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Will chaos or defiance rule in Iran?

Christopher de Bellaigue

OPINION

LONDON Almost since the beginning of this millennium, Iran has been an island of calm amid instability and violence. Afghanistan, its neighbor to the east, descended into chaos following the American-led invasion of 2001; Iraq, across its western border, suffered the same fate after 2003. Eight years later, in 2011, Syria erupted into civil war.

Although Shiite Iran has been involved in the conflicts that have ensued in all three of those neighbors — sending men, money and arms to advance the fight against Sunni jihadists and their sponsors in the Gulf — its own territory has remained remarkably untouched. Iran has been a functioning nation state where the central authorities have enjoyed a monopoly of force and people out of uniform have been overwhelmingly unarmed. Last year, on a trip to Europe, the country's reform-minded president, Hassan Rouhani, boasted that Iran was "the safest, the most stable country" in the Middle East.

In the view of many Iranians, wherever they stand on the country's reformist-conservative axis, any lack of political or social freedom in the Islamic Republic is a price worth paying for a secure state, and they have dreaded the day when — if — that security would come to an end.

It is possible that June 7 was that day — when the ordinary business of a Tehran morning was broken by suicide attacks and the idea that the Islamic Republic was exempt from sectarian murder was revealed to be false. About 10:30 a.m., the modern, sloping Parliament building, a symbol of the democratic element in the Islamic Republic's complicated power structure, along with the more traditionally conceived mausoleum of the regime's clerical founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, were the object of coordinated assaults by gunmen and suicide bombers.

At least 17 people were killed in the terrorist attacks, along with the six assailants, one of them female; more than 40 people were injured. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks, and Iranian social media were flooded with expressions of grief and worry, denunciations of the attackers' barbarism, and howls of defiance: the mood music of another pitiless DE BELLAIGUE, PAGE 10



Farmers below the Chishi Bridge don't expect the colossal structure to affect them much. "It does nothing for me but must be useful for the country," one said.

China's bridges to nowhere

CHISHI, CHINA

Dazzling structures carry little traffic and are mired in debt and corruption

BY CHRIS BUCKLEY

Soaring over a lush valley in southern China, the Chishi Bridge is a 1.4-mile-long marvel of concrete and steel. Four piers, like graceful tuning forks as tall as skyscrapers, secure cables suspending a four-lane expressway 610 feet above fields of corn and rice.

Squinting up from a dirt road below, Gu Tianyong, a 66-year-old farmer, pondered the colossus, which is a shortcut linking southwestern China with the east coast.

"The government wouldn't have built it if it was useless," he said. "It does nothing for me but must be useful for the country."

The Chishi Bridge is one of hundreds of dazzling bridges erected across the country in recent years. Chinese officials celebrate them as proof that they can roll out infrastructure bigger, better and higher than any other country can. China now boasts the world's highest bridge, the longest bridge, the highest



A driver on the Chishi Bridge finding open road ahead. Since it opened in October, the bridge and the expressway it serves have been underused.

rail trestle and a host of other superlatives, often besting its own efforts.

The eye-popping structures have slashed travel times in some areas, made business easier and generated a sizable slice of the country's economy, laying a foundation, in theory at least, for decades of future growth.

But as the bridges and the express-

ways they span keep rising, critics say construction has become an end unto itself. Fueled by government-backed loans and urged on by the big construction companies and officials who profit from them, many of the projects are piling up debt and breeding corruption while producing questionable transportation benefits.

For all its splendor, the Chishi Bridge, in Hunan Province, exemplifies the seamy underside of China's infrastructure boom. Its cost, \$300 million, was more than 50 percent over budget. The project struggled with delays and a serious construction accident was tarnished by government corruption. Since it opened in October, the bridge and the expressway it serves have been underused and buried in debt.

"Infrastructure is a double-edged sword," said Atif Ansar, a management professor at the University of Oxford who has studied China's infrastructure spending. "It's good for the economy, but too much of this is pernicious. 'Build it and they will come' is a dictum that doesn't work, especially in China, where there's so much built already."

A study that Mr. Ansar helped write said fewer than a third of the 55 Chinese highway and rail projects he examined were "genuinely economically productive," while the rest contributed more to debt than to transportation needs. Unless such projects are reined in, the study warned, "poorly managed infrastructure investments" could push the nation into financial crisis.

In the country that built the Great Wall, major feats of infrastructure have long been a point of pride. China has produced engineering coups like the CHINA, PAGE 7

Britons feel pinch as 'Brexit' approaches

LONDON

Economy losing steam as consumers grapple with increasing prices

BY PETER S. GOODMAN

Right about now, Eddie Stanton, a construction worker, would normally be making preparations to jet off to a sandy stretch of the Mediterranean for a summer holiday. Not this year.

In the year since Britain's shocking vote to abandon the European Union, the British pound has surrendered 13 percent of its value against the euro, raising the cost of cherished European vacations. Food from other lands — meat, cheese, wine — is more expensive, too. So is gasoline.

Accelerating inflation may help explain the stunning electoral rebuke of Prime Minister Theresa May and her governing Conservative Party, as well as the unexpected strengthening of the Labour Party, in Thursday's parliamentary elections. Consumers are grappling with rising prices, and wages have not kept pace.

The economy is weakening. Mr. Stanton, 51, who lives in northeast London, has traditionally voted for the Conservatives, yet this time he gave his support to the U.K. Independence Party, the fringe party that has long advocated that Britain ditch Europe. Never mind that the consequences of that position, the falling pound, have yielded the indignity at hand — trading the sun-splashed beaches of Greece for the shaded parks of south London.

"Travel is more expensive," Mr. Stanton said. "I'm just going to stay home."

Here is the economic backdrop for the tumultuous period of political uncertainty now unfolding. Mrs. May and her party have lost their governing majority just as Britain is set to negotiate terms in its tricky divorce with Europe — "Brexit," as it is widely known.

As the Conservatives try to hang on to control of the government, a weakening economy is likely to intensify the sense of grievance among ordinary Britons who have not gained the spoils from REBREXIT, PAGE 7



Inflation may have hurt Prime Minister Theresa May in the election.

From 'Prozac Nation' to United States of Xanax



For many Americans, anxiety is increasingly a shared cultural experience that feeds on alarmist CNN graphics and metastasizes through social media.

It's a medical condition, but anxiety is looking like a sociological one, too

BY ALEX WILLIAMS

This past winter, Sarah Fader, a 37-year-old social media consultant in New York City who has generalized anxiety disorder, texted a friend in Oregon about an impending visit, and when a quick response failed to materialize, she posted on Twitter to her 16,000-plus followers. "I don't hear from my friend for a day — my thought, they don't want to be my friend anymore," she wrote, appending the hashtag #ThisIsWhatAnxietyFeelsLike.

Thousands of people were soon offering up their own examples under the hashtag; some were retweeted more than 1,000 times. You might say Ms. Fader struck a nerve. "If you're a human being living in 2017 and you're not anxious," she said on the telephone, "there's something wrong with you."

It was 70 years ago that the poet W. H. Auden published "The Age of Anxiety," a six-part verse framing modern humankind's condition over the course of more than 100 pages, and now it seems we are too rattled to even sit down and read something that long (or as the internet would say, t;dr).

Anxiety has become Americans' everyday angst, our thrumming lifeblood: not just on Twitter (the ur-anxious medium, with its constant updates), but also in blogger diaries, celebrity confessional (E! tv, Beyoncé?), a hit Broadway show ("Dear Evan Hansen"), a magazine start-up (Anxiety, a mental health publication based in Berkeley, Calif.), buzzed-about television series (like "Maniac," a coming Netflix series by Cary Fukunaga), the lauded "True Detective" director and, defying our abbreviated attention spans, on bookshelves.

With two new volumes analyzing the condition ("On Edge: A Journey Through Anxiety" by Andrea Petersen, and "Hill, Anxiety" by Kat Kinsman) fol- ANXIETY, PAGE 2

HAPPY SPORT

Chopard

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PAGE TWO

A new age of anxiety

ANXIETY, FROM PAGE 1

lowing recent best sellers by Scott Stossel ("My Age of Anxiety") and Daniel Smith ("Monkey Mind"), the anxiety memoir has become a literary subgenre to rival the depression memoir, firmly established since William Styron's "Darkness Visible" and Elizabeth Wurtzel's "Prozac Nation" in the 1990s, and continuing today with Daphne Merkin's "This Close to Happy."

While to epidemiologists both anxiety and depression are medical conditions, anxiety is starting to seem like a sociological condition, too: a shared cultural experience that feeds on alarmist CNN graphics and metastasizes through social media. As depression was to the 1990s — summoned forth by Kurt Cobain, "Listening to Prozac," Seattle fog and Temple of the Dog dirges on MTV, viewed from under a flannel blanket — so it seems we have entered a new age of anxiety. Monitoring our heart rates. Swiping anxiously at our iPhones. Filling meditation studios in an effort to calm our racing thoughts.

According to data from the National Institute of Mental Health, some 38 percent of girls ages 13 through 17, and 26 percent of boys, have an anxiety disorder. On university campuses, anxiety is running well ahead of depression as the most common mental health concern, according to a 2016 national study of more than 150,000 students by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Pennsylvania State University. Meanwhile, the number of web searches involving the term has nearly doubled over the last five years, according to Google Trends. (The trendline for "depression" was relatively flat.)

TO KAI WRIGHT, the host of the politically themed podcast "The United States of Anxiety," which had its debut last fall on the publicly funded radio station WNYC, such numbers are all too explicable. "We've been at war since 2003, we've seen two recessions," Mr. Wright said. "Just digital life alone has been a massive change. Work life has changed. Everything we consider to be normal has changed. And nobody seems to trust the police in charge to tell them where they fit into the future."

For "On Edge," Ms. Petersen, a long-time reporter for The Wall Street Journal, traveled back to her alma mater, the University of Michigan, to talk to students about stress. One student, who has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or A.D.H.D., along with anxiety and depression, said the pressure began building when she was in high school. "I realized she had to be the top of her class to get into high school honors classes, which she needed to get into Advanced Placement classes, which she needed to get into college."

This was not the stereotypical experience of Generation X.

The online Urban Dictionary defines a slacker as "someone who is being intelligent, doesn't really feel like doing anything," and that certainly captures the ripped-jean trope of 1990s Xers. Their sense of tragic superiority was percolated by Edna St. Vincent Millay's ironic Troy in "Reality Bites," who asserted that life is "a random lottery of meaningless tragedy and a series of near escapes," so one must take pleasure in the things that are. "Controlled neurosis" is the common characteristic of most "highly successful entrepreneurs," according to Mr. Trump (or Tony



At universities, anxiety is running well ahead of depression as the most common mental health concern, according to one study, and the number of web searches involving the term has nearly doubled over the last five years.

was a constant and Ms. Wurtzel's "Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America," about an anhedonic Harvard graduate from a broken home, dressed as if she could have played bass in Hole, was a bible.

The millennial equivalent of Ms. Wurtzel is, of course, Lena Dunham, who recently told an audience at the 82nd Street Y in Manhattan, "I don't remember a time not being anxious." Having suffered debilitating anxiety since age 4, the creator, writer and star of the anxiety-ridden "Girls" recalled how she "missed 74 days of 10th grade" because she was afraid to leave her house. This was around the time that the largest act of terrorism in United States history unfolded near the Tribeca neighborhood of Manhattan where she grew up.

IF ANXIETY IS THE MELODY of the moment, President Trump is a fitting maestro. Unlike his predecessor, Barack Obama, a low-key ironist from the mellow shores of Oahu, the incumbent is a fast-talking agitator from New York, a city of 8.5 million people and, seemingly, three million shrinks.

In its more benign form, only a few beats from ambition, anxiety is, in part, what made Mr. Trump as a businessman. In his real estate career, enough was never enough. "Controlled neurosis" is the common characteristic of most "highly successful entrepreneurs," according to Mr. Trump (or Tony

Schwartz, his ghostwriter) in the 1987 book, "The Art of the Deal." "I don't say that this trait leads to a happier life, or a better life," he adds, "but it's great when it comes to getting what you want."

Everything had to be bigger, bolder, gold-er. And it made him as a politician, spinning nightmare tales on the stump about an America under siege from Mexican immigrants and Muslim terrorists.

But if Mr. Trump became president because voters were anxious, as a recent Atlantic article would have readers believe, other voters have become more anxious because he became president. Even those not distressed by the content of his messages might find the manner in which they are dispensed jarring.

"In addition to the normal chaos of being a human being, there is what almost feels like weaponized uncertainty thrown at us on a daily basis," said Ms. Kinsman, the "El, Anxiety" author. "It's coming so quickly and messily, some of it straight from the president's own fingers."

Indeed, Mr. Trump is the first politician in world history whose preferred mode of communication is the 3 a.m. tweet — evidence of a sleepless body, a restless mind, a worrier.

Some have suggested that Twitter is a sort of crowdsourced poetry, but how many millions of miles is it from Auden: a cacophony of voices, endlessly shouting over each other, splintering what's

left of a "national discussion" into millions of tiny shards.

"We live in a country where we can't even agree on a basic set of facts," said Dan Harris, an ABC news correspondent and a "Nightline" anchor who found a side career as an anti-anxiety guru with the publication of his 2014 best-seller, "10% Happier."

The political mess has been "a topic of conversation and a source of anxiety in nearly every clinical case that I have worked with since the presidential election," said Robert Duff, a psychologist in California. He wrote the 2014 book "Hardcore Self-Help," whose subtitle proposes to conquer anxiety in the coarse language that has also defined a generation.

The Cold War is back, now starring China, North Korea and Russia, inspiring headline-induced visions of mushroom clouds not seen in our collective nightmares since that Sunday evening in 1953 when everyone watched "The Day After" on ABC. And television was, as Marshall McLuhan famously wrote, a cool medium. Our devices are literally hot, warming our laps and our palms.

"In our always-on culture, checking your phone is the last thing you do before you go to sleep and the first thing you do if you wake up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom," Mr. Harris said. "Just today, I got an alert on my phone about the collapsing Arctic ice shelf. That's scary as hell."

Push notifications. Apocalyptic headlines. Rancorous tweets. But if social media can lead to anxiety, it can help relieve it.

Push notifications. Apocalyptic headlines. Rancorous tweets. Countless studies have found links between online culture and anxiety. But if social media can lead to anxiety, it can help relieve it.

THE "WE HAVE NO SECRETS HERE" ethos of online discourse has helped bring anxiety into the open and allowed its clinical sufferers to band together in a virtual group therapy session. "This is What Anxiety Feels Like," which helped turn anxiety — a disorder that afflicts some 40 million American adults — into a kind of rights movement.

"People with anxiety were previously labeled dramatic," said Ms. Fader, the social media consultant, who also runs a mental health advocacy organization called Stigma Fighters. "Now we are seen as human beings with a legitimate mental health challenge."

We survived previous heydays of anxiety without a 24-hour digital support system. Weren't the Woody Allen '70s the height of neurosis, with their five-days-a-week analysis sessions and encounter groups? What about the '50s, with their duck-and-cover songs and

backyard bomb shelters?

That era "was the high-water mark of Freudian psychoanalysis, and any symptom or personality trait was attributed to an anxiety neurosis," said Peter D. Kramer, the Brown University psychiatrist who wrote the landmark 1990s best seller "Listening to Prozac." "And then there were substantial social spurts to anxiety: the World Wars, the atom bomb. If you weren't anxious, you were scarcely normal."

Scott Stossel, editor of The Atlantic, whose "My Age of Anxiety" helped kick off the anxiety memoir boom three years ago, urged people to pause, not for deep, cleansing breaths but for historical perspective.

"Every generation, going back to Periclean Greece, to second-century Rome, to the Enlightenment, to the Georgians and to the Victorians, believes itself to be the most anxious age ever," Mr. Stossel said.

That said, the Americans of 2017 can make a pretty strong case that they are gold medalists in the Anxiety Olympics.

"There is widespread inequality of wealth and status, general confusion over gender roles and identities, and of course the fear, dormant for several decades, that ICBMs will rain nuclear fire on American cities," Mr. Stossel said. "The silver lining for those with nervous disorders is that we can welcome our previously non-neurotic fellow citizens into the anxious fold."

A philosopher examines Israelis' inner conflict

PROFILE
JERUSALEM

BY ISABEL KERSHNER

Micah Goodman, a popular Israeli philosopher of Jewish thought, hates to be labeled. When he lectures about Zionism, he says, people assume he is a conservative. When he speaks of liberalism and humanism, he is accused of being a leftist.

So he was hoping his new book, "Catch 67," which deals with the Israelis' inner struggle over their conflict with the Palestinians, would break down the monoliths of ideas commanded by the Israeli right and left, open up a healthier national dialogue and give expression to the largely unheard Israeli mainstream. Then, he thought, he could get back to his academic life of reading, writing and teaching.

But wading into the political quagmire, Mr. Goodman, 42, a boyish-looking, first-generation Israeli with a cheerful disposition, has become an unlikely prophet of the nation's angst.

He has also become a lightning rod for criticism, including from Ehud Barak, the former prime minister and army chief.

Published in Hebrew in March, the book has topped Israel's nonfiction best-seller lists for weeks and has driven a national discussion right at a charged moment: as Israel is observing the 50th anniversary of its victory in the June 1967 Middle East war and the 50th year



Micah Goodman hoped his new book, "Catch 67," would encourage a healthier dialogue and give voice to the Israeli mainstream. But now he is a lightning rod for criticism.

of its occupation of the territories where most of the world wants to see the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

It may be the hottest read in the country right now, but it is not a cheery one. Its prognosis is that there is no possibility of any comprehensive final peace deal between the Israelis and Palestinians.

"The reality now is that wars are not decisive," Mr. Goodman said in an interview. "Peace is not, either. There are no

more 1967 victories. There is no ultimate peace."

The book's argument centers on a paradox that Mr. Goodman says poses an existential threat to Israel.

For years, polls have shown that a majority of Israelis would opt to leave the West Bank and end military control over the lives of millions of Palestinians in order to ensure Israel's future as an internationally accepted state with a clear enough Jewish majority to prevent its becoming a binational country.

"The reality now is that wars are not decisive. Peace is not, either. There are no more 1967 victories."

Yet the same majority of Israelis believe they cannot withdraw from the highlands of the West Bank, the heartland of any future Palestinian state. They distrust Palestinian intentions and fear for the security of a slimmed-down Israel with what many describe as indefensible borders. So, Mr. Goodman argues, both remaining in the West Bank and leaving it could spell the end of the Zionist project.

The Israeli right and left have long been defined, and increasingly polarized, by their hawkish and dovish stances on the Palestinian issue. But the author says he is giving voice to a growing body of confused Israeli centrists, each involved in a deeply personal struggle and most appearing to have given up both the dream of peace and on the dream of a Greater Israel.

"The Israelis in the center are not between the right and left," Mr. Goodman said. "They are both right and left. That's why we are so perplexed."

Born in Jerusalem in 1974 to parents who had emigrated a year before from the United States, Mr. Goodman was embarrassed as a teenager by his family's diversity, but he has come to embrace it.

His mother, who converted to Juda-

ism, came from a pious Roman Catholic family. One uncle was a priest, another a personal adviser to Pope John Paul II. Still, Mr. Goodman grew up in an Orthodox Jewish household — but being a kind of an accidental Jew, as he put it, he began his own odyssey in search of meaning.

Now he is a researcher at the Hartman Institute, a center for Jewish scholars in Jerusalem, and the director of Ein Prat, a pluralistic beit midrash, or center of Jewish study for young adults from all backgrounds, in the desert near Jericho in the West Bank.

Mr. Goodman lives nearby with his wife and two 8-year-old daughters in the Jewish settlement of Kfar Adumim, but he said: "I would rather not be called a settler. It's where I live, not who I am."

His three previous Israeli best sellers, including the Hebrew version of "Maimonides and the Book That Changed Judaism," dealt with ancient canonical texts. In "Catch 67," he gives the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a kind of Talmudic treatment, where everything and its opposite are true.

The treatise charts the main, competing ideological movements of Zionism — supporting the establishment and de-facto Jewish state — and how they have reached deadlock.

The Zionist Revisionist right once combined nationalism with liberal values, promising an Israel that would grant all its residents the vote and equal rights, regardless of nationality. But most now acknowledge that the

demographics of occupation have made that aspiration untenable — Palestinians are close to outnumbering Jewish Israelis between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

But the vision of Messianic redemption suffered a blow with Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. Mr. Goodman argues, Rocket attacks against Israel from Gaza became more intense, and the right's arguments for remaining in the West Bank have focused increasingly on security.

The Israeli left, for its part, swapped its original socialist agenda for land-for-peace after the conquests of 1967. But the peace camp dwindled after the suicide bombings of the second Palestinian intifada and because of what many Israelis perceive as the Palestinians' inability to deliver a deal.

Examining the political, ethical, religious and security aspects of the conundrum, Mr. Goodman's book gives equal weight to arguments on all sides. But while he allows that there is a dispute over the legal status of the West Bank land and whether it is truly occupied, he takes a clear stand when it comes to robbing the Palestinians of their freedom.

The occupation does not lead to a lack of morality, he wrote. "The occupation itself is immoral."



BACK IN BLACK

With a boat that can truly fly, Emirates Team New Zealand is at full power for its pursuit of the America's Cup. It may be sailing's oldest trophy, but the Kiwi crew has its newest and fastest design on the water. Matching it for looks and innovation, OMEGA presents the Seamaster Planet Ocean "Deep Black" ETNZ.

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World

He hunted Putin’s foes, posing as a reporter

KIEV, UKRAINE

Assassin tried to kill couple who were fighting to keep Ukraine whole

BY ANDREW E. KRAMER

Ukrainians have long struggled with fake news from Russia, but earlier this month they discovered something even more insidious: a fake journalist.

The man was tall and dapper. He wore a dark suit and spoke with a French accent. When he met politicians in Kiev, he introduced himself as Alex Werner, a reporter with the French newspaper *Le Monde*.

“He was elegant, calm and confident,” recalled Amina Okuyeva, who is a minor celebrity in Ukraine because she served with her husband as a volunteer soldier in the war against separatists in the eastern part of the country. Mr. Werner had interviewed her several times.

It was midway through one of those purported interviews, in a terrifying flash of gunpowder, that Mr. Werner’s true identity came to light: He was, in fact, a Chechen assassin, the Ukrainian authorities now say.

Under the guise of a journalist, the assassin, Artur Denisultanov-Kurmakayev, tried to murder Ms. Okuyeva and her husband, Adam Osmayev, Ukraine’s Interior Ministry said.

The plot went awry because Ms. Okuyeva was also armed, and the details of the attack and its aftermath are now shedding light on Kiev’s role as a testing ground for what Ukrainian officials say are hybrid war activities by Russia, including assassinations.

The attack was the third high-profile killing or attempted killing in Kiev that the Ukrainian authorities have attributed to the Russian security services, but the first in which the accused killer impersonated a journalist.

In a statement published June 3, *Le Monde* said it “wants to stress that none of its journalists are in Ukraine at the moment and that its staff does not include an Alex Werner. *Le Monde* firmly condemns any impersonation of its journalists or of its title, for whatever purpose.”

In 2006, the Russian government legalized targeted killings abroad of people posing terrorist threats, resuming a Soviet-era practice. But the Kremlin has never acknowledged using the authority granted under the law and has vehemently denied specific accusations, including those in Ukraine.

As “Mr. Werner,” Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev had lived for more than a year in Kiev, mingling with politicians and anti-Russian activists before the shooting on June 1.

The cover was good but not flawless,



Adam Osmayev with his wife, Amina Okuyeva, outside the hospital in Kiev where they were treated after an assassination attempt made during a sham interview for a newspaper.

Ms. Okuyeva said in an interview, her first with a foreign news organization since the attempted murder. She was accompanied by two bodyguards who were on high alert throughout the interview.

One indication that Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev was not who he said he was: He always carried a notebook but never bothered to write in it, Ms. Okuyeva said. He wore an expensive-looking suit, also a hint that something may have been amiss.

There was nothing unusual in the request for an interview, however. “The press often asked for interviews,” Ms. Okuyeva said. “The media loves to write about us.”

Ms. Okuyeva and Mr. Osmayev, both ethnic Chechens, are well known in Ukraine. In 2012, the Russian government accused Mr. Osmayev of plotting to kill Vladimir V. Putin, who was then the prime minister. Mr. Osmayev was arrested in Ukraine, but his extradition

to Russia was blocked by the European Court of Human Rights.

After the Ukrainian revolution in 2014, he was released, and he and his wife joined a unit of ethnic Chechens fighting in the war in the east, the Dzhokhar Dudayev battalion. Mr. Osmayev has been its commander since 2015. Ms. Okuyeva served as a sniper, wearing a camouflaged head scarf at the front.

Gaining fame as enemies of Russia carried risks. The couple knew they were targets. “Putin is personally interested in getting rid of us,” Ms. Okuyeva said.

The putative Mr. Werner met three times with the couple in Kiev coffee shops from May 20 until June 1, explaining that he planned an in-depth article.

Before the fourth meeting, Ms. Okuyeva said, he asked the couple to pick him up in their car and drive to the French Embassy, and he also said he had a gift from his bosses at *Le Monde*. “There were a lot of small, strange

“There were a lot of small, strange things, and my intuition told me not to meet with him.”

things, and my intuition told me not to meet with him,” Ms. Okuyeva said, but she ignored the misgivings.

As they drove, Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev asked the pair to stop the car for an interview and to sit in the back to receive the gift, which he carried in a festive red cardboard box.

As the couple sat in the back seat of the car, Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev said, “‘Now, here is your gift.’” Ms. Okuyeva said. He opened the box, pulled out a gun and opened fire on Mr. Osmayev.

A shot hit Mr. Osmayev on the right side of his chest. But he was not immediately incapacitated and struggled with the shooter for control of the gun. Ms.



Artur Denisultanov-Kurmakayev posed as a reporter from the newspaper *Le Monde*.

Okuyeva, however, long fearful of assassination attempts, was carrying a pistol under her coat, as well as a tube of the blood-clotting agent Celox in her purse. She shot Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev four times as he and her husband fought. Both were gravely wounded but survived.

A political feud eclipses a warning on Russia

NEWS ANALYSIS
WASHINGTON

BY PETER BAKER
AND DAVID E. SANGER

Lost in the showdown between President Trump and James B. Comey that played out last week was a chilling threat to the United States. Mr. Comey, the former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, testified that the Russians had not only intervened in last year’s election, but they would also try to do it again.

“It’s not a Republican thing or Democratic thing — it really is an American thing,” Mr. Comey told the Senate Intelligence Committee. “They’re going to come for whatever party they choose to try and work on behalf of. And they’re not devoted to either, in my experience. They’re just about their own advantage. And they will be back.”

What started out as a counterintelligence investigation to guard the United States against a hostile foreign power has morphed into a political scandal about what Mr. Trump did, what he said and what he meant by it. Lawmakers have focused mainly on the gripping conflict between the president and the F.B.I. director he fired with cascading requests for documents, recordings and hearings.

But from the headquarters of the National Security Agency to state capitals that have discovered that the Russians were inside their voter-registration systems, the worry is that attention will be diverted from figuring out how Russia disrupted American democracy last year and how to prevent it from happening again. Russian hackers did not just breach Democratic email accounts; according to Mr. Comey, they orchestrated a “massive effort” targeting hundreds of — and possibly more than 1,000 — American government and private organizations since 2015.

“It’s important for us in the West to understand that we’re facing an adversary who wishes for his own reasons to do us harm,” said Daniel Fried, a career diplomat who oversaw sanctions imposed on Russia before retiring this year. “Whatever the domestic politics of this, Comey was spot-on right that Rus-



An anti-Trump rally in New York. There is no evidence that Russia has stopped trying to meddle in the American electoral system.

sia is coming after us, but not just the U.S., but the free world in general. And we need to take this seriously.”

Mr. Comey’s willingness to discuss the threat in public was something of a change of heart. As F.B.I. director, he supervised counterintelligence investigations into computer break-ins that harvested emails from the State Department and the White House, and that penetrated deep into the computer systems of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Yet President Barack Obama’s administration did not want to publicize those intrusions, choosing to handle them diplomatically — perhaps because at the time they looked more like classic espionage than an effort to manipulate American politics.

Mr. Comey’s special agents failed to

react aggressively to evidence of the breach of the Democratic National Committee, spending nine months exchanging phone calls and vague warnings with young information-technology specialists at the committee while Russian intelligence agencies cleaned out the organization’s emails. Only when emails from Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign began showing up on WikiLeaks and other sites did the bureau recognize the scope of the operation.

In October, Mr. Comey declined to sign a statement publicly accusing Russia of meddling in the election — not because he doubted the evidence, aides later said, the issue was already a matter of public discussion and he argued that it would seem too political so close to Election Day. Now many members of

Mr. Obama’s national security team say they wish they had raised the alarm about Russia earlier.

And there is no evidence that the Russians have stopped. The N.S.A. suspects that a group calling itself the Shadow Brokers, which has published tools used by the agency to breach foreign computer networks, is a front for Russia, probably the G.R.U., the military intelligence arm.

The recent leak of a classified N.S.A. document, for which a contractor has been arrested, provided evidence that the G.R.U. was trying to penetrate a company that provides software used to check voter registrations at polling places, perhaps to wreak havoc. That data may be useful in future races.

The Homeland Security Department

is also looking at new evidence of computer code buried in the electrical power grid. Russia is believed to be behind two major attacks on Ukraine’s grid, and there are warnings that those techniques could also be turned on the United States.

“This is part of what the Russians call ‘new generation warfare,’ ” Heather A. Conley, a scholar at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and an author of “The Kremlin Playbook,” said Thursday. “It’s a strategy of influence, not of brute force.”

The strategy’s central concept, she said, refined in attacks on Eastern European countries, is that it is “better to collapse a country from within.”

Eric S. Edelman, who was an under secretary of defense under President George W. Bush, said Russian information warfare capabilities were highly developed. “In the Cold War, the Soviet efforts in this regard were ham-handed and could be countered with relative ease,” he said. “Today, the Russians are much more sophisticated, and they see things like disinformation, propaganda and what we used to call ‘active measures’ as part of a suite of capabilities.”

Graham Allison, a longtime Russia scholar at Harvard, said, “Russia’s cyberintrusion into the recent presidential election signals the beginning of what is almost sure to be an intensified cyberwar in which both they — and we — seek to participate in picking the leaders of an adversary.”

The difference, he added, is that American elections are generally fair, so “we are much more vulnerable to such manipulation than is Russia,” where results are often preordained.

In Washington, however, the issue has become partisan, because Mr. Trump insists that any discussion of Russian meddling in the election is an attack on his legitimacy.

He has dismissed the Russia inquiry as “fake news” generated by Democrats to explain their defeat.

He repeated that during a news conference on Friday. “That was an excuse by the Democrats who lost an election that some people think they shouldn’t have lost,” he said.

Mr. Trump has rarely expressed con-

“I will always be thankful,” Mr. Osmayev said in an interview of his wife’s quick draw. “Because of her reaction, we are both alive today.”

The survival of the assassin could elevate the importance of the case, should investigators obtain his cooperation.

In March, a former Russian lawmaker who fled to Ukraine, Denis N. Voronenkov, was gunned down on a sidewalk outside the Premier Palace hotel in Kiev. Mr. Voronenkov’s bodyguard shot and killed the attacker. Last year, a car bomb killed a journalist, Pavel Sheremet, on a central street of the capital, and no arrests were made.

After the attack on Mr. Osmayev and Ms. Okuyeva, Ukraine’s Interior Ministry and lawmakers blamed the Russian intelligence services. Ukraine’s SBU intelligence agency, however, has said there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the killer pretending to be a journalist was a Russian agent, but it has not ruled out that possibility.

“For the world community, what is important is we have proof Russia is committing terrorist acts in other countries,” said Anton Gerashenko, a lawmaker. “His tongue may loosen to say who sent him here and why,” he said of Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev.

While it remains unclear whose bidding Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev may have been doing, it was not the first time his name had arisen in similar circumstances.

In the 1990s, Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev was all but openly associated with a Chechen organized crime group operating in St. Petersburg, and he once appeared on Russian TV to speak as a representative of the organization.

In 2008, the authorities in Austria questioned Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev about his contacts with a Chechen asylum seeker and whistleblower, Umar Israilov, who had testified to the European Court of Human Rights against Ramzan A. Kadyrov, the Chechen leader. Mr. Israilov said Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev was an envoy of Mr. Kadyrov sent to Austria to threaten his life.

Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev said the Chechen leader had sent him to Vienna to persuade Mr. Israilov to return to Chechnya and, failing that, to murder him. He said that Mr. Kadyrov kept a list of 300 enemies to be killed.

Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev said he had declined to carry out the assassination and instead turned to the Austrian police for protection against retribution for failing to fulfill the order. Two months later, Mr. Israilov was shot and killed by unknown gunmen on a Vienna street.

Mr. Denisultanov-Kurmakayev said at the time, “I do not want to break any laws, and I am not a murderer.”

Iuliia Mendel contributed reporting from Kiev.

cern about Russia’s role last year or its continuing efforts in Europe. Under questioning at the Senate panel hearing on Thursday, Mr. Comey said the president never asked him after taking office what the government should be doing to protect against future Russian intervention.

“There should be no fuzz on this whatsoever,” Mr. Comey said. “The Russians interfered in our election during the 2016 cycle. They did it with purpose. They did it with sophistication. They did it with overwhelming technical efforts. And it was an active-measures campaign driven from the top of that government. There is no fuzz on that.”

He added, “That’s about as un-fake as you can possibly get and is very, very serious.”

Mr. Comey’s warning about the Russian threat was overshadowed by his

“Cyberintrusion into the recent presidential election signals the beginning of what is almost sure to be an intensified cyberwar.”

confrontation with Mr. Trump, who fired him last month.

“What we didn’t talk enough about was the purpose we were there, about Russia’s involvement and Russia’s intent, how doggedly that they tried everything humanly possible and they will continue to keep trying and hitting on us to change how we do business in America, how we elect our officials, the confidence we have in our government,” Senator Joe Manchin III, Democrat of West Virginia, said Friday on “Morning Joe” on MSNBC.

Similar warnings have been issued by others in the intelligence community, led by James R. Clapper Jr., who has sounded the alarm since retiring in January as director of national intelligence. “I don’t think people have their head around the scope of what the Russians are doing,” he said recently.

But few doubt that the Russians have concluded that their attack on the American system was successful beyond their dreams — they started a scandal that has consumed the American political process.

Turks keep clicking, but Wikipedia is blocked

ISTANBUL

Many struggle for answers after government bans go-to information source

BY PATRICK KINGSLEY

Baris Dede, a game design student, had a question: How easily did Viking long-boats glide through the water? Dilara Diner, a psychologist, wanted to double-check a symptom of hysteria.

But these Turks were not able to quickly find out what they wanted. Since late April, the Turkish government has blocked one of the world's go-to sources of online information, Wikipedia.

After Wikipedia refused to remove unflattering references to Turkey's relationship with Syrian militants and state-sponsored terrorists, officials simply banned the whole site.

Several weeks into the ban, some Turks are still struggling to remove Wikipedia searches from their muscle memory. Yaman Akdeniz, a law professor, turned by habit to Wikipedia to find out when the latest "House of Cards" episode was released.

"You forget that it's blocked, and then you click on it and then — boomp — nothing. You realize you can't access it," said Professor Akdeniz, describing his personal form of digital whiplash. Many people didn't realize until after it was blocked, he said, that Wikipedia "was so much a part of our lives."

Mr. Dede said he mourned the loss of "part of your memory." Even in his academic world, where Wikipedia is sometimes scorned, the website was secretly seen as a good starting place for research, he said.

But beyond the problems it has created for the curious, Turkey's Wikipedia ban is a reminder of something darker, government critics say: a wholesale crackdown on free expression and access to information, amid wider oppression of most forms of opposition.



BURHAN OZBILICI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has cracked down on free expression.

Wikipedia is just one of 127,000 websites blocked in Turkey, estimated Professor Akdeniz, who has led legal challenges against the ban and other web restrictions. An additional 95,000 pages, like social media accounts, blog posts and articles, are blocked on websites that are not otherwise restricted, Mr. Akdeniz said. Some of these sites are pornographic. But many contain information and reporting that the government finds embarrassing.

For web activists in Turkey, Wikipedia is simply the latest victim of a wave of online censorship that grew steadily from 2015 onward and then surged significantly after last year's failed coup.

The coup attempt gave President Recep Tayyip Erdogan the political cover to expand a crackdown on his opponents, including in the traditional news media. Since the coup, 190 news organizations have been banned and at least 120 journalists jailed.

"The international community noticed this issue by reference to the Wikipedia block, but it's not a new thing from our point of view," Mr. Akdeniz said. "Critical media is under stress on a daily basis — and what made that visible is the Wikipedia ban."

For students, the ban could not have come at a worse time: just as they were knuckling down for exams.

"It's a big obstacle," said Ege, a 17-year-old high school student, whose surname has been withheld at the wishes of his headmaster. "Wikipedia is the source of the sources — you can find everything there."

Wikipedia use has fallen by 85 percent in Turkey since April, but some have managed to circumvent the ban with a VPN, or virtual private network, a tool that helps web users gain access to blocked websites.

According to GlobalWebIndex, a group that researches worldwide internet activity, Turkey has the third-highest VPN prevalence in the world. More than 45 percent of Turks ages 16 to 64 who have web access used a VPN in the first quarter of 2017.

But VPN use comes with an unwelcome side effect. Because Wikipedia does not allow VPN users to edit articles, Turks are unable to correct or update information posted on the site or write new articles.

"Turkey has lost its voice online because of its inability to edit Wikipedia," said Alp Toker, a co-founder of Turkey Blocks, a group that tracks Turkish internet censorship.

Trump commits U.S. to defending NATO nations

WASHINGTON

BY PETER BAKER

President Trump has reaffirmed the longstanding United States commitment to come to the defense of any NATO members that are attacked, more than two weeks after his refusal to do so during a trip to Europe stirred resent-

ment among America's allies.

The White House also has announced that Mr. Trump will travel to Poland next month before heading to Germany for a Group of 20 summit meeting, a visit meant to reassure allies in Eastern Europe at a time when they feel nervous about aggression by Russia.

European leaders were disappointed last month when Mr. Trump did not explicitly endorse the mutual defense doc-

trine articulated in Article 5 of the NATO charter while visiting the alliance headquarters in Brussels. A line in his speech was taken out at the last minute, to the chagrin of the president's national security team.

"I'm committing the United States to Article 5," Mr. Trump said during a news conference on Friday with President Klaus Iohannis of Romania in the White House Rose Garden. "And certainly, we

are there to protect and that's one of the reasons that I want people to make sure we have a very, very strong force by paying the kind of money necessary to have that force. But yes, absolutely, I'd be committed to Article 5."

Mr. Trump used his meeting with Mr. Iohannis to repeat his insistence that NATO allies increase their military spending. Only five of 28 members devoted at least 2 percent of their eco-

nom ic output to their militaries in accordance with a NATO goal.

As he has in the past, Mr. Trump seemed to misunderstand how NATO works, speaking as if the issue were a matter of dues. NATO has a relatively small budget based on contributions from members, and none of them are in arrears. The issue is whether the NATO members are spending enough on their own militaries.

The truth is hard.

The truth is hidden.

The truth must be pursued.

The truth is hard to hear.

The truth is rarely simple.

The truth isn't so obvious.

The truth is necessary.

The truth can't be glossed over.

The truth has no agenda.

The truth can't be manufactured.

The truth doesn't take sides.

The truth isn't red or blue.

The truth is hard to accept.

The truth pulls no punches.

The truth is powerful.

The truth is under attack.

The truth is worth defending.

The truth requires taking a stand.

The truth is more important now than ever.

The New York Times

Business

A graveyard for oil’s past

Dismantling of platforms in North Sea may signal beginning of an era’s end

BY STANLEY REED

Moored off the port of Rotterdam, Netherlands, Pioneering Spirit looms so large that it is difficult to recognize as a ship. The crew of 450 is dwarfed by the cranes and pipes that dominate the sprawling layers of decks.

For decades, Edward Heerema, head of Allseas, the Swiss-based energy services company, dreamed of building a giant vessel to install oil platforms offshore. But the Pioneering Spirit has found another purpose: dismantling oil fields in the North Sea.

With oil prices dropping sharply in the last two years, Mr. Heerema said he was now focused on finding enough work to meet his payroll. “I can’t say how long it will take to pay for itself. Maybe 10 years, maybe 30 years,” he said of the ship.

The North Sea east of Britain was once a crucial source of oil for the world. At its peak in 1999, it produced about 2.9 million barrels of oil a day, more than Kuwait or Iraq at the time.

Since then, production has generally been in a long slide, as oil fields discovered decades ago have been exhausted and high costs have discouraged exploration. The fields’ diminishing fortunes have been cemented by the rise of renewables and the push for cleaner alternatives to oil.

“It is one of those signs that we may be at a tipping point,” said Anthony Hobley, chief executive of Carbon Tracker, a nonprofit group that studies the investment risks of the shifting energy landscape. “We may well be at that critical point in history where people will say that this is the point where the oil industry reached its peak and began to decline.”

This spring, the Pioneering Spirit headed to the Brent field in the North Sea, a major oil and gas trove named after the Brent goose. The field helped define the business, giving its name to Brent crude, the global price benchmark for oil.

After 40 years of production, the field is nearly pumped out. And four platforms in the field — giant rigs that stand around 1,000 feet tall and weigh a combined million tons — are gradually being shut down.

This spring, the Pioneering Spirit transported one platform to its final resting place, a shipyard in Hartlepool in northeast England where it is being dismantled and sold for scrap. An industry in itself, this so-called decommissioning process creates jobs and profits along the journey.

Discovered in 1971, the Brent field was one of several major finds that turned the North Sea into a world-class oil region. Companies like Royal Dutch Shell, which operates the Brent field, and Exxon Mobil, its co-owner, focused their investments in the West, after a wave of nationalization in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The North Sea is a vast operation, with more than 300 fields scattered across 95,000 square miles. Shell built four giant platforms in the Brent field, called Alpha, Bravo, Charlie and Delta, all capable of withstanding giant waves and hostile weather.

Shell must safely dismantle these monsters and plug more than 100 wells below them. The company estimates that the process will last a decade and cost billions of dollars, some of it paid by British taxpayers.

Such exercises will become increasingly common in the North Sea and other oil regions. Around 100 platforms are expected to be dismantled in British



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CARSTEN SNEIJERG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Clockwise from above: The Brent Delta arriving in Hartlepool, England, where Able UK will strip off anything valuable; Peter Stephenson, Able’s owner; and Pioneering Spirit, a ship used to dismantle oil fields.

Shell figures that carting the platforms to shore where they can be dismantled is cheaper than busting them up at sea.

waters over the next decade.

Shell figures that hiring Pioneering Spirit to cart the platforms to shore where they can be dismantled is cheaper and safer than busting them up at sea. “The biggest risk is putting people on helicopters,” said Alistair Hope, Shell’s project director, referring to the usual means of transportation to offshore platforms.

The oil companies do not want a repeat of the mid-1990s. Back then, Shell’s plan to sink a piece of Brent equipment, called Brent Spar, in the ocean depths caused a bruising fight with environmental groups led by Greenpeace and prompted stricter regulation.

Delta, the first platform to be taken apart, consists of what is known as a topside, a kind of offshore petroleum factory and hotel with accommodation for more than 160 people. The platform rests on concrete legs that weigh a combined 300,000 tons.

In late April, Pioneering Spirit lifted the ungainly structure off the legs and carried it off like a spider grasping prey. Shell wants to leave the concrete stumps, which contain some oil, in place at sea, saying they pose minimal risk to shipping routes and have less chance of polluting the environment that way.

Once Brent Delta reached the port in Hartlepool, the platform became the property of Able UK.

In the mid-1990s, Peter Stephenson,



Able’s owner, bought an old shipyard, capitalizing on the industrial area’s decline. When the financial crisis struck, he took advantage of cheap steel prices to invest 28 million pounds, now \$36 million, in facilities, like a reinforced dock to bear the weight of the platform.

As Able workers break apart the rig, Shell will continue to watch over the process to make sure that hazardous or polluting material like asbestos or small amounts of remaining oil are handled properly.

Workers will strip off anything valuable, like brass valves.

Larger pieces will gradually be cut loose and brought to the ground. They will most likely be sold to steel mills, which melt scrap to make new metal.

Mr. Stephenson, 70, has squeezed a fortune of an estimated £430 million out of unwanted properties over the last six decades. At 19, he started out buying a broken front loader — a machine for scooping dirt into trucks — then fixing it and hiring it out. He later moved into demolition.

In recent years, Able has dismantled ships for the United States Navy, as well as the French aircraft carrier Clemenceau. He recently began buying idled coal-fired power plants, breaking them up for scrap and redeveloping their sites.

Mr. Stephenson sees value in everything.

He has turned the living quarters of a scrapped BP offshore platform into a



makeshift motel and office for workers of drilling rigs that come into the yard for maintenance. A helicopter deck is being cut up for bridging material.

The future of energy is represented, too. A torpedo-shaped device discarded by General Electric was a prototype for a machine that generates electricity from ocean waves.

As the Brent Delta platform moved through the channel, a group of Mr. Stephenson’s friends, family and associates ate roast pork and stuffing, ham and pease pudding and other regional fare in a white tent pitched by the water.

Winning a big job is a lift for a region that has been hit by the decline of some mainstay industries, like the recently

shuttered Redcar steel plant visible in the distance.

“This proves the northeast can still do stuff,” said Marcus Walker, a project director at Coolsilk, a local real estate investment firm.

Mr. Stephenson says the Brent contract will preserve or create up to 50 jobs. His company makes a practice of hiring and buying locally. A catering company called The Old Butchers Sandwich Shop provided food to guests and workers on the yard.

“There have been a lot of peaks and troughs over the last few years,” said Heidi McCullagh, who runs the catering company. “When a contract comes in, you have suddenly got a queue at the door.”

Why don’t more women start businesses?

Economic View

CLAIRE CAIN MILLER

For many Americans, starting their own business is the manifestation of the American dream: Take a risk, work hard, get rich. So why don’t more women do it?

Women, despite being about half the labor force, own 36 percent of companies in the United States. Those who do own companies are half as likely as male founders to employ anyone other than themselves, and they generally earn less in revenue, according to census data analyzed in a new report by Third Way, a think tank. In technology, fewer than 10 percent of start-ups are owned by women, according to another new paper, by researchers at Harvard.

The reason, according to the research: People with experience mentor and give money to people like themselves, while those starting out do what they see people like themselves doing. In other words, we all live in bubbles — not just in our politics or our friendships, but also in our careers

— and this shapes the ideas we form. Social scientists describe the phenomenon as homophily, or love of the same.

“Women are just outside of those established networks, and if you’re outside the networks, you don’t get the knowledge, you don’t get the opportunities, you don’t get the contacts and you don’t get the funding,” said Susan Coleman, a business professor at the University of Hartford and co-author of the Third Way report. She wrote it with Alicia Robb, a research fellow at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and the founder of Next Wave Ventures, for female angel investors.

Research shows that women around the world are less likely to consider entrepreneurship as a career path, largely because they don’t see other women entrepreneurs as role models.

They are also less likely to have the management experience that can lead to starting a company. Just 19 percent of top executives are women, according to a LeanIn.org and McKinsey report, and a main reason they do not rise is because they are less likely to have mentors in senior leadership.

That changes when women run companies. The gender pay gap shrinks, and women are more likely to be promoted, according to research of public companies by Linda Bell, an

economist and provost of Barnard College. “Whether by cause or effect, the presence of a top woman executive has a really robust impact,” she said.

Women are also left out of financing networks, which are predominantly male and often operate through referrals from friends. They are more likely

“Whether by cause or effect, the presence of a top woman executive has a really robust impact.”

to invest their own money instead of outside capital in their businesses, and when they seek investors, they ask for less. Networks are important for another reason: emotional support. “Launching

an entrepreneurial venture is a lonely and sometimes scary undertaking, and you need to have people to talk to,” Ms. Coleman said.

Founders of start-ups financed by venture capitalists are almost all male and white or Asian, according to a study by Paul Gompers, a professor at Harvard Business School, and Sophie Wang, a Harvard graduate student.

They wanted to find out whether the problem was not enough women with the education, training or desire to

start companies, or whether it was factors like bias or closed-off networks.

They concluded there were plenty of qualified women. Women earn 40 percent to 50 percent of degrees in science and engineering. But they are less likely to have information about how to become an entrepreneur, to see female role models and to know venture capitalists.

Female venture capitalists are more likely to invest in female entrepreneurs, Mr. Gompers has found. Yet 91 percent of venture capitalists are male. Eighty-six percent are white, and 11 percent are Asian. Most worked in investment banking, private equity or consulting, and went to Harvard, Stanford or the University of Pennsylvania.

Unsurprisingly, the backgrounds of venture-backed entrepreneurs are pretty much the same. Ninety-one percent are men, 80 percent are white and 16 percent are Asian. Most have degrees from a similar set of colleges and have worked at big tech companies like Google or Microsoft.

“The problem when you have five white men who all went to the same business school and worked in the same firms is their networks overlap, so they don’t draw from a very wide source of entrepreneurial deal flow,” Mr. Gompers said.

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British economy lags as ‘Brexit’ approaches

BREXIT, FROM PAGE 1
cent years of growth. The economy expanded by only 0.2 percent over the first three months of the year compared to the previous quarter, far less than the 0.7 percent pace of growth seen at the end of 2016. It grew at an annualized pace of 2 percent during the quarter.

Consumer spending makes up nearly two-thirds of British economic activity, meaning the troubles of ordinary people can have decisive influence over the economy — and politics, for that matter. For the average worker, rising prices for everyday consumer goods are landing atop a decade of stagnating wages.

Few economists expect that Britain will fall into a recession, but the consensus envisions disappointing economic growth ranging between 1.5 percent and 1.75 percent annually over this year and next.

Last year's Brexit referendum was in part a rejection of the economic elite from millions of working people who have suffered declining wages while watching London transformed into a carnival of wealth for globe-trotting financiers.

The prime minister called for the elections on the strength of polls showing her party capturing an expanded parliamentary majority, aiming to solidify her hand as she negotiates exit terms with Europe. But her miserable showing in Thursday's polls suggest that the same forces that produced Brexit have assailed the government that is supposed to execute it: Many Britons are dissatisfied with their economic lot.

In the dozen years since Vaidas Zelkskis entered Britain from his native Lithuania to pursue work as a carpenter, his wages have grown from about 120 pounds a day (about \$224 dollars at the exchange rates of the time) to about £180 now, or \$233. But over the same time, his usual assortment of groceries have soared from some £50 per week to more like £120.

“The rich people can always afford what they want,” Mr. Zelkskis said as he took a cigarette break on a recent morning outside his current job at the Shard, an iconic skyscraper south of the River Thames. “But the middle class really feels it.”

Much as in the United States, most working people in Britain have yet to fully recover from the traumatic financial crisis that began in 2008.

Britain's average weekly wages are



ANDREW TESTA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Amusement parks in Blackpool, on England's northwestern coast, may get more business this summer. More Britons plan to forgo European holidays, as the pound loses value.

lower today than they were a decade ago after accounting for inflation, noted Martin Beck, lead British economist at Oxford Economics in London. This, despite the fact that Britain's unemployment rate dropped to 4.6 percent in April, a level last seen in 1975.

“For most people, there hasn't been a real recovery for years,” Mr. Beck said.

In years past, low unemployment has tended to push up wages, as employers found themselves forced to pay more to compete for a smaller pool of workers. Why this typically enriching dynamic

has failed to emerge now is the subject of considerable debate among economists.

Unions are far weaker than years ago. The gig economy has replaced full-time jobs with part-time and temporary stints, diluting the power of workers to demand higher pay.

A surfeit of global uncertainties — Brexit, President Trump's threats to dismantle institutions at the heart of the global order — have perhaps made companies reluctant to add costs.

The weaker pound has given a boost to British exports, making them lower

priced than European and American competitors.

British whiskey, salmon and chocolate have been selling in increased volumes.

But Britain imports more food than it exports. Many of the country's key export industries — automotive, aerospace and medical devices — draw on suppliers in Europe for components. Even as the weak pound makes the prices of their finished wares more competitive, it also raises their costs.

The economy also faces the loss of

top-dollar banking jobs as London's status as a leading international financial center confronts the challenges posed by Brexit. Roughly one-third of the industry's business involves handling transactions for clients in Europe. Once Britain is out of the European Union, much of that business may be effectively illegal, requiring that banks satisfy the proclivities of regulators in the 27 remaining members of the bloc.

The financial industry has been lobbying the government to forge a deal with Europe that would maintain the

status quo, enabling the money to keep flowing unimpeded. In weakening Mrs. May's stature, the election may have increased the chances she will soften her line and assent to compromises that would preserve Britain's inclusion in the European market.

Even so, global banks cannot afford to wait in the hopes that a useful deal will be struck. They are already drawing up plans to move jobs to cities elsewhere in the European Union as they seek to ensure that — whatever comes — they will be able to execute all trades. Britain could suffer losses of 15,000 to 80,000 jobs over the next two years, according to studies.

Investment continues to grow modestly, because major projects take years to plan and execute.

But most economists assume it will slow as Brexit separates the Britain from the rest of the European marketplace, undermining the incentive for multinational companies to use Britain as a regional hub.

“As the outlines of Brexit negotiations begin to take shape, companies are going to be a lot more concerned,” said Peter Dixon, a global financial economist at Commerzbank AG in London. “Even if companies don't slash investment, they are likely to postpone expansions.”

For now, scrutiny focuses on the increasingly beleaguered British consumer.

Outstanding credit card balances across Britain were nearly 10 percent higher in April compared with a year earlier, the fastest pace of growth in more than a decade, the Bank of England disclosed.

That stoked worries that consumers could soon exhaust their sources of cash as their paychecks are effectively diminished by inflation.

Jennifer Corbin, a 48-year-old mother of five who lives in Wembley, northwest London, already has an answer to that question: Her family is economizing, forgoing their annual summer trip to the Canary Islands, where sunshine is abundant.

“Food, housing, travel. Everything is more expensive now,” she said at the beginning of a recent three-day weekend, as she and her family awaited a train to a coastal destination that was closer at hand — Brighton Beach, at the southern reaches of England.

There, the forecast was for chilly rain, followed by chillier rain.

China's bridges to nowhere

CHINA, FROM PAGE 1
world's highest railway, from Qinghai Province to Lhasa, Tibet; the world's largest hydropower project, the Three Gorges Dam; and an 800-mile canal from the Yangtze River system to Beijing that is part of the world's biggest water transfer project.

Leaders defend the infrastructure spree as crucial to China's development.

“It's very important to improve transport and other infrastructure so that impoverished regions can escape poverty and prosper,” President Xi Jinping said while visiting the spectacular, recently opened Aizhai Bridge in Hunan in 2013. “We must do more of this and keep supporting it.”

Indeed, the new roads and railways have proved popular, especially in wealthier areas with many businesses and heavy commuter traffic. And even empty infrastructure often has a way of eventually filling up, as early critics of the country's high-speed rail and the Pudong skyscrapers in Shanghai have discovered.

The country's expressway growth has been compared with that of the United States in the 1950s, when the Interstate System of highways got underway, but China is building at a remarkable clip. In 2016 alone, China added 26,100 bridges on roads, including 363 “extra large” ones with an average length of about a mile, government figures show.

China also devotes a much higher share of its economy to building infrastructure than the West — about 9 percent versus about 2.5 percent in the United States and Western Europe, according to the McKinsey Global Institute.

A primary motive is economic growth: Infrastructure spending surged as part of a huge stimulus program after the 2008 global financial crisis. Each bridge can cost billions and employ hundreds of workers for several years.

But the endless construction has also created a self-perpetuating gravy train, feeding corruption and distorting priorities.

While experts often advocate infrastructure building as a path to economic development, local governments in China “went overboard” because of corruption and other financial lures, said Huang Shaoqing, an economist at Shanghai Jiaotong University.

And as gleaming expressways and majestic bridges spread into less populated areas, the cost-benefit ratio of each new mile of asphalt drops sharply.

The Chishi Bridge, for instance, promised “a fast and convenient access to the sea” for southwestern China, a Hunan transportation official, Chen Mingxian, said in 2010, shortly before construction began.

Promising that bridges and expressways could be Hunan's road to riches,



YAN RUNBO/XINHUA, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Jiaozhou Bay Bridge in Shandong Province is the world's longest cross-sea bridge. Twenty-six miles long, it links the city of Qingdao to an island.

Mr. Chen and other local officials quadrupled the province's expressways, to 3,778 miles by the end of last year, from 872 miles in 2005.

They were certainly roads to riches for Mr. Chen and his colleagues. In the past six years, anticorruption inquiries have toppled more than 27 Hunan transportation officials.

“In their jurisdiction, they were the emperors,” a party report said in 2014. “Officials in the provincial transportation office, high and low, racked their brains for ways to get their claws into expressway projects.”

The eye-popping structures have slashed travel times in some areas and generated a sizable slice of the country's economy.

Mr. Chen, who had been lavished with official praise for his magnificent bridges, was one of the biggest culprits. According to a party report published last year, he and two underlings accepted about \$4.4 million in kickbacks for steering contracts on eight expressway projects to grateful companies in just two years.

“Connections became a magic drug for scoring engineering contracts,” he said, according to a party report in 2015. A court found him guilty of graft, and he is likely to spend decades in prison.

The Chishi Bridge was among the tainted projects.

But the bridge and hundreds like it — overpriced, underused and sinking in debt — are squeezing governments across China.

The projects are often financed by loans from state-owned banks to compa-

nies owned by local governments, which collect tolls to repay the loans. But on many routes in less populous inland regions, tolls are not keeping pace with the costs, setting off a spiral of mounting debt and rising expenses.

The Chinese government estimated that expressways nationwide lost \$47 billion in 2015, more than double the loss in 2014.

In Hunan, expressways faced interest payments of \$1.9 billion a year while taking in \$1.3 billion in tolls, a deputy governor said in 2015.

But provincial officials say they are trapped. They cannot afford to lower tolls to attract more drivers to the Chishi Bridge and the 70-mile expressway it connects, but raising tolls would reduce traffic.

The price of crossing the bridge, about \$3 and up depending on the size of the vehicle, is beyond the reach of most villagers below. That toll is on top of a higher toll for using the expressway.

“The capacity to repay loans with tolls is extremely weak, revenue cannot cover the outlays on operation and management, and we have no capacity at all to pay the interest and capital” on the construction loans, the Hunan transportation office said in April, responding to a complaint from a local official.

Thanks to government backing, the state-owned company building the bridge is unlikely to default or go bankrupt. But bridges like Chishi leave local governments and developers struggling with debt, and those who live below non-plused.

“If you don't build roads, there can't be prosperity,” said Huang Sanliang, a 56-year-old farmer who lives under the bridge. “But this is an expressway, not a second- or third-grade road. One of those might be better for us here.”

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE

GHANA

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE TENDERING (ICT)

Invitation for Tenders

Tender No: **VRA/KGS/DAMS-REHAB/02**

REHABILITATION OF THE KPONG DAM EAST AND WEST DYKES AND SPILLWAY PROJECT

1. The Volta River Authority (VRA) of the Republic of Ghana has allocated funds as part of its budget to cover eligible payments under the Contract for the Rehabilitation of the Kpong Dam East and West Dykes and Spillway Project. The project is aimed at carrying out various remedial/improvement works at the Akosombo and the Kpong dams. The objective is to ensure the structural integrity of the dams are maintained.

2. The VRA now invites sealed Tenders from eligible and qualified Tenderers for the Rehabilitation of the Kpong Dam East and West Dykes and Spillway Project. The works include but not limited to the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Repair of Upstream face slope of the Kpong West Dyke. | • Rehabilitation/Installation of piezometers. |
| • East dyke downstream berms improvement. | • Cleaning and lowering of East and West Dykes toe and outfall ditch drains. |
| • Remedial works on the Kpong Shoreline protection. | • Repair of erosion scars on the Akosombo main dam downstream face. |
| • Opening of Spillways No.1 and 2 ski jump drain holes | • Supply, Installation and calibration of crack monitors. |
| • Upstream Riprap protection works using Quarox cable net. | • Supply, installation and calibration of automatic water level monitors |
| • Technology/Knowledge Transfer | |

3. Tendering will be conducted through the International Competitive Tendering (ICT) procedures specified in the Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663) and the Public Procurement (Amendment) Act, 2016 (Act 914) and is open to all Tenderers from Eligible Source Countries as defined in the Guidelines.

4. Interested eligible Tenderers may obtain further information and inspect the Tendering Documents from the Volta River Authority at the address (1) given below during office hours 09.00 to 15.00 hrs GMT each working day from **June 19, 2017 to August 7, 2017**.

5. A complete set of Tendering Documents in English Language may be purchased by interested Tenderers upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Six Hundred Ghana Cedis (GH¢600.00)**. The method of payment will be by cash or certified cheque in the name of the Volta River Authority.

Tendering Documents shall be available from **June 19, 2017 to August 7, 2017**.

6. There shall be a **mandatory** pre-bid meeting at the project site on **July 17, 2017**. All Bidders shall converge at the Office of the Director, Engineering Services Department at Akuse in the Eastern Region at 10:00am (local time).

Bidders who fail to attend the mandatory pre-bid meeting shall have their Bids rejected.

7. Tenders must be delivered to the address (2) below at or before **12.00 hrs GMT on August 7, 2017**. Electronic Tendering will not be permitted. Late Tenders will be rejected. Tenders will be opened in the presence of the Tenderers' representatives who choose to attend in person at the address (2) below immediately after **12.00 hrs GMT on August 7, 2017**.

All Tenders must be accompanied by a Tender Security of Fifty Thousand United States Dollars (**US\$50,000.00**) or its equivalent in a freely convertible currency and issued by a Bank. The Tender Security shall remain valid for **210 days** from the date of Tender Submission.

8. The addresses referred to above are:

1) Address for information, inspection and purchase

The Director
Engineering Services Department
P.O. Box MB 77,
Accra, Ghana
Tel.: +233-3430-20705/20620
Fax: +233-3430-21286
E-mail Address: dengsd@vra.com; sesd@vra.com

Location: Engineering Services Department
Volta River Authority
Off the Kpong Hydro Generation Station Road
Akuse, Eastern Region
Ghana

2) Address for Tender Submission:

The Chief Executive
Volta River Authority
Electro-Volta House
28th February Road
P.O. Box MB 77
Accra, Ghana

Place for Tender Submission and Opening

Location: Conference Room
Engineering Services Department
Volta River Authority
Off the Kpong Hydro Generation Station Road
Akuse, Eastern Region
Ghana



**VOLTA
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AUTHORITY**

A MODEL OF EXCELLENCE FOR POWER UTILITIES IN AFRICA

Opinion

Fail, keep calm and carry on

After humiliating losses, Theresa May will start Brexit talks with a zero credit rating.

Matthew d'Ancona
Contributing Writer

LONDON Like a stumbling figure from "The Walking Dead," Britain's prime minister, Theresa May, has yet to realize that she is a political zombie. For all her poise as she spoke on Downing Street on Friday, the day after Britain's general election, when she declared her intention to continue in office, she is roaming the land of the undead. Sooner or later, reality is going to bite — hard.

Once again, almost all the pundits, pollsters and political betting wonks got it wrong. Less than a year after Brexit stunned this country, and seven months after Donald Trump won in the United States, a political outcome that seemed certain and preordained was upset by people actually going to vote. They made an emotional pick, and now Mrs. May has to figure out what to do after a net loss of seats in the House of Commons that deprives her of the overall majority required for stable government.

As the extent of the upset became clear on Thursday night, it was assumed — even by many of Mrs. May's most ardent supporters — that she would be gone by Friday morning. There was talk of a "dignified exit," a timetable for departure and then, unavoidably, another general election. Instead, Mrs. May has formed a pact with Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party, an alliance that will give her an aggregate number of members of Parliament that passes, just, the 326-seat threshold required for a governing majority.

Doesn't this suffice? Surely a politician is entitled in such circumstances to be creative, if only to deprive her opponents of power?

I have praised much that Mrs. May has done as prime minister: uniting a party torn apart by the European Union referendum last year; triggering the Brexit process in Parliament after a supreme court challenge; and, most laudably, seeking to extend the reach of her party from the affluent to those who are, in her own phrase, "just about managing." In her unfairly criticized manifesto, she eschewed glib slogans and confronted issues of great and pressing complexity, such as the care of the elderly in a country with an aging population, the pathologies of the Internet and the grievances of those left behind by the hectic forces of globalization and modernity.

So why not salute her gutsy decision to carry on? The problem is twofold. First, Mrs. May explicitly framed the election — which she was not obliged to call when she did — as a test of her leadership, character and credentials to negotiate a good Brexit deal with the European Union. Posturing as a statesman being undermined at home by amateur politicians, she demanded a clear mandate from the voters to crush her opponents and demonstrate to European leaders that she was backed unequivocally by the British people.

Well, the British people have spoken — and conspicuously withheld that backing.

In a race against a supposedly unelectable hard-left leader, Jeremy Corbyn — whose own Labour Party members of Parliament tried to topple him last year — Mrs. May lost seats. Though Mr. Corbyn failed to win the election, he has made significant gains.



AP/WIDE WORLD

He has not only secured his own position, but also, extraordinarily, has established his Castro-loving, Chávez-friendly brand of socialism as the mainstream creed of the party that, only 10 years ago, was led from the center by Tony Blair.

This election campaign was twice interrupted by horrific terrorist attacks, first in Manchester, then in London. Inevitably, this put security at the heart of the race, and shone an unflattering light on Mr. Corbyn's past links with the Irish Republican Army and his opposition to antiterrorism legislation. For days, before the election, Britain's tabloid press was crammed with lurid details of his coterie's alleged associations with paramilitary and Islamist organizations.

But none of this made the slightest difference in the outcome. Or, put another way, none of it did Mrs. May any good. In the early stages of the campaign, some of her supporters privately admitted that she had called this snap election for fear that Labour would ditch Mr. Corbyn later in the year and deprive the Conservative Party of an opportunity for a landslide victory.

Mrs. May took that shot, and missed by miles. Her decision to cling to power now looks undignified; that is

out of character. Moreover, her alliance with the unionists looks like an act of desperation. It is.

From 2010 to 2015, the Conservatives (then led by David Cameron) governed in coalition with the Liberal Democrats under Nick Clegg (who lost his seat in this election). That alliance, long-planned and carefully choreographed, was hard enough to

maintain, even with plenty of common ground between the center-right Tories and their center-left partners.

The Democratic Unionist Party, in contrast, is a hard-line reactionary party, devoted not only

to the union of Britain and Northern Ireland, but to a social conservatism that directly contradicts the modernization of the Conservative Party in the past 15 years. When she was the party chairman from 2002 to 2003, Mrs. May did much to brush away the cobwebs, daring to tell annual conference delegates that theirs was perceived as "the nasty party." Now, nearly 15 years

later, she has allied it with the Even Nastier Party.

How will she explain to the socially liberal, centrist voters whom Mr. Cameron won over during his decade-long leadership that she must now govern in partnership with a group of homophobes, zealots and creationists?

Mrs. May might claim that it is her duty to form a government, given the alternative: some improbable Corbyn-led rumormongering of Labour plus the Liberal Democrats and the various nationalists. But that alone is not sufficient justification for this shabby deal, which will only confirm the suspicion that all the Conservatives truly care about is power.

Worse, Mrs. May has failed to acknowledge the scale of what has happened, or even that it has happened at all. Whatever one thinks of Mr. Corbyn's credentials and record, he tapped into a popular anger and a yearning for change, as the Brexiters and Mr. Trump did. He understood how to achieve emotional resonance and, most impressively, inspired young people to vote.

If Mr. Corbyn never really looked like a prime minister-in-waiting — someone who could run the Civil Service, craft detailed public policy or handle the nuclear codes — there, counterintuitively, lay his appeal. The

insurgent populism of 2016 has not gone away. Here, it took a new, left-wing form.

I see little sign that senior Tories have grasped how radically the rules of the game are changing around them. It has now been 30 years since the party won a solid majority, and in apparently ideal conditions, it failed to do so in this election. What sharper wake-up call do Conservatives need?

The new government, Mrs. May said on Friday, provides "certainty." She is right, but not in the sense that she meant. Its parliamentary majority is certain to be under constant attack from rebels of all kinds. Its weakness is certain to be mocked in Brussels, as the Brexit negotiations begin. And it is certain, sooner rather than later, to collapse, as such fragile arrangements always do. These extra months that Mrs. May remains in power will be grueling, unproductive and harshly judged by posterity.

As an admirer of Mrs. May, I wish she had chosen to leave with honor intact, instead of subjecting herself, and the country, to the ordeal ahead. The party is well and truly over. Will someone have the grace to tell her?

MATTHEW D'ANCONA is a political columnist for *The Guardian* and *The Evening Standard*.

Prime Minister Theresa May en route to Buckingham Palace to meet Queen Elizabeth II in London on Friday.

The headless superpower

Can the Pax Americana survive President Trump?



Ross Douthat

If the United States imperium in all its might did not exist, if the Washington, D.C., of Donald Trump and James Comey were just the Sicilian-style backwater that it currently resembles, then no one looking at recent events would doubt that the entire Middle East is on the verge of its own version of a European Great War.

Most of the elements that hurled European powers into conflicts in 1914 and 1939 (and 1870, 1853, 1805, 1756...) are present in the Middle East right now. You have two rival alliances, one led by Iran and the other by the Saudis, riven by religion, ideology and strategic interests. You have ongoing proxy wars between them, in Syria and Yemen, that resemble the Spanish Civil War in their ferocity and factional complexity. You have various unpredictable third forces, from the Islamic

State to the Kurds to the Russians, whose instigationist activities or mere self-interest could help set a catastrophe into motion.

And now, with the sudden Saudi-led attempt to isolate Qatar and impose a long list of demands on the tiny emirate, you have an Austria-Serbia-in-1914 confrontation — a larger power demanding a small country cut ties to resolve the spat. Indeed what the Saudis and their allies are doing to Qatar is, by traditional definition, already an act of war — closing borders and waterways and halting flights in what amounts to a soft blockade. The shows of support for Qatar from the Iranians and Turkey, meanwhile, are the kind of steps that historically turn crises into open conflicts, as escalation feeds on escalation until the real war comes.

Except: In the historical examples, 1914 and all the rest, there was not a global hegemon with a military dwarfing all the rivalrous powers and a clear interest in making sure that conflicts stay local and that borders stay where they've been drawn. And the main

point of the Pax Americana, the best case for all the money we spend maintaining it, is that it promises to keep a lid on exactly these sorts of regional conflicts — by variously reassuring, cowering and protecting nations that would otherwise be engaged in arms races and shooting wars.

Thus we rely on our unpleasant friends the Saudis not to start a regional war because they depend on us for military hardware and, often, to do their fighting for them. We rely on our unpleasant enemies the Iranians not to start a regional war because they don't want to risk going up against our juggernaut directly. We expect Qatar to accept our mediation because (among other reasons) we have a major military base in their territory. And while the Qataris and all the other players — Kurdish, Turkish, Iraqi, Israeli — have ways to be the tail that wags our dog, they know there are limits, that they have to get what they want without doing anything that makes us turn on them.

All of this can work, and it has worked, in the Middle East and elsewhere: Recent decades have seen fewer major wars, fewer combat deaths and many fewer inter-state conflicts than in a multipolar, pre-Pax Americana age.

But it doesn't inevitably work, and it won't inevitably last. Our leaders can destabilize things from above, as George W. Bush did when he tried to remake Iraq by force of arms. And local actors can expose the limits of our hegemony, as they did under Obama's more hands-off style, which avoided an Iraq-level blunder but saw the world's peace weakened as bloody proxy wars increased.

Now the heir to Bush's blunder and Obama's struggles is a man who has no idea what he's doing in almost any aspect of the presidency. And not



The emir of Qatar in Riyadh last month.

surprisingly, that inexperience or incompetence is one reason the Qatar crisis has become this dangerous already. All that Trumpian glad-handing and orb-stroking in Saudi Arabia seems to have given the Saudi alliance the sense that they had room to be unusually aggressive, and since the crisis started his tweets and public statements have often seemed to clash with what our diplomats are doing. (Meanwhile the Trumpian strategy, such as it is, in Syria has us getting deeper into that proxy war ourselves.)

So we have a test: How well does American hegemony function when the colossus lacks a head? Is the basic structure of the Pax Americana — the weight of our military advantage, the geopolitical habits instilled by 25 years of unipolarity, the atrophy in other nations' readiness for interstate conflict — strong enough to keep lesser powers out of major wars even if the president of the United States doesn't understand his role or how to play it?

This time, we can reasonably hope, the answer will be yes.

But if so, don't get comfortable: The Middle East will be in a 1914 alignment for the duration of this presidency, and the kind of test happening in Qatar will come around more than once.

The New York Times

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THE OLYMPICS FOR TRUMP APOLOGISTS

In the face of James Comey’s damning testimony, Mr. Trump is greeted by a Republican chorus of excuses.

“He’s just new to this,” offered Paul Ryan, the speaker of the House, by way of explanation for President Trump’s oafish efforts to get James Comey, then the F.B.I. director, to drop the bureau’s investigation of Michael Flynn, the former national security adviser. Mr. Trump stumbled, Mr. Ryan went on, because “he wasn’t steeped in the long-running protocols that establish the relationships between D.O.J., F.B.I. and White Houses.”

With these impressive bits of casuistry, Mr. Ryan became the unofficial leader of the Trump Excuses Caucus. This caucus is composed exclusively of Republicans.

If Mr. Obama had fired an F.B.I. director who was leading an investigation of his associates — he didn’t, and there was never any such investigation — can you imagine Mr. Ryan treating the action as a learning experience?

Thin-skinned as he is, Mr. Trump ought to be offended by Mr. Ryan’s condescension. The president obviously knows that it’s wrong to interfere in an investigation. As a candidate, he repeatedly condemned Bill Clinton’s tarmac conversation with Loretta Lynch, then the attorney general overseeing an investigation into Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server.

The claim of inexperience is but one of the excuses offered by the caucus, compelled by this president’s misbehavior and misadventures to grow more inventive by the day.

During Thursday’s hearing, Senator James Lankford of Oklahoma suggested to Mr. Comey that Mr. Trump didn’t *really* want to shut down the Flynn investigation: “When the president asked you about he ‘hopes’ that you would let this go . . . this seems like a pretty light touch,” he said.

Marco Rubio, whom Mr. Trump ridiculed on the campaign trail, has sidled ever closer to his former adversary. He chided Mr. Comey for not clearing Mr. Trump. “You ever wonder why of all the things in this investigation, the only thing that’s never been leaked is the fact that the president was not personally under investigation?” he asked. Actually that information was leaked — by Mr. Trump, in his letter firing Mr. Comey.

Some Republicans, like the committee chairman, Richard Burr, appear to be taking the president’s transgressions far more seriously. And there are signs that members of the caucus are struggling to maintain their own contortions. Pressed on his absurd comment about Mr. Trump’s inexperience, Mr. Ryan admitted, “I’m not saying it’s an acceptable excuse.”

Republican officeholders are in a quandary, ashamed of Mr. Trump but terrified that if they speak out his voters will send them packing in 2018.

THE RUSSIAN STATE VS. A LIBRARIAN

A suspended sentence and a warning that there is zero tolerance for challenges, real or imagined, to the official lies about Ukraine.

There is something particularly Orwellian about accusing a librarian of hate crimes because books under her care don’t jibe with government propaganda. That, in essence, is what a Russian court did in giving to Natalia Sharina a four-year suspended sentence because the Moscow Library of Ukrainian Literature, which she formerly headed, purportedly carried literature that didn’t match Russia’s official version of what’s happening in Ukraine.

No matter that most of the books seized in the raid on the library in 2015 and cited by the prosecution were in special storage and not available to the public, or that, according to the library staff, the book deemed most offensive by the state was planted there by the police. The case was not about inciting “interethnic enmity and hatred,” nor was it about the spurious charges of embezzlement that were leveled against Mrs. Sharina.

It was about denying Ukraine’s claim to a cultural uniqueness, and even more about making clear that the state would brook no challenge to its official lies about Ukraine being in the grips of fascists manipulated by the West to denigrate Russian culture. That version of Russian-Ukrainian affairs was, in fact, how the prosecutor, Lyudmila Balandina, opened her oral arguments, leaving no doubt about the political nature of the trial. It was the librarian’s duty, she argued, to filter new books and to destroy anti-Russian ones.

Mrs. Sharina’s eminently reasonable response was an emphatic no: “I am absolutely not guilty of anything. Nobody gave a library director the right, moreover the responsibility, to censor legally published books.”

Furthermore, she said, she never “disseminated” any hostile ideas, as the state claimed she did, but maintained a library founded in 1989. Of the books listed by the prosecution as “degrading” to the Russian people, she said, only one was actually accessible to readers, a children’s magazine called Barvinok. There, a court-appointed “expert” found the “extremist” contention — one shared by much of the rest of the world — that Russia, and not only separatists, was involved in the fighting in eastern Ukraine.

But in Vladimir Putin’s Russia, rights, responsibilities and the law have fallen prey to the old Soviet notion that any deviation from the position or the lies of the state is liable to be prosecuted under vague anti-extremism legislation.

The obvious motive behind the trial is to intimidate critics of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and of its continued meddling in eastern Ukraine. That in itself is reprehensible. But to do so by accusing an innocent librarian of extremism is beneath contempt.

America made me a feminist

Paulina Porizkova

I used to think the word “feminist” reeked of insecurity. A woman who needed to state that she was equal to a man might as well be shouting that she was smart or brave. If you were, you wouldn’t need to say it. I thought this because back then, I was a Swedish woman.

I was 9 when I first stepped into a Swedish school. Freshly arrived from Czechoslovakia, I was bullied by a boy for being an immigrant. My one friend, a tiny little girl, punched him in the face. I was impressed. In my former country, a bullied girl would tattle or cry. I looked around to see what my new classmates thought of my friend’s feat, but no one seemed to have noticed. It didn’t take long to understand that in Sweden, my power was suddenly equal to a boy’s.

In Czechoslovakia, women came home from a long day of work to cook, clean and serve their husbands. In return, those women were cajoled, ignored and occasionally abused, much like domestic animals. But they were mentally unstable domestic animals, like milk cows that could go berserk you if you didn’t know exactly how to handle them.

In Sweden, the housekeeping tasks were equally divided. Soon my own father was cleaning and cooking as well. Why? He had divorced my mother and married a Swedish woman.

As high school approached, the boys wanted to kiss us and touch us, and the girls became a group of benevolent queens dispensing favors. The more the boys wanted us, the more powerful we became. When a girl chose to bestow her favors, the lucky boy was envied and celebrated. Slut shaming? What’s a slut?

Condoms were provided by the school

nurse without question. Sex education taught us the dangers of venereal diseases and unwanted pregnancy, but it also focused on fun stuff like masturbation. For a girl to own her sexuality

In Sweden, women were powerful. In France, they were dangerous. And in America?

meant she owned her body, she owned herself. Women could do anything men did, but they could also — when they chose to — bear children. And that made us more powerful than men. The word “feminist” felt

antiquated; there was no longer a use for it.

When I moved to Paris at 15 to work as a model, the first thing that struck me was how differently the men behaved. They opened doors for me, they wanted

to pay for my dinner. They seemed to think I was too delicate, or too stupid, to take care of myself.

Instead of feeling celebrated, I felt patronized. I claimed my power the way I had learned in Sweden: by being sexuality assertive. But Frenchmen don’t work this way. In discos, I’d set my eye on an attractive stranger, and then dance my way over to let him know he was a chosen one. More often than not, he fled. And when he didn’t run, he asked how much I charged.

In France, women did have power, but a secret one, like a hidden stiletto knife. It was all about manipulation: the sexy vixen luring the man to do her bidding. It wasn’t until I reached the United States, at 18, and fell in love with an American man that I truly had to rearrange my cultural notions.

It turned out most of America didn’t think of sex as a healthy habit or a bargaining tool. Instead, it was something secret. If I mentioned masturbation, ears went red. Orgasms? Men made smutty remarks, while women went silent. There was a fine line between the private and the shameful. A former gynecologist spoke of the weather when doing a pelvic exam, as if I were a Victorian maiden who’d rather not know where all my bits were.

In America, a woman’s body seemed to belong to everybody but herself. Her sexuality belonged to her husband, her opinion of herself belonged to her social circles, and her uterus belonged to the government. She was supposed to be a mother and a lover and a career woman (at a fraction of the pay) while remaining perpetually youthful and slim. In America, important men were desirable. Important women had to *be* desirable. That got to me.

In the Czech Republic, the nicknames for women, whether sweet or bitter, fall into the animal category: little bug, kitten, old cow, swine. In Sweden, women are rulers of the universe. In France, women are dangerous objects to treasure and fear. For better or worse, in those countries, a woman knows her place.

But the American woman is told she can do anything and then is knocked down the moment she proves it.

In adapting myself to my new country, my Swedish woman power began to wilt. I joined the women around me who were struggling to do it all and failing miserably. I now have no choice but to pull the word “feminist” out of the dusty drawer and polish it up.

My name is Paulina Porizkova, and I am a feminist.

PAULINA PORIZKOVA, a former supermodel, is the author of the novel “*A Model Summer*.”



ILLUSTRATION BY CRISTIANA COUCEIRO, PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHUTTERSTOCK AND DESERONTO ARCHIVES

This isn’t what Putin wanted

Stephen Kotkin

In the Senate last week, Richard Burr, a Republican from North Carolina, asked the fired F.B.I. director James Comey if he had “any doubt that Russia attempted to interfere in the 2016 elections.” Mr. Comey responded with a single word: “None.”

Indeed, he went on to tell the American public that the Russians “did it with purpose, they did it with sophistication, they did it with overwhelming technical efforts.” And he warned: “They will be back,” adding, “they are coming after America.”

Vodka shots in the Kremlin, right? Not exactly.

Doubtless Vladimir Putin continues to derive satisfaction from having assaulted American democracy and embarrassed Hillary Clinton. But the Russian president had one paramount priority: to lift Western sanctions.

The sanctions, passed in the aftermath of Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, have been effective at preventing key Russian individuals and businesses from obtaining financing and critical technology. Now, even though Mrs. Clinton managed on her own to lose a winnable election, Mr. Putin is likely to get hammered with reinforced sanctions further targeting his circle of capos, state companies and cybercriminals.

While pundits hyperventilate about Russia’s resurgence, the reality is that President Putin isn’t winning. He is, in fact, on a losing streak. His dishonest intervention in eastern Ukraine has rendered that country more pro-Western than at any time since 1991. Russia’s steadfast support for Syria’s butcher, Bashar al-Assad, is bringing Moscow little concrete gain. And costs keep piling up. According to one estimate, a quarter of Russia’s global weapons exports in 2015 were to rogue Venezuela, in transactions predominantly effected via loans. Last week, Moscow cut \$1 billion from projected state budget revenues.

So it’s unwelcome news for Mr. Putin, to say the least, that the United States Senate is not only unlikely to lift sanctions on Russia but also well on its way to strengthening them. Word from Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, is that a final bill would pass overwhelmingly and that the votes will

likely be there in the House, too, to override a presidential veto. When sanctions were imposed in 2014 and reinforced in late 2016, they took the form of an executive order, but if Mr. Graham and his colleagues have their way, the new, tougher sanctions regime will become law.

The senators leading the way are right on the policy: Russia needs to pay a significant price for its cyberwarfare against the United States and other adversaries need to be deterred. Mr. Putin’s aim is the survival of his regime. Russia’s longer-term grand strategy, such as it is, consists of hoping that the West weakens or even collapses, and helping that dissolution along. The stakes couldn’t be higher.

As our lawmakers put financial pressure on Moscow, the Senate Intelligence Committee, the House Intelligence Committee and the special counsel Robert Mueller are investigating allegations that the Trump campaign might have coordinated with Russian intelligence on the hacking and tarnishing of the Clinton campaign. Americans will eventually learn the truth.

But we don’t need to wait for their official reports to know that the notion that the Russians sought out the help of the Trump campaign is hilarious. It would be like LeBron James asking me for shooting tips. I play pickup, but c’mon.

Anyone who knows the likes of Carter Page or Roger Stone, or even more seasoned bumbler like Paul Manafort and Michael Flynn, would laugh at the idea that the Russians needed their

assistance. Did some of the characters in Mr. Trump’s circle seek to ratchet up their status or fatten their wallets by sucking up to Russians and wittingly or unwittingly expose themselves to foreign intelligence operatives? Maybe. Yet the collusion story is ultimately a sideshow. What’s consequential is the tale of Russia’s penetration of Trumpworld in order to try to influence United States policy.

Mr. Trump may be strategically vacuous — look at Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela — but he is tactically agile, particularly when it comes to covert ops. Mr. Trump, for many years, was talking to Russian oligarchs and, according to Russian officials, became a walking listening device for the Kremlin.

The Kremlin isn’t crowing about Comey. Is it true? We shall learn in due course, when

penetration rather than collusion rightly takes center stage.

The root of the unfolding political fiasco for Mr. Trump is that as a candidate and as president-elect he reportedly sought to do something beyond daft: to lift sanctions on Russia right after they had blatantly meddled in an election partly on his behalf. It’s no surprise that speculation has been feverish that he must be guilty of collusion or even of opening himself up to blackmail.

But who needs blackmail when Mr. Trump has genuine affection for strongmen like Mr. Putin (see also: Egypt, the

Philippines, Saudi Arabia). His corresponding dislike for democratic and female leaders like Angela Merkel, who happen to be constrained by the rule of law, also seems sincere. Furthermore, it is possible that the president has implored various government officials to delegitimize his election victory. (To some extent, it is.) Mr. Comey’s shrewd performance under oath on Thursday, however, amplified the prospect that Mr. Trump’s ham-handedness will mire his presidency in charges of obstruction of justice.

An investigation into Trumpworld for collusion, moreover, could morph into the equivalent of looking for bacteria on a pile of dung. Large parts of the overpriced real estate sector involve money laundering, with Russian, Chinese, Arab and even Iranian money.

That said, the irony is that Mr. Trump’s Putinophilia is correct in an unwitting way: The United States needs Russia inside the international order for its own security and global stability. Attempted isolation, which President Obama pursued, failed spectacularly. The 2016 election interference was a dramatic reminder that Russia is out there and must be reckoned with. A policy of waiting for the “inevitable” regime collapse from its economic failures misunderstands how Russia works. The only viable option is to engage. But contra Mr. Trump, that must be done from a position of strength.

What will come of Mr. Trump? Beyond the infamous associates of his chaos campaign, he has assembled numerous outstanding individuals in his administration, and the more I interact with them the more I feel they are characters in a Greek tragedy, whose central figure suffers from a ruinous character flaw. Last week, despite Mr. Trump’s efforts to sideline him, Mr. Comey returned to the stage, and his part in the drama won’t end any time soon. Unlike Mr. Putin, Mr. Trump’s fate will be determined by the institutions of our democracy, which have proved more resilient than perhaps all but our 18th-century founding fathers anticipated.

STEPHEN KOTKIN is a history professor at Princeton and a fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He is the author of the forthcoming “*Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1929-1941*.”



SERGEI KARPUKHIN/REUTERS

Vladimir Putin speaking at an economic forum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

OPINION

The G-man vs. the mob boss



Maureen Dowd

Lordy, what a fine day to be Donald Trump.

Three hours of earnest James Comey testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee and the president is not in immediate jeopardy of being indicted or impeached.

High crimes can wait. The master of low expectations headed off to his New Jersey golf club to celebrate the fact that he still has plenty of time for further self-incrimination.

If there's going to be an auto-da-fe on the Potomac, Trump would prefer to light the match. He doesn't want some shrewd, fired, leaking, taller-than-thou swamp creature to take him out when he can self-immolate.

He can do the job himself on Twitter and in TV interviews.

His talent for theatrical self-destruction and Dickensian cliffhangers was on vivid display Friday at a Rose Garden press conference when, with his best truculent bulldog face, he pronounced himself willing to testify under oath about his conversations with Comey.

"One hundred percent," Trump said.

As the Twitterati noted, the president might just be salivating at the thought of scoring higher ratings than Comey.

Trump tantalized, saying that he would reveal "sometime in the very near future" whether their conversations were taped.

Thursday's hearing underscored how adept Trump is at creating the kind of havoc that could bring down his presidency. We learned from Comey that if Trump hadn't tantrum-tweeted about a possible surreptitious tape of their Oval Office meeting, then Comey wouldn't have felt compelled to try to spur the appointment of a special counsel by leaking his memos.

This is, after all, Donald Trump, hailed by Vanity Fair Hive as "the origami-coiffed, Wharton transfer student who talks about hookers with

F.B.I. directors and now intends to overlord a putative chain of three-star hotels from the West Wing."

It was possibly, from his viewpoint, the third best day of the Trump presidency.

Even the press behemoth praised him in February for becoming president when he stuck to a teleprompter addressing a joint session of Congress and in April when his after-dinner entertainment at Mar-a-Lago, over "the most beautiful piece of chocolate cake that you've ever seen," was raining Tomahawks on Syria. "Trump Appears Dazzled by Being Able to Bomb Syria Over Dessert," read The Washington Post's headline.

We knew Trump was too big to be confined by Infrastructure Week. Infrastructure doesn't get good ratings. But a nasty gunfight between a starchy, cautious lawman and a louche loose cannon does.

The Senate hearing on Trump's White House nest of vipers drew nearly 20 million viewers — more than the N.B.A. finals. People started lining up to see the hearing in person at 4 a.m. Even Preet Bharrara, another law enforcement officer ousted by Trump, wanted in. Washington bars held special screening parties.

Who is bigger than Trump?

Sure, he got called a liar by the ousted F.B.I. chief, in what was "almost certainly the most damning j'accuse moment by a senior law enforcement official against a president in a generation," as Peter Baker wrote in The New York Times.

Sure, the president came across in Comey's testimony like a mob don, demanding fealty and calling on Comey to do him a service by seeing his way clear to letting the nefarious Michael Flynn go.

But on the bright side for Trump — which is a historically low bar — there were these things:

Comey admitted he was a leaker, and Trump is obsessed with catching leakers even though he's a world-class leaker himself. They are their own Deep Throats.

Comey confirmed that he had told the president three times that he was not under investigation.

He asserted that Loretta Lynch lost

her credibility on the Hillary email investigation when she let Bill Clinton on her plane and directed Comey to call it "a matter" rather than "an investigation."

And Comey seemed like a wimpy careerist for not confronting Trump on the Flynn meddling and looking him in the eye and saying, "What you want is wrong and we will not do it and I will no longer work for you." Unlike Trump, Comey wasn't even willing to do the dirty work of leaking himself.

The main takeaway, however, is that with the absurdist Trump administration, we have sunk very low. There's no way that the Republicans would not be calling for the head of a Democratic president who had done this stuff. They would be going nuts trying to impeach him.

Instead, we have the risible Paul Ryan trying to excuse the president's sleazy behavior with Comey by painting the most powerful man in the world as Candide.

"He's just new to this," Ryan told reporters, explaining that Trump "wasn't steeped in the long-running protocols" between the Department of Justice and the White House.

The real problem isn't that Trump is a Washington naïf, though he is. It's that he brought his own distorted reality and warped values with him.

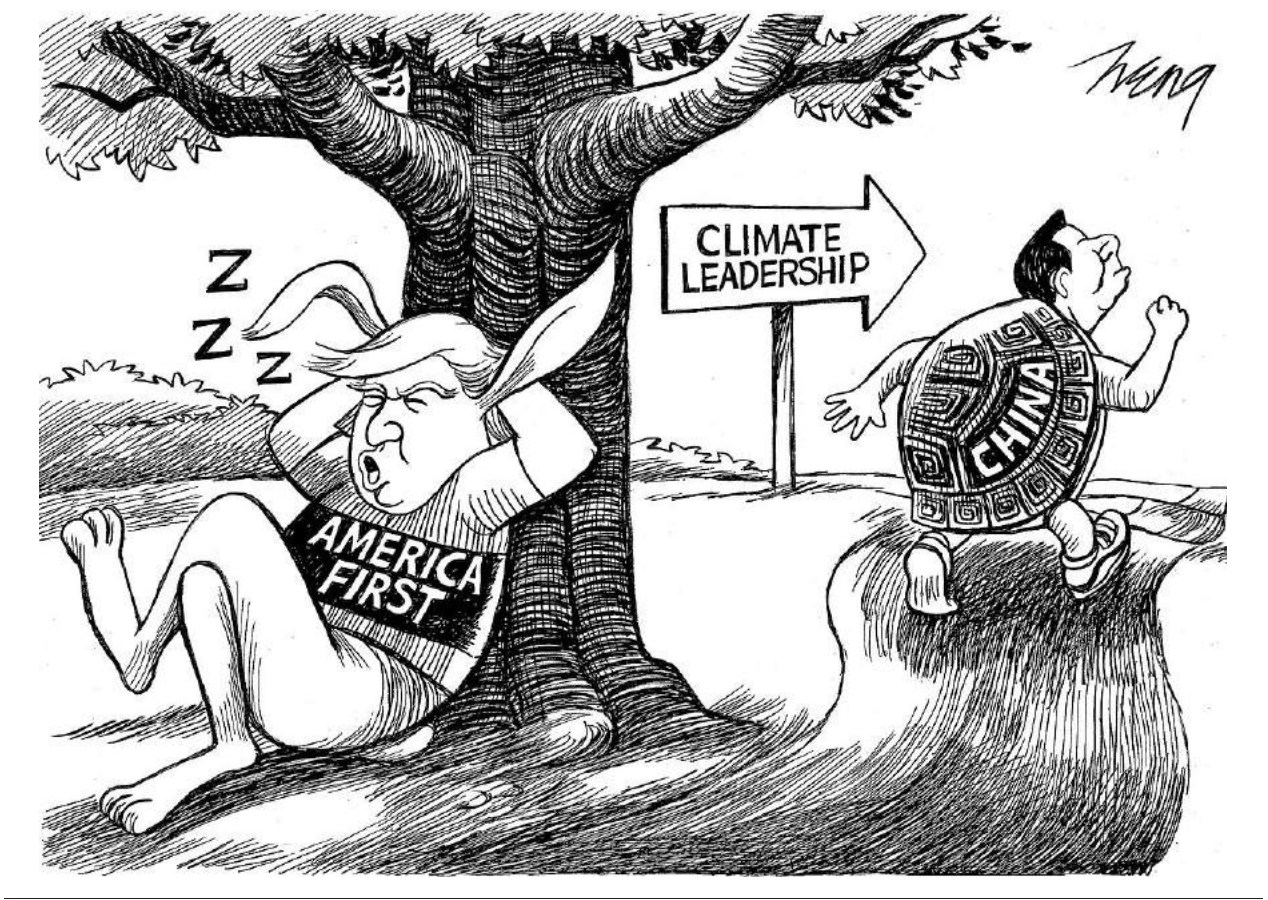
He has yet to express a scintilla of real concern that the Russians tried to hurt our democracy and alter the will of American voters.

At the press conference Friday, he reiterated his ridiculous contention that the Russia scandal is a red herring, even now that everyone agrees that it is real.

"That was an excuse by the Democrats who lost an election that some people think they shouldn't have lost, because it's almost impossible for the Democrats to lose the Electoral College, as you know," Trump said. "You have to run up the whole East Coast and you have to win everything as a Republican, and that's just what we did."

Trump is so self-regarding that he can only process the Russia hack as an insult to him. If the Russians helped him beat Hillary, then he gets less credit.

And with Comey & Co., Trump is so eager for the credit that he would rather bring himself down than allow someone else the honor.



Pain without birth control

Lena Dunham

I was 12 the first time I felt the crippling cramps. I hadn't yet gotten my period and was happily running around a state fair with my best friend, mouth full of cotton candy, when it hit me: a steady drum of pain beneath my pubic bone, a throbbing in my back that made its way down both my legs. I fell to the muddy ground. Suddenly the Ferris wheel was a nightmare, the carnival games distorted and unpleasant. I blacked out.

At the E.R. they told me it could've been a reaction to bad chicken (sure) and sent me home with Pepto-Bismol. Thus began a 15-year routine of pain, questions and nonanswers that would continue until I was found to have endometriosis at age 27. (This delay is not unusual, and the average woman suffers for years before she is given a diagnosis.) My only savior during much of that time? Oral contraception.

Birth control pills are many women's method of choice for preventing unintended pregnancy and should be covered by all insurance policies for that reason alone. But for millions of women living with endometriosis, polycystic ovarian syndrome, cystic acne, migraines, uterine abnormalities and a history of ectopic pregnancies, birth control can be a crucial, even lifesaving, medical treatment. While there is no cure for endometriosis, hormonal contraception can control pain and bleeding by stopping or significantly shortening the length of a woman's period. It helps keep women with the disease happy, healthy and able to work. Considering how little money the government puts into endometriosis research (last year, the National Institutes of Health allocated around \$10 million of its \$32 billion budget to it), it's clear that our country already has a

dangerous disregard for women with this common condition. But imagine if this disease that affects about one in 10 women of reproductive age were allowed to progress unhindered. Imagine losing these women's essential contributions to our world because of a treatable illness.

Well, if the Trump administration follows through on its plan to roll back the requirement that insurers cover birth control (revealed in leaked government documents last week), you won't have to imagine it. The documents outline a chilling proposal that would allow any employer to deny coverage of birth control at any time and for any reason. Women who rely on oral contraception would suddenly be living in a very different reality, one in which some could become disabled as their disease progressed.

For women with financial means, the rollback would be inconvenient and unfair, as other necessary medications remain covered. But for women living near or below the poverty line, it would be disastrous, jeopardizing their ability to work and provide for their families. Birth control pills can cost up to \$50 a month without insurance, and in a 2010 survey, a third of female voters said they'd had trouble paying for them at some point. Low-income women who may not have access to expensive surgeries or other more advanced endometriosis treatments will be hit the hardest because they are the most reliant on oral contraceptives to manage their condition.

More women in this country are prescribed oral contraception for medical reasons than for pregnancy prevention. If the Trump administration and

Republicans in Congress succeed in stripping funding from Planned Parenthood and giving employers carte blanche to deny women necessary medication under murky notions of moral disdain, all paths to health and wellness will disappear for a huge swath of Americans.

Between 1998 and last week, I've been to the emergency room over 50 times with endometriosis-related pain (this makes for some very cozy relationships with fun nurses, but it's not a particularly sustainable or amusing life plan). Despite my access to remarkable doctors, oral contraceptives and even alternative treatments, my disease progressed to the point that I needed surgery, from which it has taken several months to heal. I had to use a walker after the operation. Even with my attempts to add bling to the item, it was a shocking reminder of what this illness can do (and of the fact that denying birth control isn't just misogynistic but also deeply biased against people who are disabled by the disease). And yet I am one of the lucky ones. I can continue to do my job as a writer and a director, work directly with doctors to ensure my disease is controlled, and feel the support of millions when I am let down by my own body.

But many are not so fortunate. And it is not only celebrities with access to the voice of the news media who deserve the chance to be heard on this essential issue. I encourage every reader to reach out to their members of Congress and voice their opposition to this rollback, as well as to the attacks on Planned Parenthood. At a time when we have no guarantee of health care or protection from our administration, every woman you love, sick or well, is depending on you. Please do not let us down.

LENA DUNHAM is a writer and director.

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Will Iran descend into chaos?

DE BELLAIGUE, FROM PAGE 1

jihadi attack.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard quickly, but with deliberate vagueness, incriminated Saudi Arabia and the United States. It was fodder for conspiracy-minded Iranians who believe that Islamic State is the joint creation of its main Sunni adversary and its main Western adversary. In the days to come, however, once the blood has been wiped off the walls and the dead have been honored, more sober attention will turn to the security lapses that permitted squads of suicide bombers to penetrate two of the country's most iconic buildings.

Ever since the Islamic State declared its caliphate in 2014, Iran's armed forces have prided themselves on their ability to prevent the jihadis from entering Iran; indeed, commanders used to speak of a "red line" about 25 miles into Iraqi territory, which Iran would under no circumstances let the Islamic State cross.

But as early as mid-2014, reports were spreading — denied by Iran — of Islamic State militants crossing the Iraqi border, while two years later the commander of Iran's land forces admitted that the Islamic State had drawn recruits from among Iranian Sunnis. (About 9 percent of Iran's population of 79 million is thought to be Sunni, most of them members of the Kurdish and Baluchi minorities.)

In February Iran's chief prosecutor announced the arrest of Islamic State operatives "in the vicinity of Tehran"; they had been planning "mischief" to coincide with a ceremony to commemorate the 1979 revolution.

A warning of unprecedented publicness came a month later, when Islamic State operatives in eastern Iraq posted a video in Persian on their social media networks. In this video an Islamic State militant vowed, "We will invade Iran and return it to Sunni control," and Shiite militiamen — thought to be Iraqis — were executed.

The Islamic State video singled out

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, for abuse and excoriated his regime for its relatively lenient attitude toward the more than 8,000 Jews who live within its borders. "Iran shouted slogans against America and Israel," a narrator asserted, "in order to deceive the Sunnis, while the Jews of Iran live in security under the protection of the Iranian state."

That Islamic State should criticize the Islamic Republic for being too nice to its Jews suggests that a great deal other than sectarian identity separates the two. This distinction clearly eluded President Trump when he appeared to lump Iran and the Sunni jihadis together as part of the same "evil" in a speech to Muslim leaders in Saudi Arabia on May 21. And it seems to elude many others in the West.

The ideology of the Islamic State has more in common with that of the more radical elements of Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi religious establishment — including their shared disparagement of Shiites as apostates who deserve death.

In Iran, by contrast, the discourse has been more tolerant. While Iranian Shiites are taught that their version of Islamic history and practice is the correct one and while Sunnis are routinely discriminated against, nowhere have I heard ordinary Sunnis described as anything other than Muslims. Being a Sunni in Iran may not be comfortable, but it is not life-threatening.

More than a statement of sectarian rigidity, the Revolutionary Guard's statement implicating Saudi Arabia in Wednesday's attacks should be seen in the context of ever-worsening strategic tensions between Tehran and Riyadh. For all its attachment to its coreligion-

ists, Iran takes a pragmatic attitude to foreign relations, as demonstrated by its decision to supply food to the tiny Sunni monarchy of Qatar, after Saudi Arabia, and several other Gulf states, cut ties with the Qataris as a punishment for their cordial relations with the Islamic Republic.

Iran's leaders and media gleefully anticipate the destruction of the Islamic State in its strongholds of Iraq and Syria, as if this will end the problem of jihadi violence. It will not. Even if it is annihilated and the organization dissolves, or more likely mutates, its capacity to inspire and commit atrocities remains formidable. The Middle East will not be wiped clean of the poisonous anti-Shiite sentiment that the Islamic State has disseminated, and which will test the Islamic Republic for years to come.

The fear now is that if Iran is increasingly exposed to jihadi attacks, attitudes toward Sunnis — in particular the country's Sunni minority — will harden. "If we don't slap the enemy" outside our borders, Iran's public prosecutor told the public in March, "he'll come to your door." And what if he is perceived to be already inside?

The attacks on Tehran are likely to bear down on Iran both domestically and externally. Reformists have already criticized Iran's support for the secular tyrant in Syria; those criticisms may grow in volume.

Is Iran, whose military involvements around the region have brought it into conflict with the Islamic State while also ratcheting up tensions with Saudi Arabia and its fellow-Sunni clients, overreaching itself?

Add to this President Trump's recent expressions of hostility, and it is clear that the world outside Iran, a complicated and treacherous place indeed, has landed in the middle of Tehran.

CHRISTOPHER DE BELLAIGUE is the author, most recently, of "The Islamic Enlightenment: The Modern Struggle Between Faith and Reason."

Sports

Freshening up the Olympic Games

Sports Of The Times

BY JULIET MACUR

Three-on-three basketball? Yes, please. Mixed-gender relays in the pool and on the track? Just tell me when to be there.

The International Olympic Committee announced big changes to the Olympic sports menu for the 2020 Tokyo Games on Friday, and it's not too early to get excited about some of them. There will be new sports, like karate, and new events, like basketball played three against three, with one hoop — kind of like playground ball with Olympic medals at stake, but most likely without chain-link nets.

The new events will guarantee that the Games in Japan won't be anything like your parents' Olympics. Unless, of course, your parents are into skateboarding and sport climbing and surfing. Those sports were added to the program for the Tokyo Games last year.

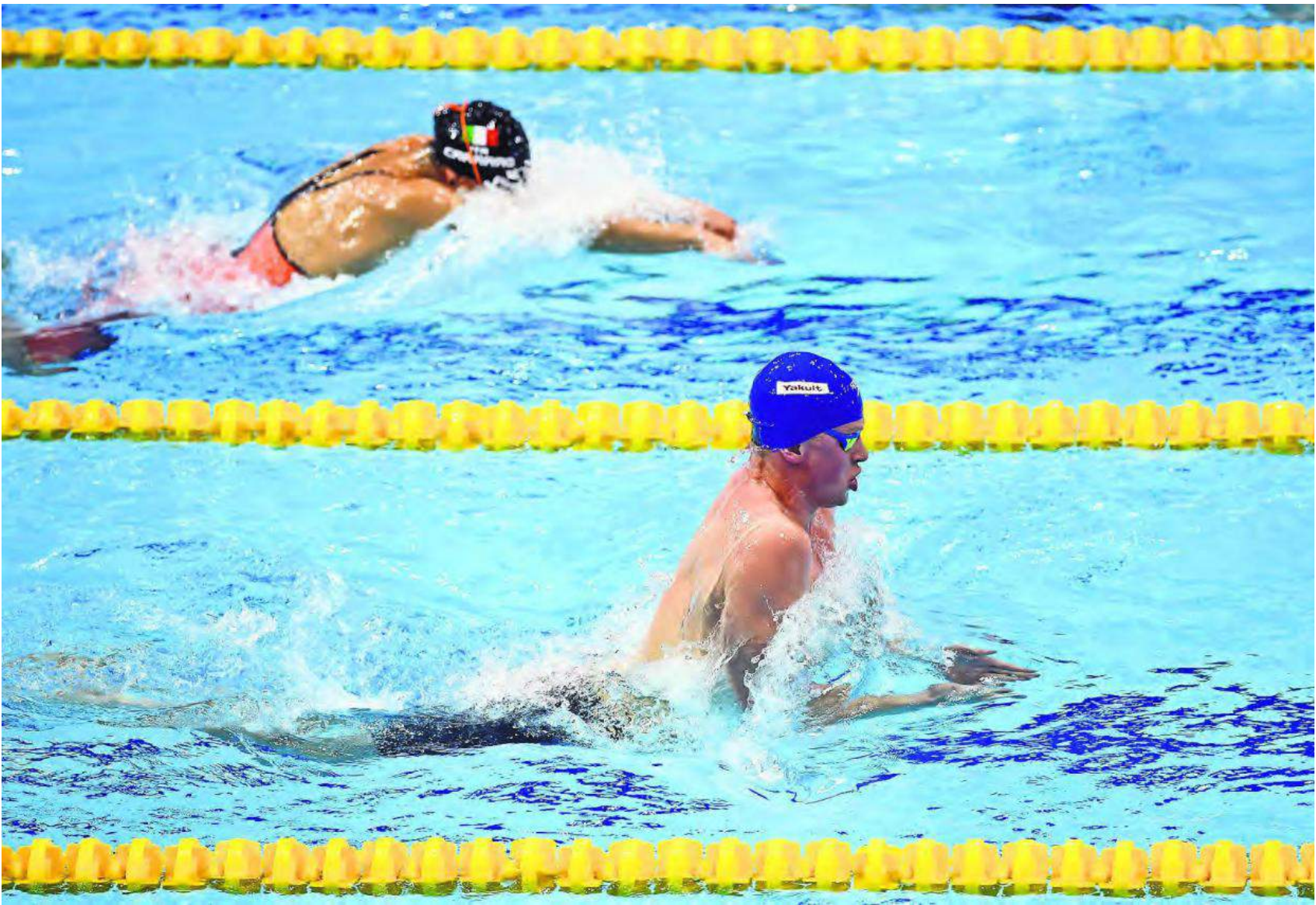
For the I.O.C. to make this happen is one step short of extraordinary. Somehow, Thomas Bach, the I.O.C. president, and his stodgy cronies have succeeded in creating a new look for the old Olympics.

Now the Games sound both fresh and fun. Not competing-in-the-nude fresh, the way the Olympics did things in the very old days, and not simply the regular kind of fun that comes from watching the best athletes in the world compete.

Fresh and fun in a way that may make younger fans want to tune in.

Now there will be mixed-gender team events in archery, and in judo. There will be a 4-x-400-meter mixed relay in track and field, in which some of the world's fastest men may run head-to-head against some of the world's fastest women, and a mixed medley in swimming, which will offer the same in the water.

Imagine what a mixed swimming relay would have been like at the 2016 Rio Games. Michael Phelps and Katie



A swimming relay featuring men and women, like this one at last year's European Aquatics Championships, will be part of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Ledecky in the same event? It's safe to assume a few people might have tuned in to watch that, perhaps just to see if they could finish, towel off, dress and eat dinner before the second-place team touched the wall.

But there are more subtle, yet more meaningful, changes, too. In Tokyo, for the first time, four more Olympic

sports — canoeing, rowing, shooting and weight lifting — will have the same number of events for women as they do for men. That means equal numbers of medals for men and women. Equality. It's a nice concept, finally backed by some I.O.C. follow-through.

Yet for all the positive change, and for all the sports and athletes who

were winners this past week, there were some losers, too. No need to shed a tear for them.

Track and field will lose 105 athlete slots, and men's weight lifting will lose an entire weight class. In all, places for 64 weight lifters were cut, part of a series of bookkeeping adjustments that will make room for the new events

while still shrinking the overall field of athletes.

It was probably appropriate those were the sports hit hardest in this I.O.C. overhaul, though. The losses for weight lifting, especially, make sense. In recent years, so many weight lifters have surrendered their medals after failed doping tests that you had to

wonder if it didn't make sense to hand them out with prepaid return envelopes.

Here's just one pitiful example: In the men's 94-kilogram class at the 2012 London Games, Poland's Tomasz Zielinski finished ninth. A disappointment, to be sure, but Zielinski was eventually awarded the bronze medal after six of the lifters ahead of him failed drug tests.

Wonderful story, right? Not so much. Zielinski, who obviously didn't win a medal for his ability to learn from other's mistakes, was kicked out of the 2016 Rio Games when one of his own tests came back positive.

Oops.

The persistent black eyes had left Olympic officials with little choice but to act to clean up weight lifting and track, or at least to impose consequences for two international sports federations that had repeatedly failed to police their own. Let's hope that other rogue sports are next in line, and that countries that do the same face the same fate as Russia, which saw its track and field team barred from Rio after a massive doping scandal.

For now, Bach has warned the International Weightlifting Federation to get its antidoping act together by December, or the I.O.C. might kick the entire sport out of the 2024 Olympics. As it is, it will lose only a few spots in Tokyo.

Maybe the I.W.F. can use that free afternoon to publish a new record book. In the retesting of drug samples from the 2008 and 2012 Olympics, more than four dozen weight lifters were found to have tested positive.

Bach called weight lifting's punishment in Friday's reordering of the Games "a strong signal" to the sport. Good for him. Standing up to cheaters, and meting out real punishment, is common sense. If one sport's athletes can't follow the rules, other athletes from other sports should get a chance.

Weight lifting has squandered too many of its chances already. Let's see what the surfers and the skateboarders and the climbers can offer.

I'll check them out between three-on-three basketball games.

Teenager takes a lead role for U.S.

COMMERCE CITY, COLO.

With knack for scoring, Christian Pulisic shines in World Cup qualifiers

BY BEN SHPIGEL

The best player on the field for the United States on Thursday night was 18 years old. That sentence could also have been written in March, during the final set of World Cup qualifying matches, and it had the chance to hold true again on Sunday, when the Americans were to play Mexico.

But that distinction will expire in September. Because that is when Christian Pulisic will turn 19.

Pulisic has already scored seven goals for the United States before Sunday's match, including four in its past four games and two in the second half on Thursday night to propel the United States to a 2-0 victory over Trinidad and Tobago in an important World Cup qualifier.

In fact, Pulisic had been directly involved in the United States' last eight goals over all — scoring four, assisting on three and winning the free kick that produced another. At this pace, Pulisic might catch his teammate Clint Dempsey, who was one away from tying Landon Donovan's national team scoring record of 57 goals, by the time he can legally celebrate the achievement with a drink.

The most impressive part, though — the one that makes fans cheer, teammates smile and his gruff coach, Bruce

Arena, lavish uncommon praise — is the way Pulisic seems to make scoring international goals, a skill that even some of the world's best players struggle to acquire, look astonishingly simple sometimes.

In the past 15 months, since making his debut for the United States in March 2016, Pulisic has helped guide a team in transition. Even though Michael Bradley still wears the captain's armband and Dempsey will soon surpass Donovan in goals, Pulisic will ultimately determine whether the Americans advance to the 2018 World Cup in Russia, and how far they will go if they do.

"Those guys don't come around very often," goalkeeper Tim Howard said of Pulisic. "So you have to enjoy it and savor it, and we certainly are. We're going to continue to lean on him as he grows."

"We're not playing in an age-group competition. No one cares how old you are, anything like that. He's got to deal with it. And he's been fine."

The goals keep coming because Pulisic moves relentlessly without the ball, probes for open space and finishes with the precision of a cardiac surgeon. In the penalty area, he stands up defenders — he does not panic or wobble — and then finds ways to beat them. In the field, battered and pummeled by older, bigger opponents trying to unnerve him, Pulisic absorbs the pounding, then gets back up.

He plays with fearlessness and confidence, befitting a talent who already has

excelled at the international level and for his German club, Borussia Dortmund, in high-stakes matches in the Bundesliga and in the Champions League. And if moved, he talks that way, too.

Since Arena replaced Jurgen Klinsmann as national team coach in November, the Americans had collected 7 of a possible 9 points in qualifying to slide into third place — and an automatic World Cup berth — in the six-team Concacaf standings. Pulisic had three goals and three assists in those three matches.

In the game in which he did not score, a 1-1 draw at Panama on March 28, Pulisic impressed Arena by handling the physical punishment and doing the hard work to set up a goal by Dempsey. Recalling the moment on Wednesday, Arena said Pulisic, listed at 5 feet 8 inches and 139 pounds, "manned up" that night.

"He's a big boy now," Arena said after Thursday's performance. "And to be honest with you, we're not playing in an age-group competition. No one cares how old you are, anything like that. He's got to deal with it. And he's been fine."

Added Howard: "I'm not sure he'd win in a street fight, but he'll always get stuck into a tackle. He's not afraid. He's a big boy playing in the Bundesliga, so he knows what it's about. He's not afraid. That's huge for us."

The first 45 minutes of the match passed quietly Thursday, and Pulisic acknowledged he felt a little tired. Though he had been training for it, he said, the altitude in Colorado zapped him.

"I guess it just took me a little while to get a second wind," he said.

His second wind arrived as a gale. In the 52nd minute, as Darlington Nagbe zipped through the midfield to work a delightful give and go with Dempsey, Pulisic intuitively darted ahead of them toward the goal. Loitering in the penalty area, he was in perfect position to pounce on a low cross from DeAndre Yedlin, sliding to stab it into the net.

Barely 10 minutes later, Pulisic pushed the ball upfield before leaving it for Yedlin, and then dashed along the right side to collect a smart diagonal chip from Jozy Altidore. After a brief hesitation, Pulisic lashed a shot inside the near post.

Taken together, the goals offered a tantalizing snapshot of the Americans' offensive potential when they — and Pulisic — have room to operate. It was, as Arena noted, his first match with a full team, or close to it, and he said that the players were still learning what he wanted them to do, and how to work together to achieve it.

"We're just getting a feel for each other," Arena said before mentioning Sunil Gulati, the president of U.S. Soccer. "If Sunil had hired me much earlier, I would have had a little bit more time with this team."



Christian Pulisic, left, is adept at dealing with abuse delivered by bigger defenders.



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OFFICIAL WATCH
SCUDERIA FERRARI

Men's Fashion Florence

Projecting a political message

BY GUY TREBAY

Nicolas Bourriaud said it first. Or maybe not first, but his argument on contemporary cultural practice, in the 2002 essay “Postproduction,” was definitive. As part of it, the French critic and curator argued that the dominant cultural figure of our era was the D.J. This was two years before Danger Mouse mashed up the Beatles and Jay Z to create “The Grey Album,” released the same year a young graduate student from Chicago was germinating ideas of his own about mixing up all kinds of cultural stuff.

The student was Virgil Abloh. Now 36, he is a consummate illustration of Mr. Bourriaud’s thesis — a creative multi-hyphenate whose résumé includes stints as the guiding spirit behind Kanye West’s Yeezy; a party D.J. known as Flat White; a collaborator with musicians like Theophilus London and Sky Ferreira and with fashion labels as unalike as Moncler and Vlone. And as a designer, his own Off-White label, founded in 2013, fuses street style to high style, and has become a favorite of Rita Ora, Beyoncé and Rihanna, not to mention assorted Jenners and Hadids.

On June 15 in Florence, Italy, this 21st-century Renaissance man will add political provocation to his list of exploits when, as a featured guest artist at the twice-yearly men’s wear fair Pitti Uomo, he will present a fashion installation created with the American artist Jenny Holzer and built around the international refugee crisis. “Having had the

keys to the city, I wanted to do something Pitti had never done, something that represented something,” Mr. Abloh said. “Not just fashion for fashion’s sake.”

Reached at his home in Lincoln Park, Ill., before he took off for Europe, the peripatetic designer, who says he flies more than 350,000 miles a year, spoke of the path that led him, a child of Ghanaian immigrants raised in suburban Rockford, Ill., to one of the cities where modern Western culture began.

How did the collaboration with Jenny Holzer come about?

She has always impacted me as a designer, the scale of her work, and in particular the projections. My idea, upon seeing these large buildings, Brunelleschi’s dome in Florence, was to project text on that, using it as a canvas to express ideas.

That’s pretty ambitious.

I was thinking about the political climate. I was thinking about the world the young generation inhabits and the headlines that are in the ether. If I have the gift of a voice, over a million Instagram followers, and kids that are inspired by moves that I make, I would be doing a disservice not to be ambitious and connect some dots. As a designer I always look for a voice that is commenting. In this case, I wanted a woman’s voice.

Ms. Holzer said the texts you will be projecting in Florence include poems about war and exile from the civilian’s



ANDREW WHITE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



VALERIO MEZZANOTTI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

viewpoint, among them Anna Swir’s “Building the Barricade,” about her experiences as a nurse during the Warsaw Uprising, which, Ms. Holzer said, “could be about Syria.” How does that relate to your experience?

The underlying premise of our collaboration is the story line of my dad making it to America from Ghana. Immigration and the plight of refugees are at the center of what the show is all about. It is evident in the clothing itself, the set design,

the garments, the text that is projected — ultimately, we decided to project the text in the plaza in front of the Palazzo Pitti — all those things that have an importance we feel passionate about.

That’s a surprising brief for a designer most associate with a label known for a high celebrity quotient and influencer cool.

I always felt that art should reflect the culture of the time. The responsibility

we have is to record the events of history within an artistic expression. Each season, I’ve found it more relevant to reflect the times in the work. Now that I have this platform of designing clothes and putting the message out there, it’s my job to do that. In a way, being a guest designer at Pitti Uomo gives me a vehicle for putting out ideas I learned from great mentors of mine about humanity and civic duty. The collection itself is a Trojan horse.

Left, Virgil Abloh, who lists D.J. and fashion designer among his many talents. Above, a look from his Off-White fall 2017 men’s show.



TOM JAMIESON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

ONLINE: **IN LONDON**
A student design at the Royal College of Art show on Thursday. [nytimes.com/style](https://www.nytimes.com/style)

What to expect at the next shows

BY JOHN ORTVED

When the days lengthen, those who work in the men’s fashion industry embark on their twice yearly caravan through the fashion capitals of Europe and the United States. After the end of London Fashion Week: Men’s, they will gather at the Pitti Uomo exhibition in Florence, Italy. Then come the runway-heavy fashion weeks in Milan and Paris, where designers will unveil looks from the spring 2018 season, and the finale next month in New York.

Pitti Uomo, June 12 to 16

At the 92nd edition of this men’s wear trade show, 1,220 labels are scheduled to present their wares to an audience expected to number around 30,000.

J. W. ANDERSON

Jonathan Anderson has left his usual



perch at London Fashion Week: Men’s for a runway show in Florence on June 14. At the 2015 British Fashion Awards, Mr. Anderson won the top prizes in the categories of men’s wear and women’s wear. And let it be known that four years before images of the male romper crowded social media feeds, he sent them down the runway.

OFF-WHITE C/O VIRGIL ABLOH

The American designer Virgil Abloh, who holds degrees in architecture and civil engineering, has a gift for marketing, which he has shown off to good effect as the creative director for Kanye West’s fashion foray. Mr. Abloh unveils his work for Off-White on June 15.

Milan, June 16 to 20

The absences of Gucci and Bottega Veneta mean more eyes on brands less likely to draw media attention.

MARNI

Francesco Risso, a veteran of Prada, took the reins from Marni’s founder, Consuelo Castiglioni, in 2016 and made his men’s wear debut for the label in January. Matthew Schneier, a critic for The Times, called it “clever in its zaniness.” He returns on June 17.

MGSM

Massimo Giorgetti’s side job as the designer for Pucci ended in April, and so he has turned his full attention to his label

MSGM. Designers on a mission to prove themselves tend to make for runway drama, so look for a statement at the MSGM show on June 18.

Paris, June 21 to 25

Givenchy, Tom Ford and Saint Laurent will not be in Paris this time around, which gives lesser-known brands like Études and Officine Générale a chance to make some noise.

BALENCIAGA

The Georgian designer Demna Gvasalia, a founder of the label Vetements, is no longer a fan of fashion shows. “It’s become repetitive and exhausting,” he told Vogue this month, to explain why Vetements is stepping away from fashion weeks. But Mr. Gvasalia is also the creative director of the French luxury house Balenciaga, and for that brand the show must go on. See it on June 21.

AMI

Alexandre Mattiussi, the design brain behind Ami, is a master of the ordinary. His clothes, which will hit the runway on June 22, are infinitely wearable.

From far left, Jonathan Anderson, who is showing at Pitti Uomo; Francesco Risso will show his Marni collection in Milan; Demna Gvasalia, who says he doesn’t believe in fashion shows, will make an exception for Balenciaga in Paris on June 21.



GUCCI

gucci.com

Culture

A collision of tech and tradition

At the Cannes festival, Netflix and Amazon were viewed as villains by many

BY GLENN KENNY

Just as giant streaming services like Netflix and Amazon have quickly established themselves as movie production entities, resentment and panic from studios and filmmakers (and what some might term a critical peanut gallery) have grown more blatant.

At this year's Cannes Film Festival, the 70th, the great Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar, the president of the festival's competition jury, said at a news conference that he couldn't imagine giving an award to a competition film that would not be shown in a theater. This came shortly after the festival issued a statement saying that in the future its competition section would not consider films that would not be shown theatrically in France.

The wording of that statement was ambiguous — some films in the competition come to the festival with no distribution deals in place, so how do you determine their French theatrical future in those cases? As for Mr. Almodóvar's throwdown, it had some unpleasant implications. Would the jury leader effectively blackball the two Netflix movies in competition, Bong Joon-ho's "Okja" and Noah Baumbach's "The Meyerowitz Stories (New and Selected)"?

Some members of the news media reportedly booed the Netflix logo at the beginning of one film in competition.

The fun continued into the festival last month, where some members of the news media reportedly booed the Netflix logo at the beginning of "Okja," then booed some more when the first 10 minutes of the movie were projected in the wrong aspect ratio, a glitch that inspired some Infowars-style conspiracy theories on Twitter. Once the movie was shown correctly, it earned an ovation and attendant critical praise on social media.

Mr. Baumbach's movie was also warmly received, and in postscreening exchanges with reporters, he enacted what is becoming a very familiar dance, explaining that his movie, while ideally meant to be exhibited on a big screen, benefited substantially from the artistic freedom Netflix had afforded him. (Neither "Okja" nor "Meyerowitz" took home any awards, as it happened.)

While Netflix garnered controversy without actively seeking it, Amazon quietly took Todd Haynes's new movie, "Wonderstruck," to the competition. As of this writing, there was no news of either company's having made major acquisitions at the festival.

Efe Cakarel, the founder and chief executive of the streaming service Mubi, which rides hard for cinephile art house



Eric Caravaca and Esther Garrel in Philippe Garrel's "Lover for a Day," which the streaming service Mubi acquired from the Cannes Film Festival.

fare, told me I shouldn't be too surprised by this.

"The first few years I came to Cannes, all I did was explain to film producers what streaming video on demand even was," Mr. Cakarel told me in a phone interview just after this year's festival (his 10th).

"And if you even broached the idea of acquiring rights to first-run movies for streaming," he continued, "they looked at you like you were crazy. Remember, Cannes 2007 was right before the introduction of the iPhone. Three years before the iPad. Yes, YouTube was around, but that sort of thing wasn't even close to what YouTube would be about then. Although you could tell, by looking at the way people used their laptops, there

was a readiness to engage with long-form material."

Mubi acquired its first title from Cannes last year, the charming Finnish period drama "The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki," based on a true story about a boxer and his match with a fearless American opponent.

This year, the service picked up "Lover for a Day," the latest film from the redoubtable, moody French auteur Philippe Garrel. As Mr. Cakarel notes, though, having the likes of Amazon and Netflix in the production game means that at a festival like Cannes, fewer and fewer films are arriving without a distributor.

"There were 18 films in competition with 13 already bought," Mr. Cakarel

said. "Every year it's getting more and more intense, and that's in part because companies such as Netflix and Amazon are part of the Cannes machine, so to speak. They're financing, producing, distributing films, often with an eye to getting them to Cannes. So now we are in the business of negotiating prebuys, too."

So, Mr. Cakarel concluded, "If you want to work with Paolo Sorrentino, you have to have the conversation with him today, before he's even embarked on whatever he is going to do next."

Mr. Sorrentino recently made a big international splash with a television mini-series, "The Young Pope," rather than a feature film. This year Cannes offered attendees looks at series by two

top-drawer film directors and Cannes veterans, Jane Campion, whose "The Piano" won the Palme d'Or in 1993, showed all six hourlong episodes of "Top of the Lake: China Girl," the second iteration of a mystery series starring Elisabeth Moss (which will air on SundanceTV and stream on Hulu beginning in September), while Mr. Lynch, whose "Wild at Heart" won the Palme in 1990, brought the first two hours of "Twin Peaks," a revival of his 1990s ABC primetime show that is now airing on Showtime.

Mr. Lynch, who expressed outrage about a decade back over the very idea of watching a movie on a phone (his words, which included "are you kidding

me" became a kind of mantra for theatrical-experience purists), is coming back to a form of cinematic storytelling after a long absence. (His last feature film was "Inland Empire," from 2006.) He and others have described the "Twin Peaks" revival not as a multipisode television series but as an 18-hour movie. Judging from what I've seen, it certainly feels like that. And it's such a singular work that it's likely to toss the whole argument for film's superiority over television (or vice versa) out the window, even as the borders between the two media grow sufficiently porous to render the question moot. In any event, movie or television series, it is absolutely available to watch on the phone, courtesy of the Showtime Now app.

Scuff, patter, chug, poke, wade, swim

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

Artists are expanding the boundaries of dance, onstage and in water

BY SIOBHAN BURKE

Anyone who thinks that Irish dance is a necessarily rigid form, defined by a stiff upper body and dancers moving in militaristic unison, should spend some time watching Colin Dunne. New Yorkers had the chance to do so when the singular Mr. Dunne, who has long moved past his flashier days as a star of "Riverdance," appeared on the small, no-frills stage of Irish Arts Center this month with the fiddler Tola Custy, the harpist Maeve Gilchrist and the piper David Power.

In their collaborative concert, "Edges of Light," Mr. Dunne's percussive dancing — performed both in the footwork known as hard shoes and, more adventurously, barefoot — functions as a fourth musician, his feet doing the work of a drummer as they scuff, patter, chug, poke and swipe at the floor. Irish dance, though inherently musical, can have a rote relationship to music, as if obeying rhythmic orders. But Mr. Dunne, who joins his wildly talented colleagues for about half of the numbers in this 70-minute show, is a soulful, integral part of the band.

"Edges of Light," created last year, brings together traditional time-honored tunes ("We decided to go for the really old ones," Mr. Dunne said before the engagement) with more contemporary compositions and devices, like the sonic manipulation of his tapping into rippling echoes. The unifying theme, as the title suggests, is dawn. Irish dawn in particular, and the music evokes both the hush and the brilliance of early morning.



Annie Saunders performing underwater in Lars Jan's "Holoscenes" in Times Square.

In one of the more unusual moments, Mr. Dunne, seated, pulls a foot toward his mouth and whistles a church bell refrain into the microphone on the sole of his shoe. Most of his experiments, though, happen while he's standing. He ushers in the work with the sound of a whisper or a gust of wind, produced through the swing-

ing action of one foot pawing the air, before moving into more intricate territory.

After his years in the "Riverdance" spotlight, Mr. Dunne took a step back and trained in contemporary dance, making an effort to soften the severity of the Irish form, with its traditionally immobile torso, and to tone down the

showmanship. The result is a nimble, slippery ease, entirely his own. As movement ricochets up through his chest, hands, hips and head, nothing is forced. He moves, it seems, because he needs to.

A few blocks southeast of Irish Arts Center, in Times Square, a crowd gathered a couple of days earlier around an



From left, Tola Custy, Maeve Gilchrist and Colin Dunne in "Edges of Light" at Irish Arts Center in New York. Mr. Dunne was an integral part of the band.

elevated water tank, trying to decipher what was happening inside: a woman, fully clothed in a skirt and shawl, performing various tasks with a basket, a footstool and some loose nectarines. The water level methodically rose and fell, so that she was sometimes submerged, sometimes wading. "Is it a magic trick?" someone asked.

It wasn't, which isn't to say that Lars Jan's "Holoscenes," a meditation on climate change, specifically water-related crises, was devoid of magic. Part of the World Science Festival and on view for five hours a night on three successive nights, the installation, with performers rotating every half-hour or so, lured thousands of passers-by into

its incandescent orbit. Watching people slow down and observe so intently cast its own kind of spell.

The first night, on the day President Trump announced he would pull out of the Paris climate accord, and the next night, I watched the piece's final two sections: Lua Shayenne, the shawled woman, trying to fill her basket with fruit or sit on her stool, followed by Annie Saunders and Geoff Sobelle (the work's choreographer), who could have been a couple arguing in the kitchen or getting ready for bed, just underwater. As the sides of the tank reflected the lights of Times Square — all that electricity — the effect was melancholic yet cautiously hopeful.

A play on water, made drop by drop

Hurricane Katrina inspires a theatrical meditation on ecology

BY LAURA COLLINS-HUGHES

The two actors were sopping wet, their clothes sticking to their skin. In a dinghy onstage at 3LD Art & Technology Center in Lower Manhattan, they were rehearsing a scene from Sheila Callaghan’s immersive new eco-play, “(Not) Water” — guzzling water ever more sloppily from a succession of increasingly large plastic containers, then throwing their empties overboard. They talked. They drank. The liquid spilled out and drenched them. The bottom of the boat sloshed with runoff.

“Act like you’re not wet at all,” their director, Daniella Topol, called from a few yards away on a recent afternoon, and the performers stopped wiping their eyes. Letting the water course over them, they just kept on going.

It’s a tricky element, water — messy, difficult to contain and, for Ms. Callaghan and Ms. Topol, who conceived “(Not) Water” together, elusive as a dramatic subject. It has taken nearly a dozen years for the play, which began in 2005 with a monologue about Hurricane Katrina, to find its shape.

“It’s about water quality, which we have control over, and water quantity, which we don’t have control over,” Ms. Callaghan said from Los Angeles, where she writes for the Showtime comedy “Shameless,” and where the yearslong drought informed her thinking about water. Yet it is such an enormous topic that it was not only hard to grasp but also exhausting to confront. The hyper-awareness of details concerning any number of issues (climate change, safe drinking water, use of natural resources) periodically led to what she called “urgency fatigue.”

“We’re trying to hold a storm in our hands,” a character named Not Sheila says in the play — or did in a recent draft, which has been updated since. Because that’s the thing about this show: Its state of flux has been a constant. Hurricane Sandy, the lead-tainted water in Flint, Mich., even President Trump’s announcement this month that the United States would pull out of the Paris climate accord — with each significant event, the play has morphed anew. Waist-deep in “(Not) Water,” Ms. Callaghan, 44, and Ms. Topol, 42, just keep on forging.

Presented by the theater company New Georges at 3LD, where it opens on Thursday, the full-length play is part of a program called Works on Water that includes an exhibition of visual art. It joins a growing body of plays addressing climate change and the chaos it’s wreaking (Cynthia Hopkins’s “This Clement World,” Sharyn Rothstein’s “By the Water,” Madeleine George’s “Hurricane Diane,” the Civilians’ “The Great Immensity”).

Ms. Callaghan said her show — a multimedia experience in which video has a prominent role — is intended not as a polemic but as a catalyst for conversation, even if “there’s a little ornery activist heart at the core of the play.” Part provocation, part meditation, it embraces silliness, ventures into scariness and from the start demands a measure of participation from audience members. On arrival, they choose their own seats from a heap of buckets, plastic crates, camp chairs and coolers.

The set designer, Deb O, described it as the kind of unruly pile you see in post-flood news photos, where people’s belongings have been removed from their homes and tossed onto their lawns. “You just pull up that 5-gallon bucket and you sit on that and look at what has happened,” she said.

Ms. Callaghan’s problem, when Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in 2005, was that she couldn’t stop looking. The storm didn’t affect her directly; she was living in New York then, and she



PHOTOGRAPHS BY VINCENT TULLO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Above, Mike Shapiro, left, and Ethan Hova in “(Not) Water,” opening this week.



From left, April Matthis in rehearsal, and Deb O, Daniella Topol and Susan Bernfield, part of the team behind the play.



watched television footage of the disaster’s victims from the comfort of her gym. Outraged, she became obsessed with both the government’s failure to protect vulnerable people and the power of something as essential and everyday as water to “turn on us,” she said.

The piece that became “(Not) Water” has gone through many work-in-progress incarnations in the years since. One staging, at Here, was so early in the artists’ ecological awareness that each audience member was given a bottle of water — a gesture the team later discarded as wasteful, Ms. Topol said. Another version, at the 14th Street Y, featured a doughnut-shaped stage by Mimi

Lien, the Tony-nominated set designer of “Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812,” with the audience on the inside looking out.

Ms. Callaghan and Ms. Topol had a welcome success when they collaborated on the ambitious, multimedia “Dead City” in 2006, also with New Georges at 3LD. (Two actors from that show, April Matthis and Rebecca Hart, are also in this one.) “It was, both of us, our first big deal,” said Ms. Topol, who is now the artistic director of Rattlestick Playwrights Theater. But they couldn’t get “(Not) Water” to breathe the way they wanted.

Then, in November, at a reading the

day before the presidential election, Ms. Callaghan presented the company with a fresh draft structured around a couple of new characters named Not Sheila and DT: stage versions of Ms. Callaghan and Ms. Topol.

The characters have the same humor and rapport as their real-life counterparts, and they get similarly overwhelmed as they wrestle with the same storytelling problems. As a frame, it’s self-aware, meta and riskily so.

“Daniella was horrified because first of all, I don’t remember asking her permission to put her in the play,” Ms. Callaghan said. “She wasn’t entirely comfortable with it. Because it is so revealing. It

reveals on some level that we were lost.” Yet that way of approaching the play, allowing those characters to observe and respond to the world around them, seemed at last to be the key. “It was the first time it ever started to feel alive,” Ms. Callaghan said.

More recently, she borrowed a potent Hurricane Sandy memory from Susan Bernfield, the producing artistic director of New Georges, whose ailing mother was using an oxygen tank and had to be evacuated from her apartment by firefighters after the storm knocked the power out. A character named Susan Bernfield Artisticdirector tells that story.

Deb O also has a mom story, and she told it when Ms. Callaghan and Ms. Topol called to feel her out about joining the project. “There was a barrage of questions,” Deb O recalled. “My relationship with water, and have I thought about water, and what have I done with water.” She mentioned the parasite in the water supply in her native Milwaukee that killed scores of people and sickened 400,000 others, including her mother, in 1993.

Plastic water bottles are objects of ecological loathing for Deb O, and a sprawling sculpture that is part of her “(Not) Water” set uses about 2,000 of them, scavenged from various sources and destined for recycling. But for many years after that parasitic outbreak, tap water scared her. She drank her water from plastic bottles instead. Now she wonders how safe that was.

That’s the kind of skeptical awareness that “(Not) Water” aims to elicit, backing even its futuristic bits with science dramaturgy by the group Guerilla Science. And while Ms. Callaghan said she doesn’t know whether, after all this time, the show will mean anything to anyone but its creators, Ms. Topol sounded sanguine about the product of their oh-so-slow journey — a show she would love to tour. Years ago, when they were still dissatisfied, they made the deliberate choice not to rush it.

“Our taste has changed and evolved, and our confidence has changed and evolved, and our sense of courage to say, ‘We don’t know what we’re doing, and that’s O.K.,”’ Ms. Topol said. “We’ve just grown up together.”

“I would wish that for all artists,” she added. “To trust themselves and to give themselves time and space for the complex things.”

Wired for isolation

BOOK REVIEW

TOUCH
By Courtney Maum. 306 pp. G.P. Putnam’s Sons. \$26.

BY ANNALISA QUINN

When the comedian Samantha Bee filmed in Rikers Island prison in New York City, she had to leave her phone in a lockbox. “I felt like I had gone on a Caribbean vacation,” she said in a recent interview in The Hollywood Reporter. “It was the most free I’ve felt in months.”

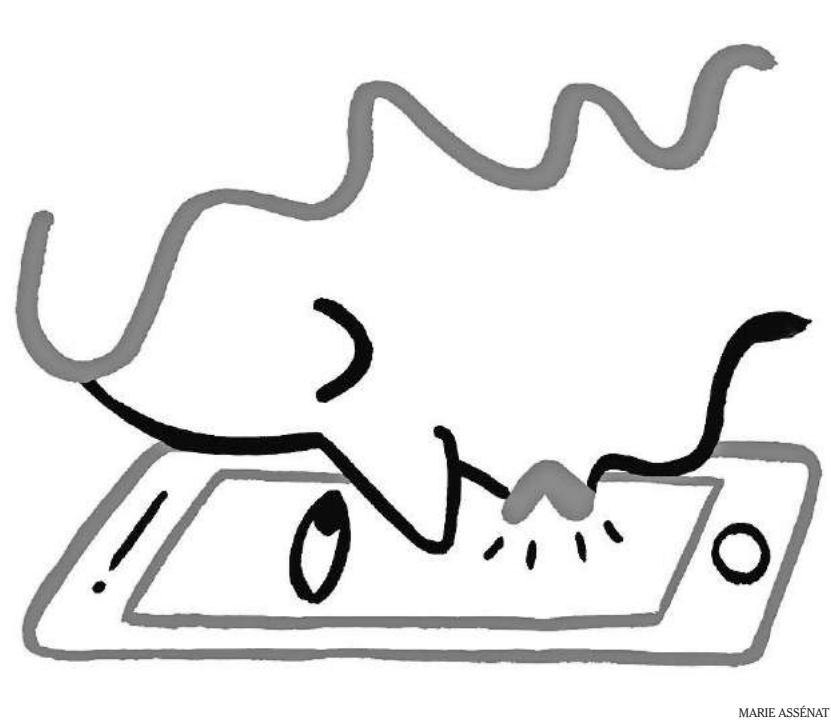
This line, in its biting bad taste, could have come from “Touch,” Courtney Maum’s exuberant satire of the “wired rich,” set in a near future when “the only thing that people wanted was to stay alive and order takeout and play quietly with their phones.”

The protagonist, Sloane Jacobsen, is a forecaster of consumer desires, famous for predicting the touch-screen “swipe.” (“As elegant as a conductorial

movement . . . swiping was sensual. Swiping was cool.”)

Maum’s writing is easy, eager and colloquial. People “quip” or “croon” rather than speak, metaphors mix promiscuously, points are made twice, italics tilt madly from every page. Less finished but more lively than Maum’s last novel, “I Am Having So Much Fun Here Without You,” “Touch,” sometimes reads like an email from a hallucinating brand strategist trapped on a silent retreat. (“A coming craze for scuba diving. Domestic birds and ant farms. A clamor for new pets. A baby born with webbed fingers, an evolutionary edge. Proof that humans didn’t need separated digits any longer, just a nub to scroll,” Sloane thinks in one of her Sibylline predictive trances.)

Over the course of “Touch,” Sloane loses faith in her job and in techie consumerism, and turns instead toward the messy warmth of real relationships. “Human touch is *endangered*,” Sloane says, going off-script in a meeting. “You think the future belongs to the type of people who are



going to sync their fridges with their smartphones, but people are ready — not tomorrow, but *now* — to be vulnerable and undirected and *intimate* again.”

Worry about the decline of intimacy is almost reassuringly constant. I thought of E. M. Forster’s lament about progress and alienation in “Howards End”: “Month by month the roads smelt more strongly of petrol, and were more difficult to cross, and human beings heard each other speak with greater difficulty.”

Sloane’s stances are not radical (sex over iPhones; family over alienation), but *what* she thinks is less interesting than *how*. Maum shines when she writes about creativity, the slow burn and then sudden rush of ideas that lead Sloane to change her life.

Having new ideas feels like love. We use the same liquid, luminous metaphors for both: lightning, fire, magma, light bulbs. But while love stories are almost mandatory parts of novels, good writing about creativity is rare.

Consider Sloane, brainstorming product colors inspired by nature: “Oh, the jolted thrust of something finally right! The outer body flash of it, the hot thrush of quickened heart. Textured images started to burn up at her: tarnished metal, corroded copper. Mica. Moss.” Never mind that Sloane is thinking about colors for tablets. Those visions illuminate the way to her humanist return to nature.

In Forster’s 1909 dystopian story “The Machine Stops,” people live in isolation underground, transmitting images of themselves to thousands of “friends” around the world via glowing plates. They delude themselves into thinking they are connected. How could he have predicted the internet so well if the habits it facilitates and the needs it fills were not in us already? Here we are a hundred years later, with different and better tools in the same cycles of alienation, longing and return.

Annalisa Quinn is a contributing writer, reporter and literary critic for NPR.

TRAVEL

Finding 'pura vida' on the Costa Rican coast

FRUGAL TRAVELER

Around Drake Bay, a tropical getaway can be had for very little money

LUCAS PETERSON

Early morning is the best time to be awake in Costa Rica. In the soft, bluish light and calm, cool breezes, the previous day's heat and humidity are just a memory.

This particular morning, though, there was a problem. I walked over to the Land Cruiser owned by my host, Edu, and joined him in considering a flat rear tire. I was scheduled to go on a tour of Corcovado National Park in 30 minutes, and Edu was supposed to take me to the pickup point.

"It's no problem," he said, and he pulled out a cellphone to make a call. "Pura vida." Pura vida, an unofficial motto that means "pure life," is rarely used in a literal sense in Costa Rica. Instead, it's an all-purpose saying that can be applied to any number of situations: greetings, farewells or, in this case, "don't worry about it."

Ten minutes later, a distant buzzing could be heard from down the dirt path that leads up to Rio Drake Farm, a small hotel that Edu oversees with his wife, Sabrina. It was a small motorbike coughing gray smoke. He slipped the rider a few bills and told me to hop on the back. Then we were off, dipping and diving through the forest on the sputtering bike, rushing to make the boat to Corcovado, as the sun rose higher in the sky.

In the Central American wilderness, it's easy to lose yourself: Gambling through European capitals is always fine and worthwhile, but you never really forget about the emails, voice mail messages and bills that await you at home. At Drake Bay, on the richly biodiverse southwestern coast of Costa Rica, it's possible to truly disconnect. Better yet, I was able to relish this thoroughly enjoyable tropical getaway, full of hiking, snorkeling and wildlife encounters, for a very reasonable sum.

Costa Rica has no standing military, focusing on other issues like environmental conservation. Its efforts (about 25 percent of the country is protected) have paid off: While Costa Rica occupies 0.03 percent of the earth's surface, it has almost 6 percent of the world's biodiversity. It's the ideal place for an ecologically conscious vacation.

Documents in order (you may not be allowed on the plane to Costa Rica unless you've had the yellow fever vaccination and a "proof"), I chose the Osa Peninsula, on the Pacific coast



The canopy of the rain forest in Corcovado National Park. While Costa Rica occupies 0.03 percent of the earth's surface, it encompasses almost 6 percent of the world's biodiversity.



along the monkey trail on Rio Drake Farm's property and saw a couple of capuchins moving through the branches above me. Other activities, like a fishing trip (\$325) or seeing poisonous dart frogs (\$90), can be arranged.

I chose snorkeling (\$89) and a tour of Corcovado National Park (\$99). With these, Edu simply acts as a middleman in arranging the tour. If you want to save a few dollars, you can book directly with the tour operator (Manolo Tours, in this case), but you may just find it easier to book it all through Edu.

At 6:30 a.m., after a night of driving rain, I headed out to snorkel. A group of us (roughly a dozen, mostly Europeans) gathered and greeted our tour guide, Gustavo, and his son, with matching curly hair. We took a 45-minute boat ride out to Isla del Caño, a small island due west of Drake Bay. During the journey, we spotted a pod of spotted dolphins playing in the spectacularly blue water and red-footed and brown boobies flying alongside our boat.

We arrived, donned our provided flippers and snorkeling gear and plunged into the water. The colors were spectacular. Despite the previous night's rain, the fish and coral were bright and clear. Immediately Gustavo said, "There's a shark." I froze. Gustavo was unperturbed. He took his GoPro camera and went to move closer to the white-tip reef shark, floating not far below the surface. He did that frequently during our outing, demonstrating superhuman lung capacity and disappearing minutes at a time to get a better look.

And there was plenty to see. No sooner had we moved past the shark than a black sea turtle swam by, plunging deep into the dark-blue ocean below. After that, it was a symphony of crackling coral and a parade of bright yellows, metallic greens and deep, shiny blacks. Parrotfish swam alongside us, followed by a few clown fish. We encountered a school of horse-eyed jacks, hundreds of small, silvery fish swirling and flashing brightly like anglers' lures in the water.

THE TOUR OF Corcovado National Park provides just as much excitement for those who wish to remain on solid ground. For the most part, anyway. The day after the snorkel tour, we had something of an amphibious landing upon arriving near Sirena Beach (pack flip-flops or water shoes, as well as drinking water and sunblock). After my exhilarating motorbike ride from Rio Drake, I boarded the boat to Corcovado with just minutes to spare. It's a lengthy ride down the peninsula to the park—nearly 90 minutes each way.

Our guide, Julián, was no-nonsense. "Be careful," he told the group of us. "We have some of the most poisonous snakes in the world." I pulled my socks up slightly. "This is the land of the jaguar, the puma and the tapir," he said. There were also 22,000 butterfly species in this forest alone, he said. With sharp eyes, he pointed out a cute little coati-mundi poking around in the dirt, then a crested caracara bird.

"We must be quiet," he said, leading us to a small clearing where a tapir at least six feet long was lying with her baby. We walked past majestic ceibas and thick, rosy ficus trees, all while gazing up at playful spider monkeys, a couple of dozing howlers and the odd black-mandible toucan (Julián helpfully brought a small telescope so we could get a closer look).

Some of the sightings were clearly semiplanned by the guides. There was one particular tree where Julián seemed to know a three-toed sloth would be hiding with her baby. But halfway through our roughly four-hour hike, Julián's face lit up after having talked excitedly to an

other tour guide. "There's something I haven't seen before," he explained.

After another 10 minutes of walking, he looked through his telescope. "That's it!" he said, and motioned to us to take a peek. There were two silky anteaters, or pygmy anteaters, high in the branches

of a tree, their fuzzy, pinkish-brown tails intertwined. It was hard not to feel enthusiasm along with Julián, who looked positively gobsmacked. "I've never seen this," he said, beaming.

Pretty soon, I had a smile on my face as big as Julián's.



Capuchin monkeys near Drake Bay. Rio Drake Farm, a small hotel, has a monkey trail.

in the south, over the more developed Nicoya Peninsula in the northwest precisely because it was more remote and difficult to reach and therefore more likely, I reasoned, to have an experience dominated more by nature than by other tourists.

Once within Costa Rica, your best bet to reach Drake Bay are Nature Air and Sansa Airlines; I flew Sansa. Expect to pay around \$80 to \$120 each way. (American dollars are widely accepted, though I recommend getting some colones, the local currency.) A few essential tips: Sansa doesn't leave from the main airline terminal in San José. It's in a separate building nearby, so make sure to double check where you're going. Your boarding pass is simply a reusable laminated card with the name of your destination airport on it—it doesn't have your name or any other personal information on it, so don't misplace it.

And while most airports usually have a decent selection of small stores to buy food, supplies and other sundries, it's sorely lacking in San José's. Searching for sunscreen, I found a store in the terminal selling a small tube of 50 SPF lotion for 9,500 colones, or a little under \$17. A similarly sized container of SPF 70 was going for 13,000 colones. When I inquired as to the difference in price, the man at the counter shrugged and pointed at the number 70. "Bigger number," he said. I recommend bringing your own sunscreen—and bug spray.

AFTER A 45-MINUTE flight on a Cessna propeller plane, I was in Drake Bay. Edu, wearing cargo shorts and a lime-green ball cap, found me immediately among the dozen passengers. We climbed into his Land Cruiser and made one of the

briefest airport transfers I've ever experienced. The drive to Rio Drake Farm took about a minute.

In the heat and humidity of the afternoon, Edu walked me past a hand-painted sign that read "Bienvenidos a Rio Drake Farm" and past papaya and marañón (cashew fruit) trees to show me my modest room. For \$54 a night, I had my own room with a private bathroom. You can pay less, at nearby Cabanas Manolo, for example (\$40 per night, but you'll have to pay for transportation from the airport) and also much, much more: At high-end eco-

"We must be quiet," he said, leading us to a small clearing where a tapir at least six feet long was lying with her baby.

tourism spots like the Luna Lodge, also on the Osa Peninsula, you can pay over \$200 a night for a private bungalow.

Still, my accommodations were satisfactory. The bed was basic but serviceable, and the room came with a fan that was weak but provided some relief on sweltering nights (and helped keep mosquitoes at bay). A slow Wi-Fi connection is available to guests for a couple of hours every night. But any lack of creature comforts was compensated by other amenities: breathtaking sunsets from the open dining area, the ability to ride a kayak on the Rio Drake and proximity to a nearly deserted beach and nature trails.

One day I trekked across a rope bridge to reach the gorgeous beach, which I had almost completely to myself. Another morning I went hiking



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