passivity infuriated Lenin. The February upheaval had forced him to rethink old dogmas. To move forward, he now believed, there had to be a socialist revolution. No other solution was possible. The czarist state had to be destroyed, root and branch. So he said as he stepped off the train in Petrograd: No compromise was possible with a government that continued to prosecute the war or with the parties that supported such a government.

The Bolshevik slogan that embodied his tactical thinking was "peace, land and bread." As for the revolution, he now argued that the international capitalist chain would break at its weakest link. Winning over the Russian workers and peasants to create a new socialist state would pave the way for an insurrection in Germany and elsewhere. Without this, he argued, it would be difficult to build any meaningful form of socialism in Russia.

He detailed this new approach in his "April Theses," but had to fight hard to persuade the Bolshevik party. Denounced by some for turning his back on accepted Marxist doctrine, Lenin would quote Mephistopheles from Goethe's "Faust": "Theory, my friend, is gray, but green is the eternal tree of life." An early supporter was the feminist Alexandra Kollontai. She, too, rejected compromise because, she believed, none was possible.

From February to October, arguably the most open period in Russian history, Lenin won over his party, joined forces with Trotsky and prepared for a new revolution. The provisional government of Alexander Kerensky refused to withdraw from the war. Bolshevik agitators among the troops at the front assailed his vacillations. Large-scale mutinies and desertions followed.



SHEPARD SHERBELL/CORBIS SABA, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Above, a mural of Vladimir Lenin.

Within the workers' and soldiers' councils, or soviets, Lenin's strategy began to make sense to large numbers of workers. The Bolsheviks won majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow soviets, and the party was developing rapidly elsewhere. This merger between Lenin's political ideas and a growing class consciousness among workers produced the formula for October.

Far from being a conspiracy, let alone a coup, the October Revolution was perhaps the most publicly planned uprising in history. Two of Lenin's oldest comrades on the party's central committee remained opposed to an immediate revolution and published the date of the event. While its final details were obviously not advertised beforehand, the takeover was swift and involved minimal violence.

That all changed with the ensuing civil war, in which the nascent Soviet state's enemies were backed by the czar's former Western allies. Amid the resulting chaos and millions of casualties, the Bolsheviks finally prevailed — but at a terrible political and moral cost, including the virtual extinction of the working class that had originally made the revolution.

The choice that followed the revolution of October 1917 was thus not between Lenin and liberal democracy. The real choice was to be determined instead by a brutal struggle for power between the Red and White armies, the latter led by czarist generals who made

no secret that if they won, both Bolsheviks and Jews would be exterminated. Pogroms carried out by the Whites saw entire Jewish villages wiped out. A majority of Russian Jews fought back, either as members of the Red Army or in their own partisan units. Nor should we forget that a few decades later, it was the Red Army — originally forged in the civil war by Trotsky, Mikhail Tukhachevsky and Mikhail Frunze (the former two killed later by Stalin) — that broke the military might of the Third Reich in the epic battles of Kursk and Stalin-grad. By then, Lenin had been dead for almost two decades.

Weakened by a stroke for the last two years before he died in 1924, Lenin had time to reflect on the achievements of the October Revolution. He was not happy. He saw how the czarist state and its practices, far from being destroyed, had infected Bolshevism. Great-Russian chauvinism was rampant and had to be rooted out, he realized. The level of party culture was lamentable after the human losses of the civil war.

"Our state apparatus is so deplorable, not to say wretched," he wrote in Pravda. "The most harmful thing would

be to rely on the assumption that we know at least something."

"No," he concluded, "we are ridiculously deficient." The Revolution had to admit its mistakes and renew itself, he believed; otherwise, it would fail. Yet this lesson went unheeded after his death. His writings were largely ignored or deliberately distorted. No subsequent Soviet leader emerged with Lenin's vision.

**His writings were largely ignored or deliberately distorted. No subsequent Soviet leader emerged with Lenin's vision.**

Of his successors, neither of the notable reformers — Nikita Khrushchev in the 1950s and '60s and Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s — had the capacity to transform the country. The implosion of the Soviet Union owed almost as much to its degraded political culture — and, at times, the ridiculous deficiency of the bureaucratic elite — as it did to the economic stagnation and resource dependency that set in from the 1970s. Obsessed with mimicking the technological advances of the United States, its leaders cut the ground out from beneath their feet. In the revolution's final, sorry chapter, not a few of its bureaucrats rediscovered themselves as millionaires and oligarchs — something Trotsky had predicted from exile in 1936.

"Politics is a concentrated expression of economics," Lenin once remarked. As

capitalism stumbles, its politicians and their oligarchical backers are finding voters deserting their parties in droves. The shift to the right in Western politics is a revolt against the neoliberal coalitions that have governed since the Soviet Union collapsed. Today, however, the politicians cannot blame socialism as they once did — for it does not exist.

In the national-conservative Russia of its president, Vladimir V. Putin, there are no celebrations this year of either the February Revolution or the October one. "They are not on our calendar," he told an Indian journalist of my acquaintance last year.

"After their death," Lenin wrote of revolutionaries, "attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to say, and to hallow their *names* to a certain extent for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter." After his death, against the cries of his widow and sisters, Lenin was mummified, put on public display and treated like a Byzantine saint. He had predicted his own fate.

**TARIQ ALI**, a member of the editorial committee of the *New Left Review*, is the author, most recently, of *"The Dilemmas of Lenin: Terrorism, War, Empire, Love, Revolution."*

*This is an essay in the series Red Century, about the legacy and history of communism 100 years after the Russian Revolution.*

## How I angered my readers, again

The suggestion to be kind to Trump voters didn't go over well.



Nicholas Kristof

When I write about people struggling with additions or homelessness, liberals exude sympathy while conservatives respond with snarling hostility to losers who make "bad choices."

When I write about voters who supported President Trump, it's the reverse: Now it's liberals who respond with venom, hoping that Trump voters suffer for their bad choice.

"I absolutely despise these people," one woman tweeted at me after I interviewed Trump voters. "Truly the worst of humanity. To hell with every one of them."

Maybe we all need a little more empathy?

I wrote my last column from Oklahoma, highlighting voters who had supported Trump and now find that he wants to cut programs that had helped them. One woman had recovered from a rape with the help of a women's center that stands to lose funding, another said that she would sit home and die without a job program facing cutbacks, and so on. Yet every one of them was still behind Trump — and that infuriated my readers.

"I'm just going to say it," tweeted Bridgette. "I hate these people. They are stupid and selfish. Screw them. Lose your jobs, sit home and die."

Another: "ALL Trump voters are racist and deplorable. They'll never vote Democratic. We should never pander to the Trumpites. We're not a party for racists."

The torrent of venom was, to me, as misplaced as the support for Trump from struggling Oklahomans. I'm afraid that Trump's craziness is proving infectious, making Democrats crazy with rage that actually impedes a progressive agenda.

One problem with the Democratic anger is that it stereotypes a vast and contradictory group of 63 million people. Sure, there were racists and misogynists in their ranks, but that doesn't mean that every Trump voter was a white supremacist. While it wasn't apparent from reading the column, one of the Trump voters I quoted was black, and another was Latino. Of course, millions of Trump voters were members of minorities or had previously voted for Barack Obama.

"Some people think that the people who voted for Trump are racists and sexists and homophobes and just deplorable folks," Senator Bernie Sanders, who has emerged as a surprising defender of Trump voters, said the other day. "I don't agree."

The blunt truth is that if we care about a progressive agenda, we simply can't write off 46 percent of the electorate. If there is to be movement on mass incarceration, on electoral reform, on



HIROKO MASUIKE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Trump opponent, left, and supporter facing off at a rally in Brooklyn in February.

women's health, on child care, on inequality, on access to good education, on climate change, then progressives need to win more congressional and legislative seats around the country. To win over Trump voters isn't normalizing extremism, but a strategy to combat it.

Right now, 68 percent of partisan legislative chambers in the states are held by Republicans. About 7 percent of America's land mass is in Democratic landslide counties, and 59 percent is in Republican landslide counties.

I asked the people I interviewed in Oklahoma why they were sticking with

Trump. There are many reasons working-class conservatives vote against their economic interests — abortion and gun issues count heavily for some — but another is the mockery of Democrats who deride them as ignorant bumpkins. The vilification of these voters is a gift to Trump.

Nothing I've written since the election has engendered more anger from people who usually agree with me than my periodic assertions that Trump voters are human, too. But I grew up in Trump country, in rural Oregon, and many of my childhood friends sup-

ported Trump. They're not the hateful caricatures that some liberals expect, any more than New York liberals are the effete paper cutouts that my old friends assume.

Maybe we need more junior year "abroad" programs that send liberals to Kansas and conservatives to Massachusetts.

Hatred for Trump voters also leaves the Democratic Party more removed from working-class pain. For people in their 50s, mortality rates for poorly educated whites have soared since 2000 and are now higher than for blacks at all education levels. Professors Angus Deaton and Anne Case of Princeton University say the reason is "deaths of despair" arising from suicide, drugs and alcohol.

Democrats didn't do enough to address this suffering, so Trump won working-class voters — because he at least faked empathy for struggling workers. He sold these voters a clunker, and now he's already beginning to betray them. His assault on Obamacare would devastate many working-class families by reducing availability of treatment for substance abuse. As I see it, Trump rode to the White House on a distress that his policies will magnify.

So by all means stand up to Trump, point out that he's a charlatan and resist his initiatives. But remember that social progress means winning over voters in flyover country, and that it's difficult to recruit voters whom you're simultaneously castigating as despicable, bigoted imbeciles.



OPINION

The New York Times

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MR. TRUMP’S MOST IMPORTANT MEETING

The visit of President Xi Jinping will test the American president’s ability to deal with an experienced leader.

Donald Trump’s meeting with his Chinese counterpart this week will be the most important diplomatic encounter of his presidency so far. His two days of talks at Mar-a-Lago with President Xi Jinping will test whether the two men — Mr. Trump an unpredictable novice, Mr. Xi a tightly scripted, experienced leader — can begin to effectively manage the world’s most significant bilateral relationship.

By undoing American support for an international agreement on climate change, repudiating an Asia-oriented trade deal and calling for funding cuts for the United Nations, Mr. Trump has already ceded leadership in key areas to Mr. Xi, who is eager to expand Beijing’s role as an international power and has increasingly positioned his country as a competitor of the United States.

Mr. Trump does seem to appreciate the threat from North Korea’s rapidly advancing nuclear and missile programs, putting that matter at the top of his agenda. He could hardly avoid it, given the fact that the North conducted another missile test on Tuesday as Mr. Xi was en route to the United States.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly made clear that he expects China, the North’s main supplier of food and fuel, to increase pressure beyond what it has been willing to do so far to force an end to the weapons programs. In an interview in The Financial Times on Monday, he was even more demanding, warning that the United States would take unilateral action to eliminate the nuclear threat if Beijing fails to act, presumably by curbing trade and assistance.

Most experts believe that the North will not abandon its nuclear program unless the leadership at the top changes. China opposes this because it fears a surge of refugees into its territory and wants to keep North Korea as a buffer against a potentially unified Korean Peninsula dominated by the American military.

The risk in this meeting is that Mr. Trump knows little about diplomacy with China and does not have a team of China experts in place. He has already had to correct one major error; after calling into question America’s longstanding one-China policy, he retreated and told Mr. Xi in February that he would respect Beijing as the sole government of China and not recognize Taiwan.

Administration officials are confident that Mr. Trump can hold his own; Chinese officials say the same of Mr. Xi. Much is riding on whether they can do business.

NO BORDERS FOR TERROR OR SYMPATHY

The St. Petersburg attack shows Russia is as vulnerable to terrorism as any Western nation, and deserves support in time of tragedy.

After Monday’s terrorist attack on the subway in St. Petersburg, some Russian state media outlets noted that expressions of grief and solidarity in the West were far fewer than after attacks on targets in Western countries. No “Je suis Charlie”; no projection of the Russian flag onto the Brandenburg Gate, which has been illumined in the past in the colors of Britain, Israel, Turkey and France; and though the lights on the Eiffel Tower were doused, the gesture came only after criticism on social media of Paris authorities.

There is little question that the United States and Western Europe give considerably more attention to attacks on their territory or their people than to attacks elsewhere. The frequent suicide bombings in Muslim conflict zones rarely attract much sympathetic outpouring on social media — in the West, or, for that matter, in Russia.

What seemed to vex the Russians, however, or at least the Russian state media, was what they saw as a double standard that further proved the Kremlin’s propaganda about a West out to get Russia.

Russia under President Vladimir Putin is in fact in very low esteem in the West, and its defense of its ally, President Bashar al-Assad, over the heinous chemical attack in Syria only lowered that.

Yet elemental human sympathy should not be entangled in geopolitics. Russia is as vulnerable to the plague of Islamist terrorism as any Western nation, with large Muslim populations both in Russia and around its borders.

After 130 people in Paris were killed to spread terror in 2015, Russians brought flowers, candles and notes of support to the French Embassy in Moscow in a spontaneous outpouring of sympathy. The 14 who died in St. Petersburg were also people just going about their lives — a wrestling coach, some students, a doll maker. They too deserve flowers and tears.

People of good will should open their hearts and minds to the tragic and unnecessary suffering of all victims of terror, whether it is Russians caught in a hail of shrapnel in a subway car, or Syrians torturously killed in the chemical attack, or the 31 people killed on Wednesday in attacks in Tikrit, Iraq. None of them deserved this.

Will Mexico get its territory back?

Enrique Krauze

**MEXICO CITY** The United States invasion of Mexico in 1846 inflicted a painful wound that, in the 170 years that followed, turned into a scar. Donald Trump has torn it open again.

Among the many lies that he has constructed, none is more ridiculous than his attempt to contradict history by presenting the United States as a victim of Mexico, a country that supposedly steals jobs, imposes onerous treaties and sends its “bad hombres” across the border.

To confront this fake history, some Mexicans are proposing to remind Mr. Trump exactly what country was the first victim of American imperialism. They are calling for a lawsuit that would aim to nullify the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (signed on Feb. 2, 1848), in which Mexico — invaded by American soldiers, its capital occupied, its ports and customs stations seized — was forced to accept the American annexation of Texas and concede more than half the rest of Mexican territory, now including most of the states of Arizona, New Mexico and California.

This effort is being led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the elder statesman of the Mexican left. Mr. Cárdenas is convinced that the Mexican government — especially given the need to confront Mr. Trump’s aggression — has a solid legal case. In his opinion, the 1848 treaty violates essential international legal norms and a case can be brought before the International Court of Justice, proposing reparations and indemnification. And even

if one admits the legal validity of much of the treaty, there are a number of crucial articles — such as those dealing with citizenship, property and the security of 100,000 Mexicans who remained on what became American territory — that have been ignored from the beginning.

Such an effort faces formidable obstacles, though. A former Mexican secretary of foreign relations, Bernardo Sepúlveda Amor, the leading Mexican expert in international law, believes — “much to his regret,” he said — that Mr. Cárdenas’s initiative is not feasible. “In previous times, wars of conquest did not find the same moral and legal condemnation that is nowadays part and parcel of our system of law,” he told me. The treaty would have to be challenged under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, “for which it must be shown that the state did not expressly agree that the treaty is a valid instrument or that, by reasons of its own conduct, that state must be considered as not having acquiesced to the validity of the treaty.”

But this is not the case with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which was signed with the agreement of both governments. “Additionally, the claim to annul the 1848 treaty must be submitted to the International Court of

Justice to obtain a judgment on the matter,” Mr. Sepúlveda said. “But the United States does not recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of the court in contentious cases.”

Nonetheless, juridical reasoning is one thing, political reasoning another. If the present Peña Nieto government does not adopt Mr. Cárdenas’s project, an opposition candidate (of either the populist left or the nationalist right) could legitimately assume it as a banner for the presidential elections of July 2018. Such a new president could make that lawsuit a reality.

Beyond the validity of the suit, something of much larger impact is at play: the need to nourish a debate on the true history of a war the United States has conveniently forgotten or camouflaged and which now, more than ever, should be honestly remembered as it was. It’s a matter of an enormous crime, which leads to a question: How much of the historic prosperity of the United States of America stems from the development of territories originally inhabited by Mexicans and ripped away from Mexico through an invasion and a war of territorial conquest?

Because it was exactly that. Many American soldiers were aware of it, reading William Prescott’s “History of the Conquest of Mexico” — a recounting of Hernán Cortés’s expedition to conquer the Aztec Empire — as they advanced across Mexican territory. Many important figures of the epoch, with shame and regret, recognized its nature.

That “most outrageous war” (John Quincy Adams wrote) had been “actuated by a spirit of rapacity and an inordinate desire for territorial aggrandizement” (Henry Clay), and began with a

premeditated attack by President James Polk, thanks to which “a band of murderers and demons from hell” were “permitted to kill men, women and children” (Abraham Lincoln).

After the naval bombardment of the civilian population of Veracruz, Robert E. Lee wrote to his wife, “My heart bleeds for the inhabitants.” In his memoirs, Ulysses S. Grant lamented that he had not had “the moral courage to resign” from what, as a young officer, he had described as “the most wicked war.” For a number of other politicians and thinkers, including Henry David Thoreau, the war contradicted the democratic and republican values on which the country had been founded and was opposed to basic Christian ethics.

Mr. Cárdenas’s initiative may have little chance of succeeding legally, but its public impact could be considerable at a time when Mexico is being attacked unjustly by President Trump.

The United States owes Mexico and itself an honest reconsideration of its first imperial war, not only in its schools and universities but also in its museums and books. Hollywood and Broadway, which have always played an important role in shaping the American historical consciousness, should take up the issue.

Films, documentaries and memorable TV series have helped to modify the memory of two original sins, slavery and racism against African-Americans, and, with somewhat lesser attention perhaps, the racist slaughter and repression of the American Indians. A third sin should be added to these: the aggression against Mexico and the plundering of its territory.

Three centuries before the ancestors of Mr. Trump landed on United States soil, there were Mexicans in that northern territory known as New Spain and Mexico. But neither they nor their descendants are even symbolically part of American national pride; rather they are objects of stereotyping or emblems of a disgraceful past that has remained, to a great extent, in obscurity. It is time for it to come fully into the light, to be recognized and vindicated.

For us Mexicans, this is the chance for a kind of reconquest. Surely not the physical reconquest of the territories that once were ours. Nor an indemnification that should have been much greater than the feeble amount of \$15 million that the American government paid, in installments, for the stolen land. We need a reconquest of the memory of that war so prodigal in atrocities inspired by racial prejudices and greed for territorial gain.

But the best and most just reparation would be American immigration reform that could open the road to citizenship for the descendants of those Mexicans who suffered the unjust loss of half their territory.

**ENRIQUE KRAUZE** is a historian, the editor of the literary magazine *Letras Libres* and the author of “*Redeemers: Ideas and Power in Latin America*.” This essay was translated by Hank Heifetz from the Spanish.



JUSTIN RENTERIA

The great mistake in the Great War

Michael Kazin

One hundred years ago this week, Congress voted to enter what was then the largest and bloodiest war in history. Four days earlier, President Woodrow Wilson had sought to unite a sharply divided populace with a stirring claim that the nation “is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured.” The war lasted only another year and a half, but in that time, an astounding 117,000 American soldiers were killed and 202,000 wounded.

Still, most Americans know little about why the United States fought in World War I, or why it mattered. The “Great War” that tore apart Europe and the Middle East and took the lives of over 17 million people worldwide lacks the high drama and moral gravity of the Civil War and World War II, in which the very survival of the nation seemed at stake.

World War I is less easy to explain. America intervened nearly three years after it began, and the “doughboys,” as our troops were called, engaged in serious combat for only a few months. More Americans in uniform died away from the battlefield — thousands from the Spanish flu — than with weapons in hand. After victory was achieved, Wilson’s audacious hope of making a peace that would advance democracy and national self-determination blew up in his face when the Senate refused to ratify the treaty he had signed at the Palace of Versailles.

But attention should be paid. America’s decision to join the Allies was a turning point in world history. It altered the fortunes of the war and the course of the 20th century — and not necessarily for the better. Its entry most likely foreclosed the possibility of a negotiated peace among belligerent powers that were exhausted from years mired in trench warfare.

Although the American Expeditionary Force did not engage in combat for long, the looming threat of several million fresh troops led German generals to launch a last, desperate series of offensives. When that campaign collapsed, Germany’s defeat was inevitable.

How would the war have ended if America had not intervened? The carnage might have continued for another year or two until citizens in the warring nations, who were already protesting the endless sacrifices required, forced their leaders to reach a settlement. If the Allies, led by France and Britain, had not won a total victory, there would have been no punitive peace treaty like that completed at Versailles, no stab-in-the-back allegations by resentful Germans, and thus no rise, much less triumph, of Hitler and the Nazis. The next world war, with its 50 million deaths, would probably not have occurred.

The foes of militarism in the United States had tried to prevent such horrors. Since the war began, feminists

and socialists had worked closely with progressive members of Congress from the agrarian South and the urban Midwest to keep America out. They mounted street demonstrations, attracted prominent leaders from the labor and suffrage movements, and ran antiwar candidates for local and federal office. They also gained the support of Henry Ford, who chartered a ship full of activists who crossed the Atlantic to plead with the heads of neutral nations to broker a peace settlement.

They may even have had a majority of Americans on their side. In the final weeks before Congress declared war, anti-militarists demanded a national referendum on the question, confident voters would recoil from fighting and paying the bills so that one group of European powers could vanquish

another.

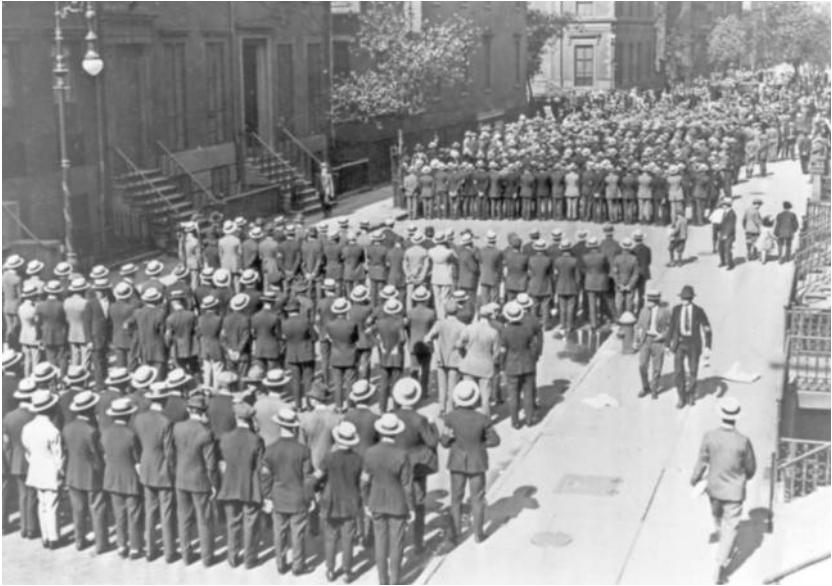
Once the United States did enter the fray, Wilson, with the aid of the courts, prosecuted opponents of the war who refused to fall in line. Under the Espionage and Sedition Acts, thousands were arrested for such “crimes” as giving speeches against the draft and calling the Army “a God damned legalized murder machine.”

The intervention led to big changes in America, as well as the world. It began the creation of a political order most citizens now take for granted, even as some protest against it: a state equipped to fight war after war abroad while keeping a close watch on allegedly subversive activities at home.

The identity of the nation’s enemies has changed often over the past century. But at least until Donald Trump took office, the larger aim of American foreign policy under both liberal and conservative presidents had remained much the same: to make the world “safe for democracy,” as our leaders define it. To achieve that purpose required another innovation of World War I: a military-industrial establishment funded, then partly and now completely, by income taxes.

For all that, the war is largely forgotten in the United States. Combatants in World War II and Vietnam are memorialized in popular sites on the National Mall, but the men who fought and died in the Great War have no such honor (though there is a small memorial specific to soldiers from Washington, and a small national monument is in the planning stages).

Alone among the former belligerent nations, the United States observes a holiday on the anniversary of the Armistice — Veterans Day — that makes no explicit reference to the conflict itself. The centennial of the declaration of war is a good time to remember how much the decision to enter it mattered.

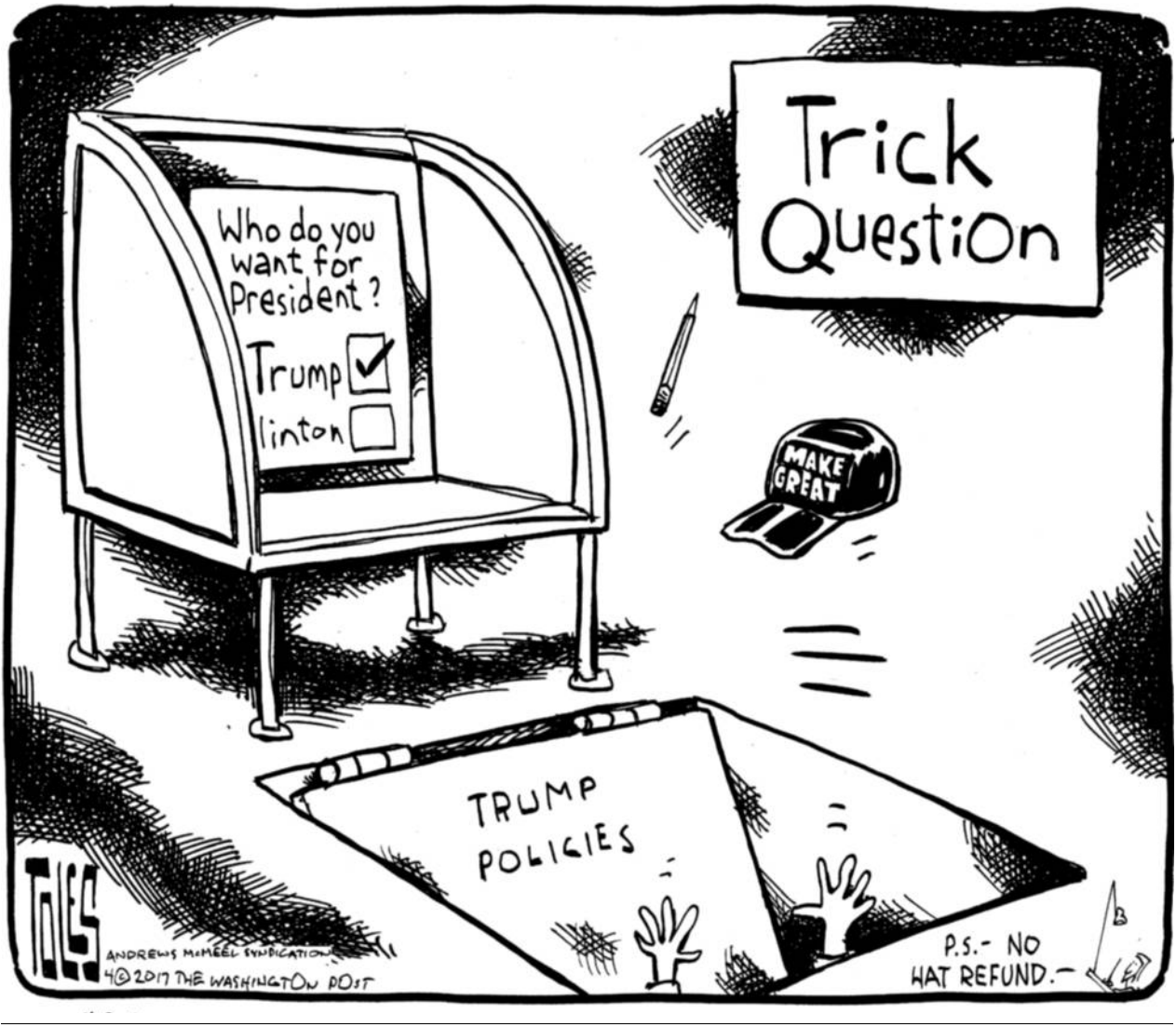


ASSOCIATED PRESS

Army recruits in New York in April 1917 soon after America declared war on Germany.

**MICHAEL KAZIN** is the author of “*War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918*,” a professor of history at Georgetown and the editor of *Dissent*.





# Creeping toward crisis



Charles M. Blow

I am racked with anxiety that our buffoonish “president” — who sounds so internationally unsophisticated and who is still operating under a cloud of illegitimacy — is beginning to face his first real foreign crises.

What worries me most is that he seems to have no coherent plan, at least not one that he is willing or able to communicate. “I don’t show my hand” isn’t a strategy to conceal a plan as much as one to conceal the absence of a plan.

His statements are all bluster and bungling and bosh. Our commander in chief is not in full command of his emotions or facts or geopolitics.

We may sometimes think that the absurdity of Trump’s endless stream of contradictions and lies ends at the nation’s borders, but it doesn’t. The world is watching, and the world is full of dangerous men who see killing as a means of maintaining and exerting power. They see in Trump a novice and know-nothing, and they will surely test his resolve.

Trump has exposed himself to the world as an imbecile and burned through American credibility with his incessant lying. Even many of our allies seem confused and worried about where we stand and how we plan to proceed.

Trump is full of pride, obsessed with strongman personas, and absent of historical and geopolitical perspective. This is the worst possible situation. The man who could bring us into military engagement is woefully deficient in intellectual engagement.

Just days after the Trump administration shockingly signaled a softer stance on President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Assad — possibly emboldened by America’s reversed course — unleashed an atrocious chemical attack on his own people, killing dozens.

Rather than using the bulk of his response to condemn the butcher Assad or the inaction of Assad’s patron, Vladimir Putin — let alone take responsibility for the role his own administration’s shifting position might have played — Trump harped on what he inherited from President Obama.

When asked Wednesday during a news conference with King Abdullah II of Jordan whether the chemical attack this week crossed a “red line,” Trump said: “It crossed a lot of lines for me.

When you kill innocent children, innocent babies, babies, little babies, with a chemical gas that is so lethal, people were shocked to hear what gas it was, that crosses many many lines, beyond a red line. Many many lines.”

He continued: “It’s very, very possible, and I will tell you it’s already happened, that my attitude toward Syria and Assad has changed very much.”

But changed from what? From the soft pedal of a few days ago that may have provided cover for this attack, or from previous statements in which he warned that America should “stay out of Syria”?

To change a position, one must start from an established position. Trump is all over the place like a spider playing Twister. During the news conference, he said that he was a “flexible person,” but I believe him to be an obtuse one.

During the news conference, a reporter asked:

“If I may, Mr. President: You know very well that the Iranian militias and Hezbollah have been propping the Syrian regime for a while, over a few

## The Syrian and North Korean problems can't be solved by a simpleton.

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During the news conference, a reporter asked:

“If I may, Mr. President: You know very well that the Iranian militias and Hezbollah have been propping the Syrian regime for a while, over a few

years now. Will you go after them? What message will you give them today? And will you work with the Russians to stop, to ground, the Syrian Air Force and to establish safe zones?”

Actually, it was clear that the president didn’t “know very well.” In fact, he seemed lost by the question. So instead of answering, he opened an attack on the Iran nuclear deal and ISIS.

The reporter had to point out the ridiculousness of the answer: “But sir, I’m talking about the Iranian militias in Syria supporting the Syrian regime, separate of the nuclear deal. What message do you have for them today?”

Caught in his ignorance, Trump clumsily responded: “You will see. They will have a message. You will see what the message will be, O.K.”

It was beyond embarrassing: It was mortifying. And it was terrifying.

Then there is North Korea, which keeps testing missiles, including one this week in advance of Trump’s meeting with President Xi Jinping of China, a clear message that North Korea continues its weapons program unbowed by pressure from America or China.

Trump is depending on China to exert influence on North Korea that it may be reluctant, or not have the capacity, to do. In any case, this week Trump told The Financial Times, “If China is not going to solve North Korea, we will.”

This seemed to signal the possibility of unilateral action of some kind, but the form is not clear. The Syrian and North Korean problems are complex and can’t be solved by a simpleton. Every action produces a reaction. Every lever you pull risks a life — or many.

This is not about Trump’s ego, even though I’m sure he believes that it is. It is about whether this draft dodger’s ignorance and insecurities could hazily plunge our country — and indeed the world — into an armed conflict. The King of Chaos isn’t suited for the steady navigation of crisis.

# Don’t fear the nuclear option

Steven Waldman

The word “filibuster” sounds silly, like the name of a pompous but ultimately well-meaning character in a Dickens novel. The phrase “nuclear option,” on the other hand, sounds terrifying.

So when we hear that the Republicans may use the nuclear option to kill the poor filibuster and confirm Judge Neil Gorsuch as a Supreme Court justice, we can lose perspective. In truth, eliminating the filibuster would be a minor change compared with the problem that such a move would solve: the recent rise of a system based on supermajority rule rather than majority rule.

Of course, the modern filibuster doesn’t require senators to give speeches through the night. It’s all very abstract; in the case of nonspending bills, the minority party simply lets it be known that it has enough votes to block the legislation.

In effect, the minority party now gets to decide when a bill should require 60 votes instead of 51.

The switch to supermajority rule happened without a constitutional amendment, without a national debate, without its even becoming a major issue in a presidential campaign. Because it happened gradually, we didn’t fully appreciate: The 788 filibusters since 2007 — those were the “nuclear” moments. It’s also confusing that the Republicans are saying: Don’t worry. Although we’re ending the filibuster against Supreme Court nominees, we’ll still allow the procedure to block legislation. If anything, there’s more of a case for eliminating the filibuster for congressional bills than for the court. If a horrible justice gets on the court, he or she is there for life; if a destructive piece of legislation gets through, it can be repealed.

I remember vividly when I first became aware that the “Schoolhouse Rock” version of how a bill becomes a law had quietly disappeared. I was covering Congress for Newsweek during the Clinton administration. The Democrats were pushing legislation to create a national service program, which had broad support.

In the middle of the process, the White House was notified that they would need 60 votes, not 51. No Republicans staged a sit-in. No one wheeled in cots so that elderly lawmakers could



WREN MCDONALD

nap during long hours of speechifying. The minority leader, Bob Dole, just informed the majority leader that 40 Republicans opposed the bill, so they were going to switch to the supermajority system, thank you very much.

The consequences for regular Americans can be significant. Under the filibuster rules in place at the time of the New Deal, Republicans could have blocked the Security Exchange Act, the National Labor Relations Act and the Tennessee Valley Authority, according to the journalist Charles Peters’s new book, “We Do Our Part.” And if the Senate had been operating under majority rule during the Obama and Bush administrations, the following bills would have gained Senate approval: the Toomey-Manchin background check bill for guns; the provision allowing people to have a “public option” for health care on the Obamacare exchanges; comprehensive immigration reform; an increase in the minimum wage; and the bipartisan campaign finance bill, called the Disclose Act.

If the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, eliminates the filibuster on legislation, the Democrats’ reaction may end up being less anger than regret (as in, “Why didn’t we think to do that?”). This may be an area in which President Trump’s disregard of tradition can work to his advantage, at least in the short run. Democrats are justified in worrying that Mr. Trump could get through more of his agenda in a majority-rules environment.

But in the long run, if Republicans

remove the filibuster for legislation, they may regret it. They have been the bigger beneficiary of the practice. From 1999 to 2006, when the Republicans controlled the Senate, the Democratic minority used the filibuster 272 times. By contrast, from 2007 to 2014, when the Republicans were in the minority, they used it 644 times, more than twice as often. The average filibuster per congressional session under President Obama was 158; under President George W. Bush it was 85.

Much has been written about why use of the filibuster grew rapidly in recent decades. From World War I until 1970, Congress averaged less than 10 filibusters each congressional term. In 1975, the Senate eliminated the requirement that to maintain a filibuster, senators had to literally stay on the floor talking. It went from being arduous to easy. Some argue that the situation worsened as voters elected fewer conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans, who had made bipartisanship more common and filibusters less necessary. Perhaps more modest reforms — like restoring the “talking filibuster” — should be tried first. That would reduce the abuse and instill more accountability. Elected officials could better fulfill their campaign promises, and voters could better judge whether they like the result.

But if the Republican leaders decide to go all the way, let’s at least remember that the bigger threat to democracy is not the scary-sounding nuclear option but the thing it blew up.

**STEVEN WALDMAN**, the founder of *Life-Posts*, is the author of “*Founding Faith: How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty*.”

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# In Germany, a first lady conundrum

SAUERBREY, FROM PAGE 1

as a state official equipped with an office, assistant and staffer could actually raise some difficult legal questions, as Sophie Schönbberger, a professor of constitutional law at the University of Konstanz, recently noted in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, picking up on the question raised in the United States over whether Mrs. Trump should be paid. Or, as Norbert Lamert, president of the German Parliament, put it during Mr. Steinmeier’s inauguration, addressing Ms. Büdenbender: “Yours is an office which, according to our Constitution, doesn’t exist.” It’s as though he was trying to squeeze women’s history into one sentence: Women have always managed without holding an office, acted without recognition, worked without pay, existed outside the written.

There’s a broad consensus in Germany that this must stop — despite recent attempts by populists to discredit the feminist agenda. In the past decade, German governments and Germany’s civil society have invested considerable energy and money in promoting women’s labor-market participation and visibility in the public sphere. The thing is: All of the political energy invested in setting up quotas and all the money poured into day care and shared parental leave have really not changed that much.

Which brings me back to whether the unofficial office of first lady represents Germany as it is. The answer is clearly yes.

Women in Germany are extremely well educated. But when the first child is born, they tend to step down, and never really step up again. Germany is currently governed by a female chancellor as well as six female and nine male ministers. But the televised ubiquity of powerful political women is misleading. Only 6.7 percent of all board members managing companies listed on Germany’s major public exchanges are women.

In the lower ranks, it’s the same picture. We are a country of stay-at-home moms and part-time moms, particularly in comparison with our Northern and Eastern European neighbors, and even with the United States, where work is much more equally distributed. Figures released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in March show that over a fifth of all German women between the ages of 25 and 40 with at least one child stay at home; another third work less than 30 hours per week. In only 10 percent of all couples in this age group do both work full time.

The typical German woman’s career is still this: get educated for a low-paid job in the social, medical or educational

## Elke Büdenbender's choice to be first lady painfully reminds us of the shortcomings and contradictions of emancipation in Germany.

sector, take time off for children, return to work part time (doing more hours than you’re actually paid for, but getting less recognition than your full-time male colleagues), take time off to tend to elderly parents, return to your job part time and then, when you’re retired, take care of ill husband and stressed-out children’s children, all while dwelling on a mediocre pension.

Of course this is not what Ms. Büdenbender personally stands for: she is a woman who has raised a child and had an impressive career despite a frequently absent husband (and one who, people who know her say, leaves her job reluctantly). But it’s what her new role as first lady represents: being “at his side” instead of just being you. Being a manager without an office, acting without recognition, working without pay, missing out on the book of history.

Ms. Büdenbender’s choice to be first lady painfully reminds us of the shortcomings and contradictions of emancipation in Germany, of the wide gap between public discourse and social reality. It is at least a quarter of a century wide. It will be extremely interesting to see whether she will reinterpret the role she has inherited from inequality in order to close that gap a little — at least the gap between what she really is, and what the first lady is.

**ANNA SAUERBREY** is an editor on the opinion page of the newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*.



WELL

Training the brain to think positively

Personal Health

JANE E. BRODY

Most mornings as I leave the Y after my swim and shower, I cross paths with a coterie of toddlers entering with their caregivers for a kid-oriented activity. I can't resist saying hello, requesting a high-five, and wishing them a fun time. I leave the Y grinning from ear to ear, uplifted not just by my own workout but even more so by my interaction with these darling representatives of the next generation.

What a great way to start the day! When I told a fellow swimmer about this experience and mentioned that I was writing a column on the health benefits of positive emotions, she asked, "What do you do about people who are always negative?" She was referring to her parents, whose chronic negativity seems to drag everyone down and make family visits extremely unpleasant.

I lived for half a century with a man who suffered from periodic bouts of depression, so I understand how challenging negativism can be. I wish I had known years ago about the work Barbara L. Fredrickson, a psychologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has done on fostering positive emotions, in particular her

**"Taking time to learn the skills to self-generate positive emotions can help us become healthier, more social, more resilient versions of ourselves."**

theory that accumulating "micro-moments of positivity," like my daily interaction with children, can, over time, result in greater overall well-being.

The research that Dr. Fredrickson and others have done demonstrates that the extent to which we can generate positive emotions from even everyday

activities can determine who flourishes and who doesn't. More than a sudden bonanza of good fortune, repeated brief moments of positive feelings can provide a buffer against stress and depression and foster both physical and mental health, their studies show.

This is not to say that one must always be positive to be healthy and happy. Clearly, there are times and situations that naturally result in negative feelings in the most upbeat of individuals. Worry, sadness, anger and other such "downers" have their place in any normal life. But chronically viewing the glass as half-empty is detrimental both mentally and physically and inhibits one's ability to bounce back from life's inevitable stresses.

Negative feelings activate a region of the brain called the amygdala, which is involved in processing fear and anxiety and other emotions. Dr. Richard J. Davidson, a neuroscientist and founder of the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has shown that people in whom the amygdala recovers slowly from a threat are at greater risk for a variety of health problems than those in whom it recovers quickly.

Both he and Dr. Fredrickson and their colleagues have demonstrated that the brain is "plastic," or capable of generating new cells and pathways, and it is possible to train the circuitry in the brain to promote more positive responses. That is, a person can learn to be more positive by practicing certain skills that foster positivity.

For example, Dr. Fredrickson's team found that six weeks of training in a form of meditation focused on compassion and kindness resulted in an increase in positive emotions and social connectedness and improved function of one of the main nerves that helps to control heart rate.

The result is a more variable heart

rate that, she said in an interview, is associated with objective health benefits like better control of blood glucose, less inflammation and faster recovery from a heart attack.

Dr. Davidson's team showed that as little as two weeks' training in compassion and kindness meditation generated changes in brain circuitry linked to an increase in positive social behaviors like generosity.

"The results suggest that taking time to learn the skills to self-generate positive emotions can help us become healthier, more social, more resilient versions of ourselves," Dr. Fredrickson reported in the National Institutes of Health monthly newsletter in 2015.

In other words, Dr. Davidson said, "well-being can be considered a life skill. If you practice, you can actually get better at it." By learning and practicing skills that promote positive emotions, you can become a happier and healthier person. Thus, there is hope for people like my friend's parents should they choose to take steps to develop and reinforce positivity.

In her newest book, "Love 2.0," Dr. Fredrickson reports that "shared positivity — having two people caught up in the same emotion — may have even a greater impact on health than something positive experienced by oneself." Consider watching a funny play or movie or TV show with a friend of similar tastes, or sharing good news, a joke or amusing incidents with others. Dr. Fredrickson also teaches "loving-kindness meditation" focused on directing good-hearted wishes to others. This can result in people "feeling more in tune with other people at the end of the day," she said.

Activities Dr. Fredrickson and others endorse to foster positive emotions include:

Do good things for other people. In addition to making others happier, this enhances your own positive feelings. It can be something as simple as helping someone carry heavy packages or providing directions for a stranger.

**APPRECIATE THE WORLD AROUND YOU.** It could be a bird, a tree, a beautiful sunrise or sunset or even an article of clothing someone is wearing. I met a man recently who was reveling in the architectural details of the 19th-century houses in my neighborhood.

**DEVELOP AND BOLSTER RELATIONSHIPS.** Building strong social connections with friends or family members enhances feelings of self-worth and, long-term studies have shown, is associated with better health and a longer life.

**ESTABLISH GOALS THAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED.** Perhaps you want to improve your tennis or read more books. But be realistic; a goal that is impractical or too challenging can create unnecessary stress.

**LEARN SOMETHING NEW.** It can be a sport, a language, an instrument or a game that instills a sense of achievement, self-confidence and resilience. But here, too, be realistic about how long this may take and be sure you have the time needed.

**CHOOSE TO ACCEPT YOURSELF, FLAWS AND ALL.** Rather than imperfections and failures, focus on your positive attributes and achievements. The loveliest people I know have none of the external features of loveliness but shine with the internal beauty of caring, compassion and consideration of others.

**PRACTICE RESILIENCE.** Rather than let loss, stress, failure or trauma overwhelm you, use them as learning experiences and steppingstones to a better future. Remember the expression: When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade.

**PRACTICE MINDFULNESS.** Ruminating on past problems or future difficulties drains mental resources and steals attention from current pleasures. Let go of things you can't control and focus on the here-and-now. Consider taking a course in insight meditation.



JASON HENRY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Good news for older mothers

The Checkup

PERRI KLASS, M.D.

The first time I got pregnant, I was a comparatively young mother, for my demographic: I was 25, in medical school, surrounded by classmates who, for the most part, were not reproducing yet. By the third pregnancy, 11 years later, I was over 35, which classified me, in the obstetric terminology I had learned in medical school, as an "elderly multigravida," that is, someone who was having a child but not her first child, after 35. (If it was your first child, you were an "elderly primigravida," or "elderly primip" for short — even as a medical student, I had a strong sense that no woman had invented this terminology.)

So by certain standards, I have experience as both a somewhat younger mother and a somewhat older mother, though not at the extremes in either direction.

National Vital Statistics Reports data released in January showed that in the United States, birthrates shifted in 2015: The birthrate for teenagers dropped to 22.3 births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19 that year, a record low for the nation. And for women 30 through 44, the birthrates were the highest they have been since the baby boom era ended in the 1960s.

And as birthrates shift toward somewhat older mothers, researchers continue to look at what that says, both about who is getting pregnant when, and how that is associated with how their children do, especially when it comes to cognitive outcomes. (There's

also been some interesting research recently on paternal age, but these studies focused on the mothers.)

The trend all over the developed world in recent years has been more women having more children later; the mean age in the United States at the birth of a first child increased from 24.9 to 26.3 from 2000 to 2014. And whether it's a first child or a later child, more women giving birth are 35 and older, which is still classified as "advanced maternal age" (well, it beats "elderly").

In a study published in February in the International Journal of Epidemiology, researchers looked at evidence from three different large longitudinal studies in Britain, from 1958, 1970 and 2000-2, each involving around 10,000 children. They were looking at the association between maternal age at the children's birth and the children's cognitive ability when tested at age 10 to 11.

In the two earlier studies, there was a negative association; maternal age 35 to 39 at birth was associated with poorer cognitive scores in the children, tested a decade later; the children who had been born to mothers 25 to 29 did better. On the other hand, for the most recent study, that association was reversed; the children born to the 35- to 39-year-olds did significantly better on the cognitive testing than the children born to the younger mothers.

What had changed over time? The researchers found that they could explain this reversal by correcting for the social and economic characteristics of the mothers; different women, in different circumstances, were having

their children later in life.

Alice Goisis, a research fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science and the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Germany, and the lead author on the study, said, "the characteristics of older mothers have changed drastically over time." In the older studies, she said, the women who were having children into their late 30s were more likely to be women who had many children, and possibly poorer, whereas in the later study, the millennium cohort study done in 2000-2, the older mothers were more likely to be educated, and socioeconomically better off. Twenty-six percent were giving birth to their first child at ages 35 to 39, as opposed to 11 percent in the 1958 study.

"One question I am often asked is whether these results are suggesting that women should wait to have children so they will have smarter children, and the answer is that our results are not addressing that," Dr. Goisis said. "These women tend to be advantaged," she said, and to take better care of themselves during pregnancy; they were less likely to smoke and more likely to breast-feed, compared with the younger mothers.

"Nowadays children of older mothers have, on average, better outcomes because of the characteristics of women who tend to have children at older ages," Dr. Goisis said.

Other researchers have looked at the question of how parenting attitudes and practices change as mothers grow older. In a study published online in December, researchers looked at how parenting practices and children's development varied with maternal age in a group of 4,741 families in Denmark. Older mothers were less likely to be harsh with their 7- and 11-year-old

children, either in terms of scolding or of physical discipline, they found, and their children were less likely to have behavioral, social and emotional problems.

"Older mothers seem to thrive better," said Tea Trillingssgaard, an associate professor of psychology at Aarhus University in Denmark, who was the lead author on the study. "The mothers have more psychological flexibility, more cognitive flexibility, more ability to tolerate complex emotional stimuli from the children."

Again, the researchers looked to see whether these differences were explained by another factor, by educational level or socioeconomic status, but even after controlling for all the demographic and socioeconomic factors they had, they still found that older maternal age itself continued to be associated with these more positive outcomes. "Emotional well-being tends to increase with age," Dr. Trillingssgaard said. "Age in itself may be an advantage."

We all know that fertility issues increase with older childbearing, with a large and complex fertility industry growing up in part to meet the needs of women who may have more difficulty conceiving later in life. But since having children is for most of us a huge and complicated decision, involving relationships, socioeconomic factors, geography, and the whole package of individual factors roughly summed up as life, love and the pursuit of happiness, decision making often doesn't allow for simple planning where you target one age or another.

The clear message is that the children of women with more support and better health habits do better cognitively, so it's important to support mothers of any age.

What a chill mouse can teach us about keeping calm

Fitness

GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

For generations, mothers have encouraged children to take long, slow breaths to fight anxiety. A long tradition of meditation likewise uses controlled breathing to induce tranquility.

Now scientists at Stanford University may have uncovered for the first time why taking deep breaths can be so calming. The research, on a tiny group of neurons deep within the brains of mice, also underscores just how intricate and pervasive the links are within our body between breathing, thinking, behaving and feeling.

Breathing is one of the body's most essential and elastic processes. Our breaths occur constantly and rhythmically, much like our hearts' steady beating. But while we generally cannot change our hearts' rhythm by choice, we can alter how we breathe, in some cases consciously, as in holding our breath, or with little volition, such as sighing, gasping or yawning.

But how the mind and body regulate breathing and vice versa at the cellular level has remained largely mysterious. More than 25 years ago, researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles, discovered a small bundle of about 3,000 interlinked neurons inside the brainstems of animals, including humans, that seem to control most aspects of breathing. They dubbed these

neurons the breathing pacemaker.

In the years since, though, little progress had been made in understanding precisely how those cells work.

But recently, a group of scientists at Stanford and other universities, including some of the U.C.L.A. researchers, began using sophisticated new genetics techniques to study individual neurons in the pacemaker. By microscopically tracking different proteins produced by the genes in each cell, the scientists could group the neurons into "types."

They eventually identified about 65 different types of neurons in the pacemaker, each presumably with a unique responsibility for regulating some aspect of breathing.

The scientists confirmed that idea in a remarkable study published last year in *Nature*, in which they bred mice with a single type of pacemaker cell that could be disabled. When they injected the animals with a virus that killed only those cells, the mice stopped sighing, the researchers discovered. Mice, like humans, normally sigh every few minutes, even if they (and we) are unaware of doing so. Without instructions from these cells, the sighing stopped.

But that study, while literally breathing, raised new questions about the capabilities of other neurons in the pacemaker.

So for the newest study, which was published recently in *Science*, the researchers carefully disabled yet another type of breathing-related neuron in mice.

Afterward, the animals at first seemed unchanged. They sighed, yawned and otherwise breathed just as before.

But when the mice were placed in unfamiliar cages, which normally would incite jittery exploring and lots of nervous sniffing — a form of rapid breathing — the animals instead sat serenely grooming themselves.

"They were, for mice, remarkably chill," said Dr. Mark Krasnow, a profes-

**Study looked at links between breathing, thinking, behaving and feeling.**

sor of biochemistry at Stanford who oversaw the research.

To better understand why, the researchers next looked at brain tissue from the mice to deter-

mine whether and how the disabled neurons might connect to other parts of the brain.

It turned out that the particular neurons in question showed direct biological links to a portion of the brain that is known to be involved in arousal. This area sends signals to multiple other parts of the brain that, together, direct us to wake up, be alert and, sometimes, become anxious or frantic.

In the mellow mice, this area of the brain remained quiet.

"What we think was going on" was that the disabled neurons normally would detect activity in other neurons within the pacemaker that regulate rapid breathing and sniffing, said Dr. Kevin Yackle, now a faculty fellow at

the University of California, San Francisco, who, as a graduate researcher at Stanford, led the study.

The disabled neurons would then alert the brain that something potentially worrisome was going on with the mouse since it was sniffing, and the brain should start ramping up the machinery of worry and panic. In that way, a few tentative sniffs could result in a state of anxiety that, in a rapid feedback loop, would make the animal sniff more and become increasingly anxious.

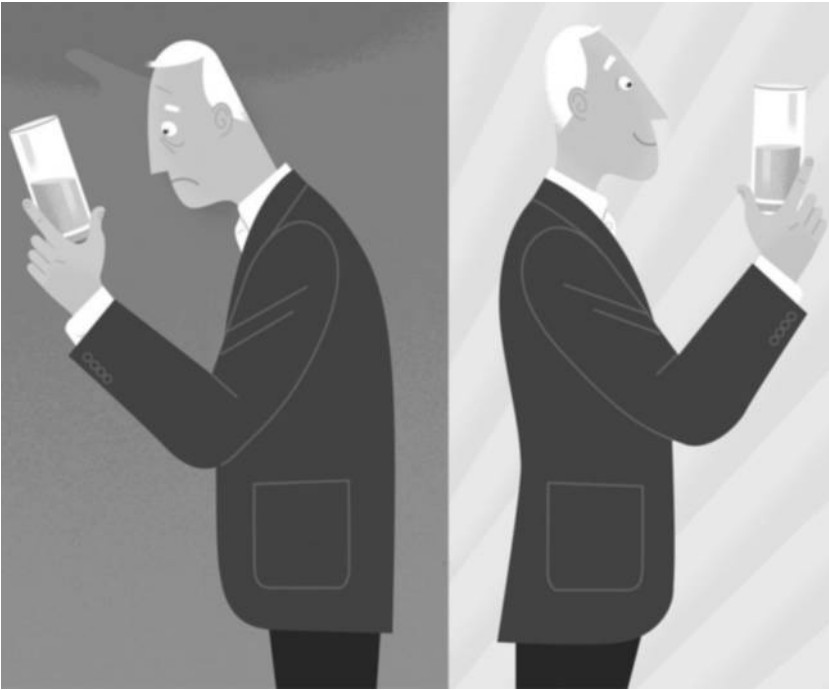
Or, without that mechanism, it would remain tranquil, a mouse of Zen.

The implication of this work, both Dr. Krasnow and Dr. Yackle said, is that taking deep breaths is calming because it does not activate the neurons that communicate with the brain's arousal center.

Whether deep breathing has its own, separate set of regulatory neurons and whether those neurons talk to parts of the brain involved in soothing and pacifying the body is still unknown, although the scientists plan to continue studying the activity of each of the subtypes of neurons within the pacemaker. This area of research is in its infancy, Dr. Yackle said.

Also, so far it involves mice rather than humans, although we are known to have breathing pacemakers that closely resemble those in rodents.

But even if preliminary, this research bolsters an ancient axiom, Dr. Krasnow said: "Mothers were probably right all along when they told us to stop and take a deep breath when we got upset."



PAUL ROGERS

Chronically viewing life's glass as half-empty is detrimental both mentally and physically and inhibits one's ability to bounce back from life's inevitable stresses.



# Sports

## N.H.L.'s snub is latest blow to Winter Games

**ON OLYMPICS**  
HELSINKI, FINLAND

With doping, cost overruns and few bidders, Olympics has plenty of problems

BY CHRISTOPHER CLAREY

The Winter Olympics are already on thin ice, even if the National Hockey League's announcement about skipping next year's Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea, turns out to be a negotiating ploy.

If the N.H.L.'s leaders are indeed not bluffing, it will be time to tread even more lightly.

This has been a brutal period for the newer, smaller, at-least-for-now-chillier version of the Games, which were first held in 1924 in Chamonix, France.

Let us count the woes: The 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, not only cost an eye-watering \$51 billion including related infrastructure, but they were also a fraud, confirmed by the most recent report by the Canadian lawyer Richard McLaren that Russian athletes' doping samples were tampered with on an industrial scale by Russia's antidoping officials.

After a series of withdrawals, some forced by referendums, only two cities bid for the 2022 Winter Games: Beijing and Almaty, Kazakhstan. The winner was Beijing, which hosted the Summer Games successfully, expensively and all too recently in 2008. It still has major pollution issues and is a long way from being a winter sports mecca.

"For a very long time, there's always been this race to get the Olympics, and that race might have ended," said Johann Olav Koss, a former International Olympic Committee member and a four-time Olympic gold medalist in speed skating for Norway. "The I.O.C. needs to figure out new ways to engage cities, and I think the Winter Olympics seems to be the one suffering the most."

It does not help that figure skating, once a pillar of the Winter Olympics, has seen its popularity slump significantly outside Japan, particularly in North America and Western Europe.

Now comes the N.H.L.'s announce-

ment. There were plenty of transcendent Olympic hockey moments before the N.H.L. players arrived in 1998, including, from an American perspective, the "Miracle on Ice" in Lake Placid in 1980 when an underdog United States team upset the Soviet Union and went on to win the gold medal.

But once you have seen the best in the world at work and on the medal stand, it is no easy maneuver to be satisfied with lesser talent.

The Winter Games have never been a truly global event. The classic winter sports inspire little interest and participation in big swaths of the world, particularly in Africa, southern Asia and much of South America.

Only 45 nations have won a medal in the Winter Olympics, compared with 150 nations in the Summer Games. Only 32 nations have won more than one gold medal in the Winter Olympics, compared with 85 in the summer version. Of the record 88 national Olympic committees that sent delegations to Sochi, only 60 had more than two athletes.

So the Winter Olympics can ill afford to let their fan base and relevance dwindle in any of their major attractions at this stage. Even if players who participate in the Kontinental Hockey League, based in Russia, and other international professional leagues would presumably take part in Pyeongchang, the N.H.L. remains the market leader.

Although Alex Ovechkin, the Russian N.H.L. star, made it clear on Tuesday that he intended to play for Russia in the Games no matter what, he may be one of the very few with enough clout to make that sort of call.

"This must be a huge disappointment for the players," the I.O.C. said in a statement on Tuesday, neglecting to mention that it must have been a huge disappointment to the I.O.C. as well.

The statement continued: "The I.O.C., which distributes 90 percent of its revenue for the development of sport in the world, obviously cannot treat a national commercial league better than not-for-profit international sports federations, which are developing sport globally."

This is obviously not nearly as obvious to N.H.L. owners, the same people who have taken a hard-line approach with their own players over collective



Workers in Pyeongchang, South Korea, preparing a snowboarding venue for the 2018 Winter Games.

bargaining agreements, resulting in bitter lockouts in the 2004-5 and 2012-13 seasons. The league may be on the verge of another one, after angering its players two years before they can opt out of the current collective bargaining agreement.

The owners are locking themselves out of the Olympics to preserve regular-season continuity (hmm) and revenue (bingo!).

However, if the owners are ever going to make real inroads and eventually real revenue in Asia, what better chance will they get than back-to-back Winter Games in Asia? Yes, they want to go to Beijing and China much more than they do Pyeongchang, but continuity mat-

ters, and the I.O.C. may not fling the door back open for 2022. So when the league said Monday that "we now consider the matter officially closed," that is not quite the same as saying "the matter is closed."

For the I.O.C., dare to share the wealth with the N.H.L. and here come the N.B.A., P.G.A., L.P.G.A., A.T.P., E.T.C.

But if the I.O.C. is going to keep playing the great benefactor, it better be much closer to beyond reproach. "It's all about money and Coca-Cola and where you can put the rings and where you can't," said Ryan Miller, the Vancouver Canucks goaltender who represented the United States at the Olympics in 2010 and 2014.

Some players expressed hope that this was all part of the rough-and-tumble negotiating process, one they know too well. Best to wait until the official start of the Northern Hemisphere summer to count the N.H.L. truly out.

Best, too, to wait until the bids come in for 2026 to start counting the Winter Olympics out.

The I.O.C. has approved its so-called Agenda 2020, which allows a more flexible approach to bidding. That could be particularly well suited to Winter Olympic candidates, which could deploy national bids or multinational bids to share infrastructure costs and cover the disparate bases of an event that needs not only big arenas for ice sports but

also mountains steep and imposing enough to run a proper downhill (as well as a city big enough to house the bloated Olympic circus, media members like myself included).

"I don't think it's an existential crisis for the Winter Olympics; I want to be clear about that," said Koss, founder of the Canadian-based humanitarian organization Right to Play. "I think Korea will be successful, and I think there are some things in Agenda 2020 that might be helpful, but it hasn't been seen in practice yet."

He does think the lack of clarity on sanctions against athletes implicated in the Sochi doping scandal is hurting public perception of the Winter Olympics. "The feeling is, why hasn't this been dealt with properly?" Koss said.

**The Winter Games never have been a truly global event. The classic winter sports inspire little interest and participation in big swaths of the world.**

What could definitely be existential is climate change, and Koss agrees that the I.O.C. needs to prioritize the environmental factor as much as possible in its Winter Olympic choices.

"Of course it's self-interest because if it gets too much warmer, there won't be any more Winter Olympics because we won't have any more snow," he said. "So it's a natural. Everybody would understand why the I.O.C. would be engaged in that."

Koss said emphasizing the climate connection was part of the platform the Oslo team was putting together when the city was a candidate for the 2022 Winter Games, before the Norwegian government called off the bid, citing a lack of support in the country as a whole.

Among those potentially in the mix for 2026 are the former Winter Olympic hosts Calgary, Alberta, and Innsbruck, Austria, as well as Sion, Switzerland, and Stockholm.

Nice list. But too many preliminary bids have proved nothing but preliminary of late. Make no mistake, Koss is concerned, as he and we — and above all the I.O.C. — should be.

### NON SEQUITUR



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### SUDOKU

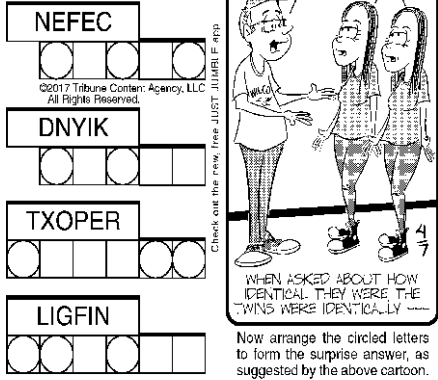
	5			2					
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7									4
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1								8	
				6	3				
5		2				7			
	7		1		4		2		
8									6

Fill the grid so that every row, column 3x3 box and shaded 3x3 box contains each of the numbers 1 to 9 exactly once.

For solving tips and more puzzles: [www.nytimes.com/sudoku](http://www.nytimes.com/sudoku)

### JUMBLE

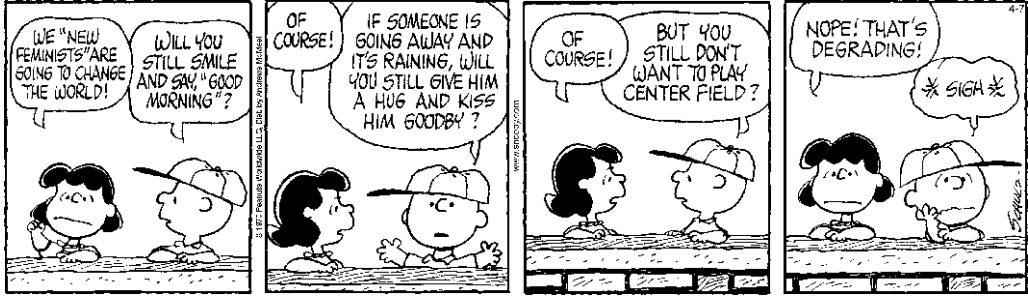
Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Yesterday's Jumbles: FATTY ICING STUDIO BOUNCE  
Answer: The sho store went out of business because not enough people — SET FOOT IN IT

### PEANUTS



### GARFIELD



### WIZARD of ID



### KENKEN

4+			2-		
1-			1-		
7+	1-			2-	
			4		

Fill the grids with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 4x4 grid will use the digits 1-4. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

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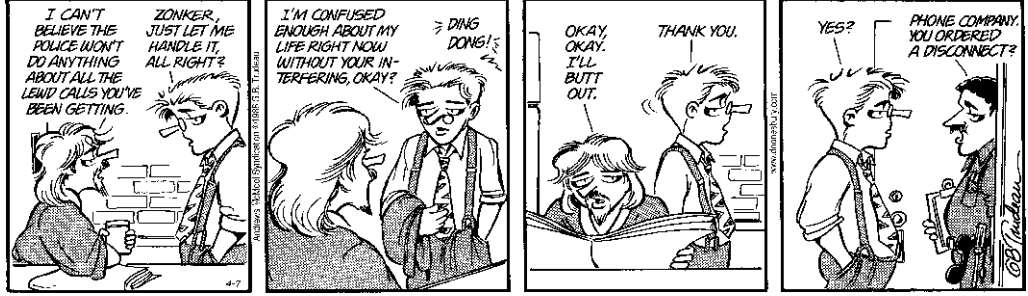
### Answers to Previous Puzzles

3-		5-		1-	2÷
6+	24x	6x			
			2-		4-
5-		2-			10+
1-		18+			
3-		1			

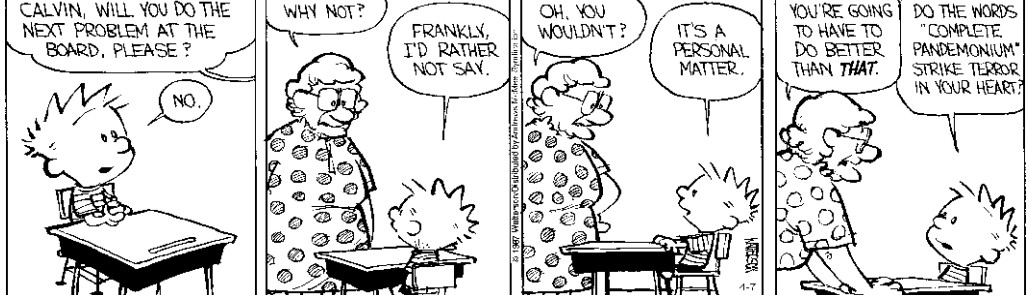
3	2	4	1
1	4	2	3
2	1	3	4
4	3	1	2

6	1	2	5	3	4
4	6	1	2	5	3
3	2	4	6	1	5
5	4	3	1	2	6
1	3	5	4	6	2
2	5	6	3	4	1

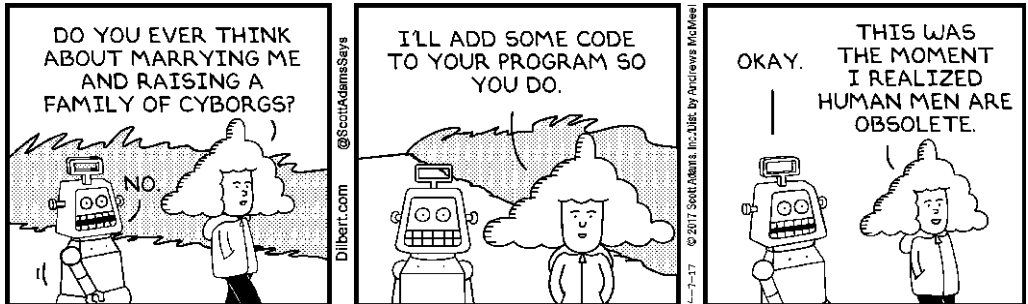
### DOONESBURY CLASSIC 1988



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### DILBERT



### CROSSWORD | Edited by Will Shortz

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Across</b>   | <b>Down</b>  |
| 1 Hopes not to be called, say                                 | 1 American candy company since 1904                                    |
| 7 Market figures  | 2 Beat soundly   |
| 13 Came to an end   | 3 Like a bed you're in   |
| 14 Harpers Ferry river  | 4 It's picked up in a mess   |
| 15 Storehouse   | 5 Roll up  |
| 16 "Brace yourselves ..."                                     | 6 Ophthalmological ailment   |
| 17 Rock music?  | 7 20th-century comedian who was known as "The Clown Prince of Denmark" |
| 19 Bunk   | 8 Runnin' ____ (N.C.A.A. team)   |
| 20 1963 western based on Larry McMurtry's "Horseman, Pass By" | 9 Shriek of pain   |
| 21 Prep before playing  | 10 Green valuables   |
| 22 Like a well-written thriller                               | 11 Dishes that might be prepared in Crock-Pots                         |
|   | 12 Sister brand of Ortho   |
|   | 14 Retro amusement center  |
|   | 23 Onetime Chicago Outfit establishment                                |
|   | 27 Wallops   |
|   | 28 Many first graders  |
|   | 30 Heat shields, of a sort   |
|   | 31 Treatment   |
|   | 32 Boy Scouts founder Robert ____-Powell                               |
|   | 33 Drivers in cabs   |
|   | 37 History course topics   |
|   | 38 Herring relative  |
|   | 39 Up-to-the-minute  |
|   | 40 Singer Winehouse  |
|   | 41 Druidic monument  |
|   | 45 Rafter connectors   |
|   | 47 Bird whose name means "golden"                                      |

### Solution to April 6 Puzzle

E	S	T	D	X	M	A	N	L	I	V	E
A	C	H	E	M	E	G	A	A	R	I	L
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45							46			47		
48										49		
50										51		

PUZZLE BY PATRICK BERRY

- |  |   |                                |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| 16 Minds one's place?                  | 27 Orange Free State founders                         | 35 Brush alternative           |
| 18 Doesn't go out                      | 29 Enlarge, in a way                                  | 36 When people meters are used |
| 22 Obsolete online connection provider | 30 Gaza Strip guerrillas                              | 38 Trading card figures        |
| 24 Parts of a rambling oration         | 31 Bread spread whose tagline is "Love it or hate it" | 41 Brown                       |
| 25 Popular Japanese beer               | 32 1983 Record of the Year                            | 42 Ear parts                   |
| 26 Fortune reader, maybe               | 34 Added numbers?                                     | 43 1979 revolution site        |
|  |   | 44 Tease relentlessly          |
|  |   | 46 Mate                        |



# Culture

## He’s a shake-up artist

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is the next music director of the Metropolitan Opera

BY MICHAEL COOPER

It was no soprano who let out the high-pitched “Johohohoe!” one recent afternoon as the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra rehearsed Wagner’s “Der Fliegende Holländer.” It was the conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin, leading his first rehearsal since being tapped to become the Met’s next music director.

This was an orchestra-only rehearsal, so Mr. Nézet-Séguin, 42, sang out odd bits of the text — sometimes in a tenor voice and sometimes in a decent falsetto. He paused occasionally to give instructions — “more bell-like,” “now rougher” — offering a glimpse of how he is shaping “Holländer” (“The Flying Dutchman”), which opens on April 25.

The baton does not pass often at the Metropolitan Opera, which is facing challenging times. Mr. Nézet-Séguin’s predecessor, James Levine, held the post (and near-absolute power) for four decades and only reluctantly stepped down to an emeritus position last year, after a long series of health problems. Attendance is down, and perilous negotiations with the company’s labor unions are on the horizon. The busy Mr. Nézet-Séguin, already the music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra and booked up years in advance, will not officially start at the Met until 2020.

So he gave the orchestra players a short, resolute speech in a rehearsal room three floors beneath the Met’s stage. “I said yes to this incredible challenge for the reason that I am passionate about the art form we’re doing,” he said before the downbeat. “I want even more people to love it.”

And in an interview, he made it clear that he was already shaping the company’s next era. He plans to open his first season with a new production of Verdi’s “Aida” starring Anna Netrebko and to start the following season with Ms. Netrebko as Strauss’s Salome. In an interview after the rehearsal, he also spoke of his desire to present more world premieres at the Met and to take an active role in fostering new work.

He also described his hopes for deepening the Met’s connection to New York, where Mr. Levine, 73, was a beloved but somewhat distant figure. The generational shift was apparent from the way Mr. Nézet-Séguin greeted the orchestra the day before the rehearsal: with a post on Twitter that showed a picture of one of his cats, Rafa, curled up by his score of “Der Fliegende Holländer.”

These are edited excerpts from the conversation.

**What can you tell us about your plans?**

The reach that the Met can have is like no other opera house. One example is obviously Live in HD, which reaches people internationally. But it can also



HIROYUKI ITO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Yannick Nézet-Séguin rehearsing in the basement studio at the Metropolitan Opera. The conductor, 42, is already the music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

reach next door in New York.

I’m not suggesting it’s exactly what we should be doing here, but in Philadelphia we went two ways. We went out of our walls, to more neighborhood concerts, more outdoor concerts, and were present at very important dates for the city, like the pope’s visit. But we also once in a while welcomed people from the city to pop-up concerts, announced 24 hours before, free, and everybody comes. That can be translated with the opera house for sure. The Met has to go out of its way not only to reach, but to welcome the people.

**What will your approach to repertoire be?**

I’m conducting an American piece in my first season. I want to make a statement that my role with our repertoire here in this country will be very important.

The Met for the past few years has been involved in a lot of Met premieres, which were not world premieres — and I think there’s a logic to that, because as Peter [Gelb, the company’s general manager] says very often, “When we do it the second time, the work has lived, and we can make a few adjustments, and it becomes even better.” I like this, but I am really passionate about being personally involved in every step of the birth of a new piece.

We will definitely get involved again in world premieres. And one way we found to make that work will be through collaborations with Philadelphia. We can workshop them in Philadelphia. We can even play some excerpts symphonically in Philadelphia and then have the world premiere at the Met as a fully staged opera. And I can be involved from Day 1.

**It sounds like you want a role in choosing the composers.**

I’m interested in so many composers now. Some have written for the voice, and some haven’t so far. Certainly Hans Abrahamsen, since he wrote “let me tell you.” Missy Mazzoli, with “Breaking the Waves.” That was in Philadelphia last year; that’s someone who really interests me. Andrew Norman has never really written for the voice, but he’s so brilliant, it might be fantastic to start with him from scratch. Then you get someone I really love and am very close to, Jennifer Higdon, who has written “Cold Mountain.”

**What works at the Met?**

The risk is always very high here, just because of the size of the place. However, that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t risk it. If you were to ask me “What does Yan-

nick like about productions? Am I a traditionalist, or am I modern?” I am both. I just want beauty.

**How do you see your role as music director as you work with Mr. Gelb, who holds artistic powers as well as administrative ones at the Met?**

The most immediate role is to be the chief of the orchestra and the chorus, too. They are the core of the Met. They need nurturing, they need inspiration, they need care.

Expanding on this, I’m at the center of things in terms of production decisions and casting decisions. Formally I am sharing that with Peter. It’s not about who ends up deciding what; in a way, I’m not even interested in this. I’m interested in hearing the ideas and at some point just agreeing to agree together.

**What will you do to make sure the Met can retain its quality?**

With the world in general, there is division, fear, reflexes of being for ourselves instead of sharing. If you add this to the fast-paced, hectic life; high stress; less and less culture in schools, that is quite apocalyptic if you look through one lens.

But if you look through the other lens, I think that is why we will become even more special. Not special because “oh, we’re so special,” but special because it will be something so necessary, such a welcome contrast to everyday life. A way to reconvene and regroup together in a place where we feel we’re connected to our own history, connected to our emotions, connected to what it is to be a community together. Music in general has, I think, an even greater role in the years to come.

# The musical ‘Amélie’: Comme ci, comme ça

THEATER REVIEW

This version of the film from 2001 isn’t likely to stir many passions

BY BEN BRANTLEY

For a cunning little bauble of an entertainment, the 2001 French film “Amélie” inspired uncommonly extreme responses. People were usually head over heels about it (“It’s so cute!”) or violently allergic to it (“But it’s so cute!”).

The mild-mannered musical adaptation of this movie, which opened on Broadway this week at the Walter Kerr Theater, is unlikely to stir similar passions. Featuring a book by Craig Lucas and music by Daniel Messé, with the lush-voiced Philippa Soo in the title role, it is pleasant to look at, easy to listen to and oddly recessive. It neither offends nor enthralls.

Say what you will about its cinematic prototype, directed with an auteur’s flourish by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, it had style to spare, not to mention the courage of its worldly but whimsical convictions. In other words, “Amélie” the movie was très, très français. “Amélie” the musical seems to have no nationality, or sensibility, to call its own.

Translating Mr. Jeunet’s work, not only from one language (and its culture) to another, but also from the screen to the stage, took the kind of fully committed courage that its shy titular heroine (Ms. Soo) must acquire to achieve a happy ending. So all credit to this show’s creative team, overseen by the director Pam MacKinnon, for giving coherent life to a tale that exists as much in Amélie’s imagination as in anywhere else.

“I can see the world I’m dreaming all around me,” sings Young Amélie (a charmingly poker-faced Savvy Crawford), the isolated daughter of overpro-



The whimsical title character, played by Philippa Soo, right, in “Amélie: A New Musical.”

tective but unloving parents (Manoel Felciano and Alison Cimmeth). The show’s very clever designers — including David Zinn (set and costumes), Jane Cox and Mark Barton (lighting), and Peter Nigrini (the delightful projections) — and its 13-member, multiple-cast ensemble dutifully transform dreams into flesh (and fabric, wood, paper and plastic).

For even after the Amélie of the early 1980s grows up to become the beautiful Ms. Soo of 1997, which happens 10 minutes or so into the show, and moves to Paris on her own, she continues to use her carefully composed fantasies to insulate herself from harsh and hurtful life. (During her childhood, her mom was killed before her eyes by a large man who jumped from the roof of Notre Dame Cathedral.)

Inspired by the noble image of Princess Diana, whose life and death are a subject of much discussion at the cafe all around me,” sings Young Amélie works as a waitress, she decides to do good in the world. But she must do so on her terms, which

means invisibly and, needless to say, most whimsically.

An eavesdropper on the lives of others, she anonymously restores lost property, arranges romances and mobilizes her stagnating widowed father into activity, by stealing a garden gnome from a shrine he built to his dead wife. (Yes, that’s right. And the gnome in this version, unlike the one in the movie, becomes an animated, singing character. But never mind.)

In the course of her acts of voyeuristic virtue, Amélie sets eyes on the equally fanciful Nino (Adam Chanler-Berat). He works as a clerk in a porn shop, but his life’s obsession is collecting strips of pictures that are thrown away at photo booths. If you haven’t realized Amélie has found her soul mate, the ensemble is there to cue you by opening suitcases to reveal sparkling hearts.

But how does a young woman untrained in social communication finally connect with another human being? Dufayel (Tony Sheldon), a twinkly old artist in the apartment across the way,



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ms. Soo with Adam Chanler-Berat as the equally fanciful store clerk Nino.

gently pushes her toward her destiny, with the visual aid of a Renoir painting he spends his days copying again and again. (Once more, don’t ask.)

As you have surely gathered by now, “Amélie” is aggressively cute and quirky. The film’s preciousness is balanced, to some degree, by the

philosophical resignation of its unseen narrator. Even Mr. Jeunet’s inventive, cinema-infatuated mise-en-scène is steeped in a sort of “so it goes” (or “ça va”) drollery, sentimentality plus cynicism being the quintessential French equation.

That delicate balance teeters when

it’s rendered via swelling song and skipping dance. (The musical staging and choreography are by Sam Pinkleton.) That the show’s creators are aware of the potential dangers of cloying cuteness probably accounts for its seeming so subdued, even as frolicsome puppets (by Amanda Villalobos) take the stage.

Although the lyrics (by Mr. Messé and Nathan Tysen) have an agreeable flow, the score proceeds in a smooth pastel stream that suggests pink Champagne gone a bit flat. It includes more choral “oohs” than any show since the moony “Bridges of Madison County,” along with a lot of sprightly “bum-da-bum-bums.” Only occasionally does it open up to allow Ms. Soo and Mr. Chanler-Berat to display their pop power-ballad singing chops.

The cast members refrain from over-signaling their characters’ eccentricity, which is a blessing. Unfortunately, they also tend to turn pale and watery before your eyes, like sidewalk chalk drawings in the rain.

This is true even of Ms. Soo, an actress of distinctive musical talent. She brought a rhapsodic passion to her roles in “Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812” (in its Off Broadway incarnations) and “Hamilton.” Like Audrey Tautou, who became an international star in the movie “Amélie,” she bears a resemblance to film’s all-time favorite waif-woman, Audrey Hepburn.

But while Ms. Tautou summoned Hepburn the mischievous gamin, Ms. Soo evokes Ms. Hepburn’s more stately and serene side, the princess in “Roman Holiday.” Playing withdrawn, as she does here, Ms. Soo tends to become a blank; in repose, her luminous face gives few clues to what’s going on inside Amélie’s ever-churning mind.

“The world is reaching out to catch me, but we’ve yet to really meet,” sings Young Amélie, early in the show. That disconnect between girl and world might be said to parallel that of this tentative show and its audience.



# Should art that angers remain on view?

## CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

The question is central to the debate over the painting ‘Open Casket’

BY ROBERTA SMITH

We all encounter art we don't like, that upsets and infuriates us. This doesn't deserve to be exhibited, our brains yell; it should not be allowed to exist. Still, does such aversion mean that an artwork must be removed from view — or, worse, destroyed?

This question has been at the heart of the controversy that has split the art world since the Whitney Biennial opened in mid-March. The turmoil, which has been excruciating for many people in different ways, centers on “Open Casket,” a painting in the exhibition by Dana Schutz. The work is based partly on photographs of the horrifically mutilated face of Emmett Till lying in his coffin in 1955, about 10 days after that African-American 14-year-old was brutally killed by two white men in Mississippi for supposedly flirting with a white store clerk. The artist, Ms. Schutz, is white, and her use of the images has struck many in the art world as an inappropriate appropriation that, they argue, should be removed.

The first protest was solo: The day the exhibition opened an African-American artist, Parker Bright, stood in front of it wearing a T-shirt with “Black Death Spectacle” handwritten on its back, sometimes partly blocking the view, sometimes engaging others in conversation. A photograph of Mr. Bright at the Whitney was posted on Twitter.

Objections to the painting went viral with an open letter from Hannah Black, a British-born writer and artist who lives in Berlin, co-signed by others, charging that the Till image was “black subject matter,” off limits to a white artist. Ms. Black belittled the Schutz painting as exploiting black suffering “for profit and fun” and demanded that it be not only removed from the exhibition but also destroyed.

For me, as for others, the ground kept shifting with the eruption of opinion pieces, interviews, blog and Facebook posts, and emails with friends. The discussion was upsetting, bracing, ultimately beneficial. Is the censorship, much less the destruction of art, abhorrent? Yes. Should people offended or outraged by an artwork or an exhibition mount protests? Absolutely. And might a museum have the foresight to frame a possibly controversial work of art through labels or programming? Yes, that, too. Inside the new National Museum of African American History and Culture, Till's coffin occupies a sanctuary that has become a shrine. Lonnie G. Bunch III, that museum's founding director, has said its placement “almost gives people a catharsis on all of the violence that the community has experienced over time.”

Many people found themselves in the messy middle ground, seeing both sides, grasping for precedents.

What came to my mind are earlier works of art by those who crossed ethnic lines in their depiction of social



Dana Schutz's “Open Casket” in the Whitney Biennial. The work is based partly on photographs of the mutilated face of Emmett Till lying in his coffin in 1955.



“Presentation,” from 2005, another example of the painter's focus on physical suffering.

trauma. “The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti” (1931-32), a series by Ben Shahn, a white Jewish artist, was a stinging commentary on the trial of the immigrants Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in Massachusetts during the 1920s — a politically charged case that mirrored issues surrounding ethnicity, class and corruption in the justice system.

In the same vein, it was a white Jewish schoolteacher and songwriter, Abel Meeropol, who wrote the wrenchingly beautiful “Strange Fruit,” an anti-lynching ballad made famous by Billie Holiday that in 1939 “tackled

racial hatred head on,” as David Margolick wrote in “Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights.”

Ms. Schutz's painting is not the only work of art inspired by the lynching of Till: There's a ballad that Bob Dylan wrote, and performed in 1962, titled “The Death of Emmett Till,” released belatedly in 2010.

Some crossovers have been met with historic hostility. Among the most intense was the condemnation of William Styron's “The Confessions of Nat Turner” 50 years ago by African-American writers. In “William Styron's

Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond,” the contributors charged that Styron furthered numerous racial myths, stereotypes and clichés. Since then, Styron's Pulitzer-Prize winning novel and the debate it unleashed have come to be seen as an important turning point for writers of black history, and the confrontation, as The New York Times Book Review wrote in 2008, “helped shatter the idea that there can or should be one version of ‘how slavery was.’”

Those who call for the removal of Ms. Schutz's painting today seem to align themselves with black artists who in 1997 started a letter-writing campaign against what they considered the negative stereotypes of blacks in the early work of Kara Walker, the African-American artist known for her mercilessly Swiftian portrayals of antebellum plantation life. They also appear to side with Roman Catholics who in 1999, led by then Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, protested a painting at the Brooklyn Museum by the British artist Chris Ofili. It depicted the Madonna and Child as black on a surface embellished with small cutouts from pornographic magazines and a few pieces of tennis-ball-size elephant dung, heavily varnished and decorated with beads.

Over time, artists have periodically depicted or evoked lynchings, but the injured black body is a subject or image that black artists and writers have increasingly sought to protect from misuse, especially by those who are not black. This debate flared up in 2015 when, in a reading at Brown University, the poet and performance artist

Kenneth Goldsmith — most of whose work is based on appropriation, sometimes of violent deaths — read as a poem a slightly rearranged version of the autopsy report of Michael Brown, the black 18-year-old shot and killed by a white police officer in Ferguson, Mo. Mr. Goldsmith was reviled on Twitter, accused of exploiting this material.

For a moment, Ms. Black's letter about the Schutz painting created the impression that African-American opinion on this issue was monolithic. It is not. Antwaun Sargent posted a balanced editorial on artsy.net that linked to a short, blunt Facebook statement by the artist Clifford Owens. It read in part: “I don't know anything about Hannah Black, or the artists who've co-signed her breezy and bitter letter, but I'm not down with artists who censor artists.”

On Thursday, Ms. Walker posted a cryptic message on Instagram that seemed guided by her own experiences. She stood up for Ms. Schutz's painting without making great claims for it or repudiating the protesters.

“The history of painting is full of graphic violence and narratives that don't necessarily belong to the artists own life,” Ms. Walker wrote. She concluded that an artwork can be generative regardless of how it offends or falls short, giving “rise to deeper inquiries and better art. It can only do this when it is seen.”

Once released into the public sphere, images proceed under their own power and, in a free society, they will be used by anyone drawn to them, in ways that will be judged effective, inconsequential or egregious. But artists don't ask

# Paying themselves forward

## BOOK REVIEW

**THE SPIDER NETWORK: THE WILD STORY OF A MATH GENIUS, A GANG OF BACKSTABBING BANKERS, AND ONE OF THE GREATEST SCAMS IN FINANCIAL HISTORY.** By David Enrich. *Illustrated.* 509 pp. Custom House/William Morrow. \$29.99.

BY WILLIAM D. COHAN

There have been so many financial scandals perpetrated by Wall Street bankers, traders and executives in the past decade that it's hard to keep up. Most everyone remembers the granddaddy of all scandals, of course: how for years Wall Street rewarded itself with big bonuses for issuing home mortgages to people who it knew had little chance of repaying the borrowed money, packaged up those billions of dollars of squirrely mortgages into securities and then sold them off as AAA-rated investments the world over. That's the one that helped to cause the 2008 financial crisis. Big mistake.

But there were also scandals involving banks conspiring to rig the foreign exchange markets; banks conspiring to manipulate the markets for gold and silver; banks scheming with Iran to hide billions of dollars of illegal transactions and laundering money; banks helping their customers avoid taxes; and the so-called London Whale scandal, where a JPMorgan Chase & Company trader in London cost the bank \$6.2 billion after making risky bets using depositors' money.

In “The Spider Network,” the jour-

nalist David Enrich tackles another one of these often overlooked scandals — the brazen conspiracy among a small group of Wall Street traders, brokers and their bosses, mostly based in Japan and London, to manipulate the price of Libor to ensure their big trading gains, big bonuses and big payoffs. What is Libor? you ask. Libor, or the London interbank offered rate, is supposed to be the interest rate that big banks charge one another to borrow money. More important, though, over time Libor has evolved to become the benchmark interest rate that is used to set the price of trillions of dollars of borrowed money around the world. Corporate loans, car loans, credit card loans and mortgages, among others, use Libor as the minimum borrowing rate, and then lenders add to it in order to gauge borrowers' credit risk. (Higher interest rates are supposed to compensate a lender for the greater risk of getting paid back.) By manipulating Libor, these greedy traders and bankers more than likely caused ordinary people to pay more in interest on their borrowed money than they otherwise would have done. (Plenty of lawsuits have been filed making exactly that claim.)

It was a shockingly simple but ingenious scheme. Here's how it worked, according to Enrich: Since there was no precise way to tell for sure what interest rate one bank charged another to borrow money on a short-term basis, the way Libor was set daily came down, essentially, to what a bunch of clerks at a group of European banks and brokers recorded on ledgers. These ledgers were then sent to the

British Bankers' Association, a London-based trade association, which compiled the various submissions, tossed out the high and low outliers, and then averaged the various rates together to get the “official” Libor rate that was then disseminated publicly and used to calculate the price many people and businesses paid to borrow money. (Part of the reason the scandal may seem distant for many Americans is that for most of the time during which Libor was being manipulated — from 2005 to 2010 — no American banks were involved, although eventually Citigroup asked to be included in the rate setting and was admitted to the group.)

If you could influence the clerks inside the banks and the brokers to set their Libor submissions to your liking, you would have what amounted to inside information. You could then make huge bets — tens of millions of dollars at a time — about the direction of Libor-based, short-term interest rates, knowing with a high degree of confidence that your bet would pay off. Suddenly, the traders manipulating Libor were big winners, reaping hundreds of millions of dollars in unexpected profits for their firms, and making themselves invaluable, and highly paid, star performers. Of course, the blatant scheme once again makes you wonder, for the umpteenth time, why it is so easy for people on Wall Street to lose their moral and ethical compasses.

In “The Spider Network,” Enrich makes little attempt to answer that burning question. Instead, though, he gives us a gripping narrative focused



David Enrich has turned the Libor scandal of 2012 into a gripping narrative.

on Tom Hayes, a math whiz from a dysfunctional West London family who decides early on that he wants to work on Wall Street and make a lot of money. To do that, Hayes, then based in Tokyo as a trader for UBS, the big Swiss bank, decides that he can put himself into the Wall Street elite — in terms of pay and recognition — by cajoling a diverse group of clerks and brokers to falsify their Libor submissions in ways that benefited his large interest-rate bets. We also learn that Hayes may have a mild form of Asperger's syndrome and therefore, Enrich suggests, did not fully appreciate the extent of his wrongdoing.

Along the way, we meet a stranger-than-fiction cast of characters — including a French trader Hayes nicknamed Gollum and another accomplice who grew up on a chicken farm in

Kazakhstan — who are only too willing to enable Hayes's schemes in exchange for higher commissions, bonuses and other perquisites. What's especially shocking is the willingness of Hayes's various bosses to overlook his manipulation while he was recording exceptional profits, and for as long as no regulators were wise to the scam. Of course, once various financial regulators — most notably the underfunded Commodity Futures Trading Commission, in Washington — started investigating the Libor manipulation, these same bosses were only too happy to throw Hayes under the bus, giving him in the end what he richly deserved: a jail cell.

Enrich covered the Libor scandal when he was a London-based reporter for The Wall Street Journal. His impressive reporting and writing chops are on full display in “The Spider Network,” a vastly expanded version of his original Journal series about the scandal. (He has since moved to New York, where he leads an investigative reporting unit at the newspaper.) From the start, the book reads like a fast-paced John le Carré thriller, and never lets up. In the prologue, Enrich shares the anecdote of how, in January 2013, he was “sitting on a sofa” in his “cramped” London flat when his iPhone “buzzed with a text message from a number I didn't recognize.” Tantalizingly, the text's author offered to meet Enrich the next day, but only if he was sure Enrich could be trusted. It was Tom Hayes. “This goes much much higher than me and a lot of what I know,” Hayes wrote. “Even the D.O.J. is in the dark.”

permission.

Ms. Schutz has said she painted “Open Casket” out of sympathy for the pain endured by Till's mother, Mamie Till Mobley, and the label at the Whitney has been adjusted to take this into account. In an email on Monday, Ms. Schutz wrote: “The photograph of him in his casket is almost impossible to look at. In making the painting, I relied more on listening to Mamie Till's verbal account of seeing her son, which oscillates between memory and observation.”

But Ms. Schutz has always focused her art on physical suffering expressed by traumatized bodies and skin. Occasionally, the body has been black — as in her painting of Michael Jackson on an autopsy table — but it is usually white. Her subjects include Terri Schiavo on life support; George Washington as a kind of monster with overgrown wooden teeth; and a portrait of Ukraine's former president Viktor A. Yushchenko, his face disfigured by poison. Most ambitious is the enormous “Presentation,” which shows two naked figures lying on a table being tormented and sliced up by a people in a crowd.

In a brief email exchange on Sunday, Ms. Schutz said that while making “Presentation” in 2005 she “was thinking about bodies not being seen coming home from Iraq.” She was referring to the longtime military ban, lifted in 2009, on photographing flag-draped coffins of American soldiers killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Themes of race and violence figure in art throughout this Biennial, including a painting by the black artist Henry Taylor, “The Times They Aint a Changing Fast Enough!” It depicts the fatal police shooting of Philando Castile.

Some might say the events and their depictions are apples and oranges. Mr. Castile was not brutally disfigured. Till's torture more than 60 years ago, and his image, have become a nexus of inexpressible pain and anger for generations of Americans.

But by remaking these tragic images as paintings, both artists have given them a monumentality and a hand-wrought physicality that photographs generally do not attain. They have made them more present while keeping some distance. Mr. Taylor's Castile has the noble face of a Greek statue. Ms. Schutz has been faulted for “abstracting” Till's gruesome wounds, yet her sliding brushwork guides our eyes away from them, suggesting a kind of shocked visual reflex.

But perhaps most important, the paintings by Mr. Taylor and Ms. Schutz share an all-too-American subject, that of hateful, corrosive white racism. Who owns that?

The Schutz painting and the debate around it are already a historical unit, one that seems new to the art world, and one that will change things. Unlike the Styron controversy, it has unfolded on the internet at warp speed with thousands of people arguing about it almost in real time. Unlike Mr. Goldsmith's poem, the cause of the furor is not ephemeral; the painting has a kind of equal weight with the debate. They are each in their own way extremely present, for people to consider going forward. “Open Casket” will not be destroyed but by now it is also beyond destruction.

Alas, not until after the book concludes, way back in the note on sources and then in the acknowledgments, do we learn the extent of the help that Hayes provided to Enrich. At first, and against the advice of his lawyers and his wife, who was then herself an attorney at the tony Wall Street law firm Shearman & Sterling, Hayes “doubled and tripled down” on the “gamble” to share his version of events with Enrich. Nearly everything Hayes conveyed to Enrich was “off the record.” But eventually, several months before Hayes's trial began, Enrich persuaded both him and his wary wife to allow him the use of their story “in full cinematic detail.”

To Enrich's considerable credit, he does his very best to remain objective about the Libor scandal and Hayes's principal role in causing it to happen. (It turned out the practice of manipulating Libor was more widespread than what Hayes and his various accomplices were doing.) But Enrich is human, and it's clear that Hayes has captivated him. Not in a bad way, mind you, and not in a way that makes you question the accuracy of what is presented. But just enough so that one can't help wondering how much Enrich's version of the Libor scandal would have differed without Hayes's considerable help, as Enrich writes, texting “at all times of day or night” and “regularly meeting me at run-down pubs and train station cafes.”

*William D. Cohan, a special correspondent at Vanity Fair, is the author of the recently published “Why Wall Street Matters.”*



TRAVEL



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUSTIN MOTT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Clockwise from left, children playing on a dock along the Mekong River, where passengers can catch a boat to Don Khon, Laos; waiting for passengers at the River Resort, which offers sunset cruises; and the central market in Pakse.

The ebb and flow of a shrine in Laos

EXPLORER

Along the Mekong River, an ancient Khmer temple lures adventurous tourists

BY EDWARD WONG

Deep in the folds of the hill, up steep stone stairs flanked with frangipani trees, stood the inner sanctum of the ancient Khmer temple of Vat Phou.

We faced the mountain ridge, our backs to the waters of the Mekong River, looking for the chamber. From this angle, it was hidden. But other parts of the temple had begun revealing themselves to us. Down here, along the rutted stone path leading to the stairs, we watched as a construction crane lifted a block onto the wall of one of the outer chambers.

To our right, a few carvers chipped away at other blocks with small tools. Through their hands flowed the tales of Hindu mythology, the millenniums-old narratives of gods in love and war that had originated on the Indian subcontinent and traveled to distant Java and to Khmer temples across Cambodia and Laos. Now that transmission of stories and beliefs and ideas was continuing here, like the flow of the Mekong, in the shadow of one of the most beautiful of those temples.

Built more than 1,000 years ago at the high point of an axis stretching from a range of mountains down to the Mekong, Vat Phou is one of the most sacred temples of the vanished Khmer kingdoms. The Khmer ruled a wide swath of Southeast Asia from the ninth to the 15th centuries, and their dedication to art and architecture is best embodied in the famous temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Lesser known and distinct from Angkor in its intimacy is Vat Phou, sometimes written in English as Wat Phu, which has been designated a World Heritage site by a United Nations agency.

To see the temple and this stretch of the Mekong, my wife, 3-year-old daughter and I based ourselves for three nights at a new riverside hotel outside the town of Champasak. This was the middle leg of a three-country whirlwind trip through Southeast Asia that we regarded as our farewell to the region.

I had been reporting in China for The New York Times for eight years, and we had plans to leave in the coming year. We had a special attachment to Southeast Asia — my wife, Tini, is Vietnamese American and worked for seven years for The Associated Press in Vietnam before moving to China. And while in China, as a couple and then a family, we had spent much of our vacation time exploring the region. For many foreigners and Chinese ground down by living in China's polluted, crowded and clogged megacities, the beaches, rivers and hills of tropical Southeast Asia provided a much-needed escape hatch.

Neither Tini nor I had been to southern Laos before, so it made sense to choose it as the centerpiece of our final Southeast Asia vacation on this tour. Even if Laos was an authoritarian state, it was still the land of the Mekong, with palm trees lining the riverbanks, freshwater dolphins swimming between islets and fishermen casting nets over the side of skiffs. The pace of life was slower, much slower, than that of Beijing.

But it would have been wrong to think of the region as timeless. The restoration of Vat Phou that we witnessed belied notions of ancient ruins lost in eternal mists. And it was there, near the entrance to the temple complex, that we discovered we were not the only

escapees from the rush of development in China. As we set foot that morning on the eastern end of the pathway leading up to the inner sanctum, we met a Chinese couple from Shanghai who were in the middle of a monthlong trip through Laos with their 6-year-old daughter.

Our daughter, Aria, instantly began following the older girl around. We told the family we were fleeing the notorious Beijing pollution.

“The situation is very bad in Shanghai, too,” the father said.

It was rare to see a Chinese family traveling alone in this corner of Southeast Asia, and I wondered whether they were a harbinger for a new wave of tourists. French travelers were ubiquitous here and had been so for more than a century, given France's colonial history in so-called Indochina, but Chinese travelers were rare, even though China bordered Laos.

We had begun our two-week trip with a flight from Beijing to Chiang Mai in Thailand to visit friends there, then entered southern Laos with a plan to spend one week before meeting other friends on a beach in Vietnam. We crossed the Thai-Laos border near the Laotian town of Pakse. There, on a sleepy street (towns in Laos only have sleepy streets), we had lunch at Dok Mai, a restaurant run by an Italian, Corrado. He told us he had tried living and working in India, but that had been tough.



A monk reciting early morning prayers in Champasak, Laos.

“Pakse chose me,” he said.

A young man sent from the River Resort then drove us the half-hour from Pakse to the hotel, built along the Mekong.

We found ourselves in the middle of nowhere, but that was the point. The River Resort consisted of two-story luxury buildings along the west bank of the Mekong, with a large room on each floor. There were two riverside swimming pools on the grounds. We had a balcony room overlooking the river. The entire wall and door facing the river was made of glass.

We could wake up in bed gazing across the waters to the sunrise. At sunset, a golden light bathed the river and trees and stones.

It was one of the most stunning hotels in which we had stayed in Southeast Asia. We would have enjoyed spending an entire day just on the riverbank, but Khmer civilization beckoned us. In the mountains looming to our west, hidden by jungle, lay Vat Phou.

The next morning, we hired a taxi to drive us the 15 minutes to the temple. Along the range of hills, we could make out one peak that stood above the others. The builders of Vat Phou had noticed this and proclaimed it a natural lingam of Shiva.

After we met the family from Shanghai, we walked between rows of trees and up the stone steps to the inner sanctum. Along the main walkway, we passed a seven-headed naga statue draped with yellow garlands. A bell rang somewhere.

Inside the inner temple, a Thai family

made offerings to a statue of the Buddha. They had bought incense sticks from a woman outside the temple. They prayed with the lit sticks. Sweet smoke drifted through the temple.

Around the sanctum were lintels carved with ornate scenes from Hindu mythology. One showed the god Indra atop a three-headed elephant. Another depicted deities taking part in the churning of the Ocean of Milk, an image that I had also seen a decade earlier at Angkor. Then there was the scene of Krishna tearing his uncle Kamsa in half.

Outside, more worshipers were arriving. We walked along the slope of the mountain behind the temple. On the site were the ruins of a small library, a sacred spring and a cave shrine. At a cistern, Laotians anointed themselves with water that flowed from mountain springs.

The Shanghainese girl told us to follow her, and she showed us a crocodile-shaped rock that our guidebook said might have been used for human sacrifices before the age of Angkor.

It was the wider natural surroundings that cast a spell on us. Atop the hill, starting down the axis and toward the Mekong to the east, I could see the many frangipani flowers below, bursts of white on the brown landscape. The temple commanded the scene, as its cousins at Angkor did in the Cambodian jungles.

The next morning, we arranged with our hotel to take a boat over to the island of Don Daeng, in the middle of the Mekong.

We had brought bicycles with us, and I strapped Aria to my back with a baby sling. A herd of water buffalo wandered languidly down the sandy beach to drink at the river.

We biked along dirt paths to villages. There were five main ones on the island, with a total population of 3,000. Locals walked from one to another or sat on the rear of trundling tractors. Outside their homes, women fried up rice cakes in pans.

At lunchtime, we stopped at La Folie, a French-run colonial-style lodge. While our hotel was all modernist glass and concrete, La Folie had polished wooden panels on the floors and walls. It overlooked the river and faced the spine of mountains to the west. We could see Vat Phou in the hills.

Top, a smiling 29-year-old man from Pakse, was working in the dining room. He had just started there one month earlier. When he found out I was from the United States, he asked about the Ultra Music Festival in Miami — Had I heard of it? Had I been there? I shook my head. “I really want to go,” he said. “My favorite D.J.s from around the world go there.”

He said that was his goal, to be a D.J., and that there were two bars in Pakse where D.J.s played.

Timeless Asia, indeed.

That evening, we took a sunset boat ride on the Mekong with a Dutch couple. Over canapés and bottles of Beer Laos, we spoke with Kanh, a 25-year-old hotel worker accompanying us. He had begun working at River Resort three months earlier.

He was from Pakse, he said, the son of a Vietnamese mother and a father who was Laotian and Chinese. While his mother had been born here, her parents were from Hue, the old imperial capital in central Vietnam. They had fled the fall of South Vietnam to Communist forces in 1975, only to eventually settle in another Communist country.

“He’s the original mixed Southeast Asian,” Tini said with a laugh. Her ancestors, too, were from Hue, and she and her family had also fled Vietnam in 1975. They ended up deep in the American South. So went the vagaries of history.

The next morning, we took a ferry

across the river, followed by a bus to a river port to the south, where we hopped on a wooden boat crammed with backpackers for a ride to what is known as the Four Thousand Islands area, or Si Phan Don, on the border with Cambodia. This stretch of the Mekong was filled with small islets and rocks. Waterfalls abounded. It was here that French colonists were unable to navigate ships up the Mekong to southwest China without building a small railroad across Don Khon and Don Det.

We stayed for a couple of nights on the northern side of Don Khon. We got a riv-

erside room at Sengahloune Villa, a more rustic place than the River Resort. The narrow waterways, wooden skiffs and palm trees swaying among the islands reminded me of the backwaters of Kerala in southern India and the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, where the Mekong emptied into the South China Sea.

We spent our days biking around the island and watching the sunset from the old French railroad bridge next to our hotel.

One afternoon, we hired a small boat off the southern tip of Don Khon, near the old railway tracks, to see the area’s

famous freshwater dolphins. As we strained from our boat to catch a glimpse of the dolphins, we saw a group of monks in saffron robes sitting in a skiff. They had come over from Cambodia. Their boat flew the Cambodian flag, with an image of the main temple at Angkor Wat.

They sat there with umbrellas to shield themselves from the sun and pointed whenever the head or back of a dolphin poked above the water for a few seconds. The river flowed onward, passing around their boat and continuing for hundreds of miles to the ocean far away.



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