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Rumblings in favor of a fuzzy 'Brexit'

David Goodhart

OPINION

LONDON There is a sense of drift and stalemate about British politics today: A severely weakened prime minister who may soon be out of office. A public that is restless and anxious, as it becomes clear that our political leaders have failed to prepare people for the difficult decisions ahead on “Brexit.” And an influential minority still passionately opposed to the decision to leave the European Union.

After the unexpected victory for national-communitarian sentiment in the Brexit referendum in 2016, the general election in Britain last month featured an equally unexpected showing by the well-educated, liberal pro-Europeans — especially younger ones — rejecting Prime Minister Theresa May’s so-called hard Brexit of prioritizing immigration control and leaving the European Union’s single market and customs union.

Britain can make of its postelection political stalemate a virtue of necessity and do what it does best: muddle through.

But this stalemate between the country’s two dominant “values” blocs may turn out to be benign. Britons excel at constructive ambiguity, or “muddling through,” and a constructively ambiguous Brexit may be exactly what both Britain and Europe need.

One thing is clear: The British decision to opt for the nation-state and self-government rather than the supranational embrace of the European Union is not going to be reversed, however quixotic it seems to the internationally minded everywhere.

Opinion polls taken both before and after the June election suggest that around 70 percent of Britons think that it is the duty of the government to deliver Brexit. There is little regret among the 52 percent who originally backed leaving the European Union, and about half of the 48 percent who voted to remain now say that because it passed, it should go ahead.

It is possible that a sharply deteriorating economy could start to erode that large majority for Brexit, and if you dig down a bit deeper into the numbers, there is no clear majority for any variety of Brexit, except the having-your-cake-and-eating-it-too one with maximum return of control and minimum disruption. And that one is not on offer from the European Union — as the European Union’s chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, keeps reminding everyone.

Nevertheless, a series of nudges and **GOODHART, PAGE 12**



Lives centered on a leaf A farmer collecting khat in the village of Infranz, Ethiopia. About half of the country’s youth, many of whom are unemployed, are thought to chew khat, a psychotropic leaf that has amphetaminelike effects. Khat, however, remains legal because it is a big source of government revenue. **PAGE 4**

On Arctic waters, rising risks

Remote region is seeing more ships but may be unprepared for disasters

BY HENRY FOUNTAIN

When the Crystal Serenity, a 1,000-passenger luxury liner, sails in August on a monthlong Arctic cruise through the Northwest Passage, it will have a far more utilitarian escort: a British supply ship.

The Ernest Shackleton, which normally resupplies scientific bases in Antarctica, will help with the logistics of shore excursions along the route from Alaska to New York through Canada’s Arctic Archipelago.

But the escort ship will also be there should the Serenity become stuck in ice or if something else goes wrong. The Shackleton can maneuver through ice and will be carrying emergency water and rations for the liner’s passengers and 600 crew members, gear for containing oil spills and a couple of helicopters.

As global warming reduces the extent of sea ice in the Arctic, more ships — cargo carriers as well as liners like the

Serenity taking tourists to see the region’s natural beauty — will be plying far-northern waters. Experts in maritime safety say that raises concerns about what will happen when something goes wrong.

“It’s what keeps us up at night,” said Amy A. Merten, who works on maritime response issues at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Although nations with Arctic lands, including the United States, have agreed to assist one another in the event of disaster, there is very little emergency infrastructure in either American or Canadian Arctic waters, or in Russia along what is known as the Northern Sea Route.

Dr. Merten and others give Crystal Cruises, the Serenity’s owner, high marks for its preparations, and the ship, with the Shackleton tagging along, made its first Northwest Passage cruise last summer without incident. Edie Rodriguez, Crystal’s president, said the company spent three years getting ready for that first Arctic voyage. “Most important, it was about preparedness and safety,” she said.

But what keeps Dr. Merten and other experts on edge is the possibility that a ship that is less prepared could have a



Crystal Serenity, a 1,000-passenger luxury liner, in Nome, Alaska. As global warming reduces sea ice in the Arctic, more ships will be plying far-northern waters.

problem that would require an extensive search-and-rescue operation.

There are relatively few government icebreakers or cutters in the region, and a long-range airlift by helicopters would be extremely difficult. So an emergency

operation would most likely rely heavily on other commercial ships that happen to be in the area. A rescue could take days.

“There’s just no infrastructure for **RE-ARCTIC, PAGE 5**

Hello Kitty’s rebellious anticapitalist cousins

CRITIC’S NOTEBOOK

BY AMANDA HESS

My new favorite cartoon character is a white-collar red panda with anger issues.

Her name is Aggretsuko, and she’s a young Japanese “office associate” who leaps, tail wagging, into her first job, only to suffer countless slights at the hands of her co-workers. In each online micro-episode — all are one minute long, perfect for Instagram snacking — her colleagues in the accounting department of a Tokyo trading company drop work on her desk at closing time, slurp noodles over her shoulder and inappropriately brag about their dating exploits.

As the indignities mount, Aggretsuko smiles courteously and types studiously. But inside her head, she slips into rage mode, where she chugs beers and performs death metal karaoke as flames spark around her face. Her inner monologue spills out in a



Aggretsuko, a red panda with anger issues, is the latest character from Sanrio, the consumer goods empire that plasters adorable images on lunchboxes and stationery.

guttural scream: “DON’T BELITTLE MEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!” and “BUZZ OOOOOOOOOFF!” After following her travails for a few weeks, I downloaded Aggretsuko wallpaper to my phone so that I see her whenever I

check my email. She is perched on a rolling chair, paws hovering over the keyboard, a coquettish smile on her face. The caption reads: “I HATE THIS.”

Aggretsuko’s experience surely

resonates with many young women who have come up against the sexist, or just plain dehumanizing, demands of corporate culture as they embark on careers. Her struggle is to project an image of sociability, compliance and quiet competence over her barely concealed seething indignation. In a cynical coda to each video, the death metal cuts off, our heroine clicks her heels together and purrs, “Tomorrow is a new day!”

As a concept, Aggretsuko isn’t exactly revolutionary — she’s basically a feminist Dilbert. More interesting is where she came from: She is the latest character from Sanrio, the Japanese consumer goods empire that plasters adorable images on lunchboxes and stationery sold around the world.

For decades, Sanrio’s central export has been Hello Kitty, an emblem of infantile feminine charm who wears an oversize bow on her head and doesn’t even have a mouth. She embodies the Japanese concept of kawaii, a cuteness ascribed to the small, vulnerable and **SANRIO, PAGE 2**

The New York Times

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PROFILE
MUSE, MYANMAR

Olive Yang, who died recently at 90, had links to C.I.A and opium trade

BY GABRIELLE PALUCH

She was born to royalty in British colonial Burma, but rejected that life to become a cross-dressing warlord whose C.I.A.-supplied army established opium trade routes across the Golden Triangle. By the time of her death two weeks ago at 90, she had led hundreds of men, endured prison and torture, generated gossip for her relationship with a film actress and, finally, helped forge a truce between ethnic rebels and the government.

Olive Yang grew up as one of 11 children in an ethnic Chinese family of hereditary rulers of what was then the semiautonomous Shan State of Kokang. According to relatives, she wore boys' clothes, refused to bind her feet and frequently fell in love with her brothers' romantic interests.

Concerned about their unconventional daughter, her parents arranged for her to marry a younger cousin. Shortly after she became pregnant, archives show, she left her husband to pursue a life among opium-trafficking bandits. Her son, Duan Jipu — named for the American jeeps Ms. Yang had seen in China during World War II — was raised by other family members.

Ms. Yang's pursuit of a career as a militia leader and opium smuggler grew in part out of her desperation to escape traditional gender roles, her relatives said. "It was a temptation she couldn't resist," wrote her niece Jackie Yang in "House of Yang," a family history published in 1997.

By age 25, she commanded hundreds of soldiers guarding caravans of raw opium on mules and trucks across the hills to the Thai border. Those trade routes served what would eventually become the world's most productive opium-growing region, supplying raw ingredients for the heroin trafficked across the United States and Europe.

Ms. Yang partnered with remnants of the Chinese Nationalist troops who had been defeated by Mao's Communists but continued to fight from havens in Burma. Intelligence dispatches at the National Archives in Yangon described her as a menace to the peace.

The Nationalist troops had won support from the United States Central Intelligence Agency because of their shared interest in stemming the spread of communism during the early stages of the Cold War. The covert plan, called Operation Paper, included an agreement by which American weapons were airlifted to Southeast Asia using planes owned by the C.I.A., Alfred W. McCoy wrote in his 1972 book, "The Politics of Heroin," as the Nationalists and Ms. Yang's troops financed their operations through opium sales.

The C.I.A.-supplied arms found their way into Ms. Yang's hands in 1952, as documented by the Burmese government in a complaint submitted at the United Nations General Assembly the next year. Ms. Yang's army was observed traveling across the border to an airfield in Thailand, where an unmarked C-47 aircraft from Taiwan, the seat of the Chinese Nationalist government, was reported to have unloaded weapons.

Shortly thereafter, Ms. Yang was in-



Olive Yang, front center, around 1956. After her older brother abdicated in 1959, Ms. Yang became the de facto ruler of Shan State.



Ms. Yang at her family's home in Muse, Myanmar, in 2015. According to relatives, she wore boys' clothes and refused to bind her feet.

tercepted by the Burmese authorities while traveling by car from the Thai border with her deputy, Lo Hsing Han. She spent five years in prison in Mandalay, on charges that she helped Chinese Nationalist soldiers illegally cross the border into Burma. It was the first of many imprisonments for Ms. Yang and Mr. Lo.

Mr. Lo would go on to earn the designation "kingpin of the heroin traffic in Southeast Asia," by United States drug enforcement officials, after striking a deal with the Burmese military government that allowed him to resume trading in opium in return for assisting the government against rebel forces.

After her older brother Edward abdicated in 1959, along with dozens of other hereditary rulers in Shan State, Ms. Yang took control of his former army, becoming the de facto ruler of the territory. She also, according to relatives, entered into a relationship with a Burmese movie actress, Wah Wah Win Shwe, lavishing her with gifts and adding her name to the deed of her house in Yangon.

Ms. Yang's family considered them a couple, though in an interview in 2015, Ms. Win Shwe, who still lived in a house on Ms. Yang's former property, denied

By age 25, she commanded hundreds of soldiers guarding caravans of raw opium on mules and trucks across the hills to the Thai border.

an affair. In any case, the arrangement came to an abrupt end in 1963, when Ms. Yang was arrested by police officials under Gen. Ne Win, who had seized power in Burma the year before. She spent six years in Yangon's Insein Prison, where she reportedly endured torture.

Her career took another turn in 1989, when she was in her 60s. Retired as a warlord but respected among the ethnic rebel groups, Ms. Yang was recruited by the Burmese government's chief of intelligence, Khin Nyunt, along with her former colleague Mr. Lo, to help negotiate peace agreements for the government. The agreement struck with Ms. Yang's distant relative Peng Jiasheng and his Kokang rebel force, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, largely held until new fighting broke out in 2009.

Confined to a wheelchair, Ms. Yang spent her twilight years in relative obscurity, living in the care of her stepson and his militiamen in a compound in Muse, in northern Shan State. Visited there not long after she had a stroke in 2015, Ms. Yang said she was happy to be living surrounded by deferential soldiers. When shown a photograph of Ms. Win Shwe at her home, Ms. Yang responded with a knowing smile and a devilish laugh. With a Chinese cigarette in her hand, she said, "That whole property was mine."

Ms. Yang, who died on July 13, is survived by two younger sisters and her son. None of her immediate relatives remain in Kokang. Ms. Yang's eventual tomb, built for her with the help of one of her former soldiers, stands near Muse, just outside Kokang.

"It's very sad for all of Kokang," said the former soldier, Liu Guoxi, reached by phone as he was preparing for the funeral. "We have all come to say farewell to our leader."

Alice Dawkins contributed reporting from Yangon, Myanmar.

Novelist had a life that was a tale in itself

CLANCY SIGAL
1926-2017

BY SAM ROBERTS

The first time Clancy Sigal went to jail he was 5. His mother, a Socialist union organizer, had been arrested in Chattanooga, Tenn., for violating social and legal norms when she convened a meeting of black and white female textile workers. Hauled away to the jailhouse, she took Clancy with her.

As an American Army sergeant in Germany, he plotted to assassinate Hermann Göring at the Nuremberg war crimes trials. A victim of the movie industry's Communist-baiting blacklist, he represented Barbara Stanwyck and Humphrey Bogart as a Hollywood agent (but improbably rejected James Dean and Elvis Presley as clients).

During a 30-year self-imposed exile in Britain as an antiwar radical, Mr. Sigal was the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Doris Lessing's lover and flirted with suicide as a sometime patient of R. D. Laing, the iconoclastic psychiatrist.

In short, in a mixed-bag life of almost a century, Mr. Sigal had enough ram-bunctious experiences to fill a novel — or, in his case, several of them. He drew on his escapades in critically acclaimed memoirs and autobiographical novels, developing a cult following, especially in Britain.

But when he died on July 16 in Los Angeles at 90 from congestive heart failure, he had never quite equaled the fame and commercial success achieved in the United States by other stars in his literary constellation — none of whom burned more blisteringly.

Mr. Sigal was a prolific essayist for The Guardian and other publications and a popular BBC commentator. His books, most famously "Going Away: A Report, a Memoir" (1961), chronicling a cross-country escapist odyssey in a red-and-white DeSoto convertible, were described as "proletarian literature." The journalist George Plimpton ranked them with the works of Saul Bellow, Joseph Heller, Jack Kerouac and Harry Matthews in the genre of "American picaresque."

As a career agitator on behalf of American blacks, Vietnam War desert-

An adventurer who was jailed at 5 and blacklisted in Hollywood.

ers and the mentally ill, Mr. Sigal mirrored his fictional alter ego, Gus Black, in "The Secret Defector" (1992). "A traveling salesman of resistance, Willy Loman with leaflets in my battered suitcase instead of nylon stockings," he wrote.

His other books include "Weekend in Dinlock" (1960), a brutal portrait of British coal miners, which The Boston Globe likened to James Agee and Walker Evans's "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men"; "Zone of the Interior" (1976), a satirical novel based on his misadventures with Laing; "A Woman of Uncertain Character: The Amorous and Radical Adventures of My Mother Jennie (Who Always Wanted to Be a Respectable Jewish Mom) by Her Bastard Son" (2006); and "Black Sunset: Hollywood Sex, Lies, Glamour, Betrayal, and Raging Egos" (2016). His account of his London exploits is scheduled to be published by early next year.

Clarence Sigal (he was named for the vaunted defense lawyer Clarence Darrow) was born on Sept. 6, 1926. He became Clancy when, while working as a stock boy at a department store, a boss with a speech impediment mispronounced his name. His birth certificate says he was born in Chicago; a cousin always insisted to him that he was actually born in Brooklyn, where he apparently spent time as a toddler.

His gun-toting father, Leo, also a labor organizer, absented himself from his family to pursue his political agenda. Clarence was raised mostly in Chicago by his Russian-born mother, the former Jennie Persly.

He was 13 when he decided to become a writer. Too young to enlist in the Army when he sought to at 17, he was drafted in 1944 and shipped to Europe in the midst of World War II.

It was after the war, in occupied Germany, that he slipped away from his unit to Nuremberg. By his account he hoped to shoot Göring, the captured Nazi Luftwaffe commander, at his trial, but his gun was confiscated at a checkpoint before he could reach the courtroom.

In Britain, he and Laing experimented with LSD and, while dabbling in what he described as "an amoral Dostoyevskian world almost beyond suicide," they formed the Philadelphia Association, a charity dedicated to the humane treatment of the mentally ill.

His self-diagnosis, he told The Chicago Tribune in 1992, was straightforward: "I'm this perfectly ordinary Jewish neurotic depressive anxiety-ridden professional writer."

Hello Kitty's rebellious new cousins

SANRIO, FROM PAGE 1

helpless. She's an Aggretsuko who never gets wasted or unleashes her wrath.

But recently, the company has been floating new characters, whose personalities are more in sync with the ambivalent humor of memes or the anti-hero characters of prestige television. And while Hello Kitty represents the height of consumer culture, these characters have an anticapitalist sheen.

Sanrio characters are imbued with very basic "back stories" by the company — Hello Kitty, which debuted in 1974, is said to be a third-grade girl from the London suburbs who is "as tall as five apples and as heavy as three" — but it's through the sale of branded stuff that the characters really "come to life," Dave Marchi, Sanrio's vice president for brand management and marketing, told me. "We create characters and put them on products or experiences or jet planes. Anything you can imagine."

Hello Kitty's catchphrase is "You can never have too many friends," and her goal is total saturation of the global marketplace. In her book, "Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific," the anthropologist Christine R. Yano describes Sanrio as "a world in which a consumer might live in interaction with a corporation and its products."

Sanrio characters are themselves model consumers. Pompompurin, a little boy golden retriever in a beret,

prizes his shoe collection, and Bearbics, three fit teddy bears, "are sensitive to the world of fashion" and "are constantly chatting about the latest sportswear post-workout." Sanrio marketing copy reads. But Aggretsuko has a more ambivalent relationship with her own consumption habits. When she binge-drinks, she gets hung over: In one micro-episode, we find her lying in bed in her underwear, next to an overturned trash bin and a half-eaten bag of chips. In her narratives, she is the commodity, and the joy of the consumer has given way to the anxieties of the consumed.

That theme plays out quite literally with Gudetama, a Sanrio character who became the company's breakout internet star after its introduction to the United States in 2015. Gudetama is

a gender-ambiguous egg yolk with a butt crack and a baby voice. It's usually found lazing languidly on a plate, projecting a kind of existential angst in the face of impending doom. In one short cartoon, Gudetama whines "Noo, I don't wanna go," as it's pulled at by a pair of chopsticks. An online retailer of Gudetama candies markets the character as an "unwilling" participant in its own branding.

Sanrio characters are created by a team of in-house designers, and the company would make them available to me only on a first-name basis, over email. "I was eating a raw egg on rice at home one morning and thought to myself that the egg was kind of cute, but entirely unmotivated and indifferent to me," Amy, Gudetama's designer, wrote. "Eggs are phenomenal," she added, but they're "relegated to this fate of being eaten and seemed to me to despair in this."

The character was introduced in Japan in 2013, when Sanrio issued a slate of new food characters and asked consumers to vote for a winner. Gudetama came in second place to Kirimichan, a grinning fish filet who longs to be eaten. "Hello. I'm Kirimichan, your faithful mealtime partner," she says in Sanrio marketing materials. "Be sure to grill me up nicely!" But Gudetama's malaise has since far eclipsed Kirimichan's eager complicity, particularly on social media, where the lazy egg has emerged as the subject of a popular Twitter account and a natural star of reaction GIFs.

Gudetama and Aggretsuko represent an "evolution" of Sanrio's character creation, Mr. Marchi said, one that unspools online as well as in stores. Aggretsuko joined Twitter last month, and Sanrio recently struck a deal with Snapchat to showcase its characters on the app. On the internet, where characters become avatars for our personalities and moods, passively pleasing trinkets don't pack the same punch.

If Hello Kitty represents happy-go-lucky submission to globalization, Sanrio's newer characters respond to the market with soul-crushing resignation or seething rage. Aggretsuko "is a symbol and expression of the pent-up stress and irritation that is rife in the world today," her designer, Yeti, wrote

in an email. And Gudetama, Amy wrote, parallels "the people in modern society who despair amid economic hard times." Another new character, not yet officially rolled out in the United States, is a group of cartoon teeth called Hagurumanstyle that helps with "mental care" — a play on "dental care" — and jumps into action when people clench their teeth in frustration. Hagurumanstyle products are just starting to infiltrate the American market.

Sanrio may finally be exploring the fallout of global capitalism, but it is still processing class anxieties through products. Capitalism has a remarkable ability to absorb its own critiques, and it's notable that Sanrio has turned to the tactic as Hello Kitty's branding power has begun to wane. (In 2010 Sanrio executives told The Times that they were desperately seeking a new hit after Hello Kitty was eclipsed as Japan's most popular character by a jelly-filled pastry named Anpanman). Now its adorably anxious cartoon cogs in the machine are being used to sell more cute stuff to despairing human beings. At pop-up cafes around the world, fans can literally consume Gudetama-printed eggs, and on Sanrio.com, frustrated office ladies can buy Aggretsuko office products to spruce up their cubicles.

In April, Sanrio posted on its Facebook page: "Don't rage about your taxes, unleash your inner red panda with new items from Aggretsuko at Sanrio.com." Tomorrow is a new day!



Gudetama, a gender-ambiguous egg yolk, became Sanrio's breakout internet star.



Hagurumanstyle cartoon teeth get busy when people clench teeth in frustration.



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OYSTER PERPETUAL DAY-DATE 40



World

In Ethiopia, lives are centered on a leaf

BAHIR DAR, ETHIOPIA

Unemployed youths’ use of psychotropic drug is becoming big problem

BY KIMIKO DE FREYTA-SAMURA

Her life revolves around a psychotropic leaf.

Yeshmebet Asmamaw, 25, has made chewing the drug a ritual, repeated several times a day: She carefully lays papyrus grass on the floor of her home, brews coffee and burns fragrant frankincense to set the mood.

Then she pinches some khat leaves, plucked from a potent shrub native to this part of Africa, into a tight ball and places them in one side of her mouth.

“I love it!” she said, bringing her fingers to her lips with a smack.

She even chews on the job, on the khat farm where she picks the delicate, shiny leaves off the shrubs. Emerging from a day’s work, she looked slightly wild-eyed, the amphetaminelike effects of the stimulant showing on her face as the sounds of prayer echoed from an Orthodox Christian church close by.

Ethiopians have long chewed khat, but the practice tended to be limited to predominantly Muslim areas, where worshipers chew the leaves to help them pray for long periods, especially during the fasting times of Ramadan.

But in recent years, officials and researchers say, khat cultivation and consumption have spread to new populations and regions like Amhara, which is mostly Orthodox Christian, and to the countryside, where young people munch without their parents’ knowledge, speaking in code to avoid detection.

“If you’re a chewer in these parts, you’re a dead, dead man,” said Abhi, 30, who asked that his last name not be used because his family “will no longer consider me as their son.”

Most alarming, the Ethiopian authorities say, is the number of young people in this predominantly young nation now consuming khat. About half of Ethiopia’s youth are thought to chew it. Officials consider the problem an epidemic in all but name.

The country’s government, which rules the economy with a tight grip, is worried that the habit could derail its plans to transform Ethiopia into a middle-income country in less than a decade — a national undertaking that will require an army of young, capable workers, it says.

Khat is legal and remains so mainly because it is a big source of revenue for the government. But there are mounting concerns about its widespread use.

As many as 1.2 million acres of land are thought to be devoted to khat, nearly three times more than two decades ago. And the amount of money khat generates per acre surpasses all other crops, including coffee, Ethiopia’s biggest export, said Gessesse Dessie, a researcher at the African Studies Center Leiden at Leiden University.

That payoff, and the dwindling availability of land, has pushed thousands of



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TIKSA NEGERI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A group of men chewing khat near the bank of the Nile River in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. Khat is legal and generates more money per acre than any other crop in the country.

farmers to switch to khat, he said. The changes have come as the government has pushed farmers off land that it has given to foreign investors in recent years.

Often associated with famine and marathon runners, Ethiopia is trying to change its global image by engineering a fast-growing economy, hoping to mimic Asian nations like China. It has poured billions of dollars into industrial parks, roads, railways, airports and other infrastructure projects, including Africa’s largest dam.

In cities across the country, skyscrapers grow like mushrooms, and along with them, dance clubs, restaurants and luxury resorts. According to government statistics, the country’s economy has been growing at a 10 percent clip for more than a decade.

But for all the fanfare surrounding what is often described as Ethiopia’s economic miracle, its effects are often not felt by the country’s young people, who make up about 70 percent of the nation’s 100 million people. There simply are not enough jobs, young people complain, often expressing doubt over the government’s growth figures.

It is because of this lack of jobs, many say, that they take up khat in the first place — to kill time.

“It’s a huge problem,” said Shidigaf

“It’s bad for Ethiopia’s economic development because they become lazy, unproductive, and their health will be affected.”

Haile, a public prosecutor in Gonder, a city in northern Ethiopia, which was rocked by violent protests last year, mainly by young people over the absence of jobs.

More than half of the city’s youth now chew khat, Mr. Shidigaf said. Many gather in khat dens away from prying eyes.

“It’s because there is a lack of work,” he added, saying there were numerous cases of people who were so dependent on the leaves, sold in packs, that they turned to petty crime. The government recognizes the problem, he said, but so far it has not been tackled directly.

“It’s bad for Ethiopia’s economic development because they become lazy, unproductive, and their health will be affected,” he said.

Khat’s effects vary depending on the amount consumed and the quality of the leaf, of which there are at least 10 varieties, according to growers. Some people turn hot and agitated. Others become concentrated on whatever is at hand to such an extent that they block out ev-



Shimuna Mohammed weighing khat in a market in Infranz, Ethiopia. As cultivation has spread, about half of the country’s youth are believed to chew the psychotropic leaf.

erything and reach “merkana,” a quasi-catatonic state of bliss. Chronic abuse, the American government warns, can lead to exhaustion, “manic behavior with grandiose delusions, violence, suicidal depression or schizophreniform psychosis.”

Dependency on khat is more psychological than physical, according to Dr. Dawit Wondimagegn Gebreamlak, who heads the psychiatry department at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia’s capital. Chewing it “is quite a complex cultural phenomenon,” he said, adding that

simply banning it would be difficult, given its role in cultural rites among certain religious groups.

Mulugeta Getahun, 32, studied architecture but works as a day laborer.

“I chew khat when I don’t have a job,” he said. “Nothing entertains me more than khat.” Sitting in a bar here in Bahir Dar, about 340 miles from Addis Ababa, where he was coming off a high, he drank “chepsi,” a home-brewed millet wine that helps neutralize the effects of stimulation.

A group of men sat around drinking the homemade liquor and chewing khat, an act that could be considered illegal under the current state of emergency.

After last year’s protests, and their subsequent violent crackdown by security forces, the government prohibited communal activities because meetings were seen as a threat to public order and a potential gathering place for dissidents.

Still, the young are defiant.

There are “bercha-houses,” secret khat dens, where young people congregate in cramped rooms, bobbing their heads to Teddy Afro, a popular Ethiopian pop singer whose lyrics are considered veiled criticisms of the government.

There are hide-outs on the banks of the Nile River, where young people stretch themselves out under mango and banana trees, chewing khat and throwing peanuts in their mouths.

Even a guesthouse where Mengistu Haile Mariam, the authoritarian ruler ousted by the current governing party 26 years ago, stayed during the summers was recently overrun by young people celebrating the end of their studies, some chewing khat in one of the bleak Soviet-style rooms with the curtains drawn.

Yared Zelalem, 17, and Yonas Asrat, 27, chewed khat on the side of a street in Addis Ababa, waiting for the odd job of washing cars to come their way. They had been chewing for five hours already, and it was still early afternoon.

They both arrived in the capital 10 years ago looking for work, they said, after Mr. Zelalem’s parents died and Mr. Asrat’s family was kicked off its farmland to make way for a resort hotel.

Mr. Asrat looked morose. “Nothing has changed in the past 10 years except for my physical appearance,” he said, showing his home, a beat-up taxi with a foam mattress inside. “This country is only for investors.”

Mr. Zelalem lives next door, in a box-like structure with just enough space to fit his small frame. He was more determined.

“I want to become prime minister and change the country, and give jobs to young people,” he said, the words “Never Give Up” tattooed on his arm. He opened the door to his abode, which was fashioned out of corrugated metal. A backpack hung on a nail, next to a cut-out of Jesus pasted on one wall. He took out his school notebooks, full of his meticulous handwriting.

“I want to study natural sciences, then become a doctor. Then I want to study social sciences to learn about politics,” he said, listing off his ambitions.

“In 20 years, you’ll see,” he added. “I’ll invite you to my office.”

Western astrology in ascendance among young Chinese

BEIJING

BY AMY QIN

China, the birthplace of the Chinese zodiac and some of the world’s oldest and most sophisticated fortunetelling techniques, has a new obsession: Western astrology.

What remains a largely niche interest in the West has in recent years become a mainstream cultural trend in China, especially among the younger generation. At dinner tables and in coffee shops, friends and strangers trade the latest gossip and tidbits about their astrological profiles.

Online, social media accounts with millions of fans dispense weekly horoscope forecasts. On dating websites, users list their zodiac signs alongside other basic information like age, salary, and car and homeownership status.

Starting in the 1990s, Western astrology began to seep into China, mostly through variety shows from Taiwan, which caught the astrology bug early on. After the spread of the internet, a seed of interest soon blossomed into a torrid love affair.

While concepts like the traditional Chinese zodiac are still relevant, they are often dismissed by millennials here as “the older generation’s pastime.” Western astrology, on the other hand, is seen as more fun. Much as some Westerners have embraced Eastern practices like Buddhism, young Chinese are gravitating toward Western astrology because they say it is new and exotic.

“People don’t get as excited about traditional culture because it’s too familiar,” said Liu Hongchen, an astrologer known as Eskey among his more than nine million followers on Weibo, a popular microblogging site. “The younger generation likes Western culture more, and the interest in Western astrology is



YUYANG LIU FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Uncle’s Friends Cafe & Store in Shanghai is among the businesses in China offering products with Western zodiac symbols.

a perfect example of this.”

More and more Chinese are consulting the ancient practice for celestial guidance on all kinds of major life decisions: relationship advice, making friends, having babies — even hiring employees.

Que Gangjian, a manager at a car sales company in the city of Changzhou, said that true to his nature as a Pisces, he was better at handling the so-called softer side of the business. So when it came time to recruit a sales representative, Mr. Que considered what skills would be best suited to the demanding job and would complement his own.

After listing the mandatory requirements — a hardworking attitude, a driver’s license and a quick tongue — Mr. Que inserted another line into the online job posting: “Scorpios, Capricorns and Gemini’s preferred.”

It is not the only instance of what has become known in China as “zodiac discrimination.” A recent survey showed that 4.3 percent of college graduates looking for jobs in China had experienced discrimination based on their Western or Chinese zodiac sign. On Baidu Baike, the Chinese version of Wikipedia, there is even an entry for the term “xingzuo zhaopin,” or job recruit-

ment based on Western zodiac signs.

Of the 12 horoscope signs, Virgos, or those born between Aug. 23 and Sept. 22, have an especially rough time. Described as perfectionists, Virgos — and Virgo men in particular — are considered to be constantly on the defensive. While the criticism is mostly tongue in cheek, the sign has become so tarnished that some Chinese employers go out of their way to emphasize in job postings that, yes, Virgos are welcome to apply, too.

The derision has prompted much introspection among Virgos.

“Sometimes I think about whether my

personality has been shaped by the stereotype,” said Yan Rubin, 35, a Virgo and an electronics engineer in the northern Chinese city of Xi’an. “I wouldn’t say it’s discrimination, necessarily, but I guess we’re just different from the other signs.”

Hu Xiaofei, like many of her friends, had a strong aversion to Virgos until she discovered that her boyfriend’s birthday fell within the ill-fated range.

“Well, he wasn’t a true Virgo,” said Ms. Hu, 28, a Taurus who works in public relations in Shanghai. “His mom changed his birthday when he was younger so he could make the age cutoff for school.”

In any case, Ms. Hu said she did not take horoscopes that seriously. “It’s just something to read everyday when I’m bored on the subway,” she said, adding that they certainly they did not influence her life decisions.

Well, that is, with one exception. “Oh, I would never date a Cancer,” Ms. Hu said adamantly. “They might be good family men but most of the Cancer guys I know dabble outside their marriage. It’s really bad.”

Over the centuries, China developed a set of sophisticated divination techniques for use within and outside the imperial court. Today, many Chinese still consult fate-calculating practices like bazi, which determines a person’s fortune based on birth year, month, date and hour.

And the traditional Chinese zodiac, which features 12 animals representing 12 years, is so widely referenced that in 2014, several provinces reported a spike in births among young couples hoping to have their babies in the last weeks of the auspicious Year of the Horse to avoid the less favorable Year of the Sheep.

China is, of course, not the only place where interest in the occult thrives. A survey by the National Science Foundation, published in 2014, found that in re-

cent years the number of Americans who said they believed that astrology was “sort of scientific” or “very scientific” was on the rise.

The difference in China is the visibility of the phenomenon. Unlike in the United States, there is little embarrassment about believing in Western astrology. Determining your fortune based on the interaction between the sun, the stars and the planets is just what Chinese have been doing for hundreds of years.

For some astrologers, the growing obsession has translated into big business. Cai Yuedong, also known as Tongdao Dashu, shot to online fame in recent years with his satirical zodiac-themed cartoons.

In December, Meisheng Culture, a local investment firm, spent \$32 million to acquire a 72.5 percent stake in Tongdao Dashu’s company. There are now plans to spin off the popular social media account, which has over 12 million fans on Weibo and many more on Tencent’s messaging app WeChat, into a sprawling zodiac-themed franchise.

To be sure, China has plenty of astrology skeptics. In December, Guokr, a popular science website, organized an online lecture that used scientific arguments to defend against the growing prominence of Western astrology.

“Western astrology is the most annoying trend,” said Yu Jun, a science editor at Guokr and a die-hard skeptic. “A person’s personality has nothing to do with his or her star sign.”

But every once in a while, Mr. Yu said, he finds himself succumbing to the celestial pressure.

“Sometimes I’ll joke about horoscopes with my friends,” Mr. Yu, a Pisces, admitted. “But my star sign is the sign that is least likely to believe in star signs.”

Karoline Kan contributed research.



Holders of Canadian First Nations status lined up to collect their \$5 treaty annuity payments during “treaty days” in Winnipeg, Manitoba, last month.

Meager nod to a painful past

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

Indigenous Canadians get \$5 yearly under a treaty to compensate for territory

BY DAN LEVIN

On a brilliant afternoon in Winnipeg, scores of indigenous people lined up under a large white tent to collect what's known as the annual “treaty payment” — money stipulated in treaties, signed by past generations with the Canadian government in exchange for territory.

The payment? Five dollars. Yes, per year. “That’s how much we natives were worth back then,” said Keri Buboire, 24, a construction worker from Winnipeg, the provincial capital of Manitoba, who had come to collect several years’ worth of money. “But it really doesn’t feel legitimate today.”

Last increased from three dollars in 1875, the annual payments are a potent symbol of the complex legal relationship between aboriginal groups, known as First Nations, and the Canadian government — and a reminder of Canada’s long record of broken promises and unmet obligations to those communities.

“The foundation of Canada is based on the exploitation and oppression of indigenous people, and the end goal of every policy has been to erase us, to get the land and resources uncontested,” said Niigaanwewidam Sinclair, an associate professor in the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba.

Beginning in the mid-19th century, treaties stipulating annuities were an important tool in British and then Canadian efforts to acquire valuable territory to expand white settlement and economic development. Canada signed seven treaties in Manitoba between 1871 and 1906.

But the treaties were not mere contracts to exchange land, historians say. They were part of a broader strategy to



Canadians participating in a powwow during National Aboriginal Day in Winnipeg. Many indigenous Canadians consider treaty days a sacred obligation to their ancestors.

erase indigenous identity and autonomy, as laws gave the federal government power over the First Nations’ finances and religious practices, and created a network of residential schools where aboriginal children were forcibly sent.

The residential school program was described as “cultural genocide” by a 2015 government commission that examined the history and impact of the schools. Its findings led Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to promise a “total renewal” of Canada’s relationship with the First Nations, and to hold reconciliation talks with 300 aboriginal communities.

Even as these efforts press forward, however, many people of the First Nations suffer from disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, suicide, violence, incarceration and addiction.

The scars of aboriginal discrimination are etched deeply here in Winnipeg, home to Canada’s largest urban indigenous population.

The metropolis was built on treaty territory, and was the nation’s most vio-

lent city in 2015. Most aboriginal residents live in the North End, an area dotted with ramshackle single-room-occupancy buildings and homemade missing-person signs taped to bar doors.

On a visit to the treaty payment event held during seven days at the end of June, indigenous people young and old, many from Winnipeg, made their way to a large tent set up for the occasion in a downtown park.

Inside the tent, government employees sat behind picnic tables draped in Canadian flags, checking identification before handing over new five-dollar bills. On another table sat a mounted replica of a treaty from the 19th century, its delicate calligraphy barely legible.

Nearly everyone standing in line was collecting several years’ worth of payments. Many said treaty days were a chance to see friends and fulfill their part of a sacred obligation signed by their ancestors.

“It’s not all about the money,” said Marina Petri, 71, who collects every eight years. “I’m proud of being an Indian and this is a chance to see my people.”

Gerald McIvor, 54, a native rights activist, collected nine years’ worth of payments. Originally from the Sandy Bay First Nation, a reserve on the western shore of Lake Manitoba, he explained that for many indigenous families, especially those living on impoverished reserves, treaty payments, though modest, can help make ends meet.

“Even though it’s five dollars, for you, your spouse and five or six kids, it can bring a little bit of money,” he said.

But the free payments contribute to a devastating culture of economic reliance on the government, he added. “The web of dependency is so perpetuated that a lot of people on reserve actually think welfare is a treaty right,” he said.

Many indigenous people say the Canadian government and First Nations were supposed to share the land and its economic benefits. They criticize the government for depriving aboriginal communities of the billions in natural resources that have been extracted from treaty territory.

“After everything Canada has taken from native people, we should be getting 5,000 dollars instead of five,” said Marcel Guiboche, 72, a retired social worker who recalled being regularly beaten and sexually abused during his years in residential school.

Still, he came for the money out of principle. “I come and get it because they owe me.”

In 2016, around 579,000 First Nation people were eligible to collect annuities stipulated in treaties signed between 1850 and 1921, according to Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, the department that oversees the payments.

Last year, the department distributed around 1.9 million Canadian dollars, or \$1.5 million, at more than 360 treaty payment events nationwide. Still, more than 16 million Canadian dollars in total annuity payments had never been claimed by the end of last year.

Lawsuits aimed at forcing the government to increase the payments to reflect changes in purchasing power have been dismissed by Canadian courts on legal grounds.

For Trump and Putin, sanctions are a setback

WASHINGTON

Restrictions on Russia may be result of leaders overplaying their hands

BY DAVID E. SANGER

Throughout 2016, both Donald J. Trump and President Vladimir V. Putin complained that American-led sanctions against Russia were the biggest irritant in the plummeting relations between the two superpowers. And the current investigations, which have cast a shadow over Mr. Trump’s first six months in office, have focused on whether a series of contacts between Mr. Trump’s inner circle and Russians were partly about constructing deals to get those penalties lifted.

Now it is clear that those sanctions not only are staying in place, but are about to be modestly expanded — exactly the outcome the two presidents sought to avoid.

How that happened is a story of two global leaders overplaying their hands.

Mr. Putin is beginning to pay a price for what John O. Brennan, the former Central Intelligence Agency director, described last week as the Russian president’s fateful decision last summer to try to use stolen computer data to support Mr. Trump’s candidacy. For his part, Mr. Trump ignited the movement in Congress by repeatedly casting doubt on that intelligence finding, then fueled it by confirming revelation after revelation about previously denied contacts between his inner circle and a parade of Russians.

If approved by Congress this week, Mr. Trump has little choice, his aides acknowledge, but to sign the toughened sanctions legislation that he desperately wanted to see defeated.

Just days ago, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson and other top officials were lobbying fiercely to preserve Mr. Trump’s right to waive Russia sanctions with a stroke of the pen — just as President Barack Obama was able to do when, in negotiations with Iran, he dangled the relaxation of sanctions to coax Tehran to agree to sharp, decade-long limits on its nuclear activity.

As one of Mr. Trump’s aides pointed out last week, there is a long history of granting presidents that negotiating leverage when dealing with foreign adversaries.

But by constantly casting doubt on intelligence that the Kremlin was behind an effort to manipulate last year’s presidential election, Mr. Trump so unnerved members of his own party that even they saw a need to curb his ability to lift those sanctions unilaterally.

On Sunday, Mr. Trump’s new communications director, Anthony Scaramucci, repeated the White House position that Mr. Trump remains unconvinced by the evidence that Russia was the culprit behind the election hacking. He said that when the subject comes up, Mr. Trump cannot separate the intelligence findings from his emotional sense that the issue is being used to cast doubt on his legitimacy as president.

“It actually in his mind, what are you guys suggesting?” Mr. Scaramucci said on CNN’s “State of the Union.” “You’re going to delegitimize his victory?”

If so, Mr. Trump is the only one with access to the best intelligence on the issue who still harbors those doubts.

Last week at the Aspen Security Forum, four of his top intelligence and national security officials — including Mike Pompeo, the C.I.A. director — said they were absolutely convinced that the Russians were behind the effort to influence the election.

“There is no dissent,” Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence, said on

Friday at the Aspen conference. The Russians, he said, “caught us just a little bit asleep in terms of capabilities” the Kremlin could bring to bear to influence elections here, in France and Germany. The Russians’ goal was clear, he said: “They are trying to undermine Western democracy.”

The wording of the legislation agreed to by House and Senate conferees over the weekend indicates that many Republicans agree with the intelligence assessment: For the first time, it imposes penalties, though not very onerous ones, on anyone determined by the United States government to have participated in the election hacking.

But when Mr. Trump met Mr. Putin in Hamburg, Germany, earlier this month, he did not utter similar suspicions, at least in public.

In fact, he emerged to tell his aides that the Russian president had offered a compelling rejoinder: Moscow’s cyber-operators are so good at covert computer-network operations that if they had dipped into the Democratic National Committee’s systems, they would not have been caught.

Mr. Putin’s decision sometime early last summer appears to have been to turn a familiar Russian surveillance operation of the American political campaign into “active measures,” releasing information that Russia hoped would harm the candidacy of Hillary Clinton. It succeeded in its immediate goal, disrupting the election and casting doubt

If approved by Congress, the president has little choice but to sign the sanctions legislation that he wanted to see defeated.

on the integrity of the American voting process.

But with the new sanctions, it now also appears to have set back his long-term strategy: to get out from under a sanctions regime that, along with low oil prices, has stunted his country’s economy.

Russia has stumbled along at barely 1 percent growth, and the new sanctions, while hardly draconian, will not ease its pain.

Chris Weafer, a senior partner at Macroeconomic Advisory, which works with international investors on Russia, said the new American sanctions legislation was “much weaker” than originally proposed and raised no new serious hurdles for the Russian economy. But he added that it would further damage perceptions of Russia’s prospects and curb badly needed Western investment by “reminding investors about Russia risk” and by prompting countersanctions by Moscow.

“If this legislation is passed, you can definitely expect a Russian reaction,” he said.

Whether Russia can easily ride out a new round of sanctions is far from certain, especially at a time when companies and banks that racked up debts in the West before 2014 are now facing payment deadlines that will become increasingly difficult to meet because of credit restrictions on sanctioned Russian entities.

The proposed new measures could also expand the number of Russian companies that are affected by credit and other restrictions.

They bar American entities from doing business with any company in which a previously sanctioned Russian individual or company owns more than a 33 percent stake. This could make Western banks far more wary of lending money to Russian companies in general as the exact ownership of many of these is often unclear.

Andrew Higgins contributed reporting from Moscow.

On Arctic waters, fears of disaster rise

ARCTIC, FROM PAGE 1
sponse,” Dr. Merten said. “Things could be O.K. But it would be a difficult situation.”

Among the problems that might befall ships in the Arctic, much of which is still poorly charted, is a grounding that in the worst case could lead to the breaking up and sinking of a ship. In addition to the obvious risk to lives, such an event could cause a spill of thousands of gallons of fuel — thick, heavy oil in the case of most cargo ships — that could be next to impossible to recover.

Mechanical failure, fire or a medical emergency are concerns as well.

Although the Arctic has not been the site of a major disaster involving a cruise ship in recent years, a smaller liner, the Explorer, sank off the Antarctic Peninsula in 2007 after striking an iceberg. Fortunately, several other ships were within 100 miles of the stricken ship, and the 150 passengers and crew were rescued after five hours in lifeboats.

Commercial ships in northern waters have occasionally run into trouble, sometimes with deadly results. In December 2004, the Selendang Ayu, a 740-foot Malaysian ship carrying soybeans and more than 1,000 tons of fuel oil, suffered an engine failure, drifted and eventually ran aground and broke apart in the Aleutian Islands in Alaska. Six

crew members died when a Coast Guard helicopter that had just picked them up was swamped by a wave.

Sea ice, which completely covers the Arctic Ocean in winter, gradually melts in the spring and reaches its minimum extent in September. That minimum has declined by about 13 percent per decade compared with the 1981 to 2010 average, according to NASA. Scientists say warming, which is occurring faster in the Arctic than any other region, is largely responsible.

As climate change continues, more of the Arctic will be open to ships, and for longer.

Some scientists predict that the region could be completely ice-free in summers by the 2030s or 2040s.

But the amount of activity over all in the region is still small, and a huge rush to the Arctic is not expected anytime soon. Even as ice coverage continues to shrink, conditions will remain variable enough that no shipping company with tight deadlines will try regular Arctic service.

“It only takes a little bit of ice to ruin your day,” said Timothy Keane, senior manager for Arctic operations for Fednav, a bulk shipping operator based in Montreal. “So if ice is in a particular area that you need to go, you’re still blocked from getting there.”

But in September, Russia will start



At the Marine Exchange of Alaska in Juneau, Shelby Martin watches ship traffic through the state’s waters. Monitoring of ships can reduce the potential for disaster.

shipping liquefied natural gas to Europe and Asia from Siberia, using 1,000-foot tankers that, by turning around and moving stern-first, can churn through ice up to seven feet thick.

And while the Crystal Serenity, with its casino and other amenities, was not built with polar cruising in mind, more

than two dozen smaller ships, designed to carry up to 200 passengers and handle moderate ice conditions, are under construction around the world.

Any ship that sails through coastal waters in Alaska, Canada and other Arctic territory is subject to government inspection — to make sure it has the re-

quired safety equipment, for instance.

But the United States Coast Guard has only two working heavy icebreakers, and has not built a new one in four decades. In a May speech, President Trump said “we’re going to build many of them.” Although money for design work has been allotted, the source of funding for actual construction is still unclear.

The amount of shipping in the Arctic is currently so small that it is difficult to justify the presence of additional icebreakers or naval cutters in the region, or a helicopter base that could aid ships far from land.

“You need investment and you need infrastructure to cover this gap,” said Lawson W. Brigham, a former captain of Coast Guard icebreakers who is now on the faculty at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Russia is better prepared, with several dozen icebreakers and more on the way. The Russian military is also building Arctic bases that, while they have been seen in the West as an unwanted military expansion into the region, will have search-and-rescue capability.

But even in the Russian Arctic most of the focus is on ports, said Mikhail Grigoriev, an Arctic shipping expert who is the director of Gecon, a Russian consulting firm. “Sea routes are very poorly developed,” he said, “and the time of ap-

proach of rescue vessels is considerable — up to several days.”

Given the lack of infrastructure, many experts argue that the focus should be on preventing accidents — through better training and certification of mariners, and safety requirements for ships. A new Polar Code, developed by the International Maritime Organization, sets some safety standards, but critics say it does not go far enough and includes almost no environmental protections.

Even relatively simple monitoring of ships can reduce the potential for disaster. Ed Page, a former Coast Guard captain, runs a private-public partnership, the Marine Exchange of Alaska, that uses a network of radio receivers to watch over ships around Alaska. Exchange operators can contact vessels that are getting too close to shore — a ship should usually be far from land, so that in the event of a mechanical problem, it has time for repairs without running aground — and have them change course.

Captain Page acknowledged that if something went disastrously wrong with a ship within the 1.5 million square miles of ocean his network covers, “it would be ugly.”

“But we should stop worrying about what we’re going to do when things go wrong,” he said. “We should prevent things from going wrong.”

TECH

Sending the trolls packing

No sexism or bullying is tolerated on Missclicks, which may ban violators

BY LAURA PARKER

Every week without fail, some viewers of Missclicks, a channel on the video game streaming platform Twitch, pipe up with sexist or misogynistic comments.

As the channel live-streams shows where hosts engage in activities like playing the Dungeons & Dragons tabletop game, viewers have made comments objectifying the female hosts. Several have called the male hosts on Missclicks “pimps,” or have said how lucky they were to have a “harem” of colleagues.

What sets Missclicks apart is its response to such behavior. Whenever a sexist remark pops up, the Missclicks community quickly jumps in to explain that the channel’s mission is to be a diverse space where underrepresented gamers can feel safe from harassment and bullying. Commenters who persist are given timeouts, or sometimes banned outright.

“Missclicks is an example of a space grown from the ground up to model a different and less toxic environment,” said Naomi Clark, an assistant arts professor at New York University’s department of game design. “Their team deliberately set expectation and policy from the beginning to counter harassment.”

Of the 2.2 million channels on Twitch, which is owned by Amazon, Missclicks was one of the first to explicitly lay out a goal of being a place where people of all genders and backgrounds could participate in gamer culture without fear, prejudice or harassment.

The motto of the channel, led by four women, is “build up, never tear down.”

That makes Missclicks something of a haven at a time when gamer culture has been criticized for being misogynistic and unforgiving. In recent years, the games industry has grappled with episodes like the Gamergate movement in 2014, when female game developers, creators and players were the subjects of a targeted harassment campaign. In 2016, Microsoft apologized after it hired women to dance on platforms at a games conference in San Francisco.

To change that culture, Missclicks and other efforts have sprung up. One advocacy group, AnyKey, which pushes for inclusive spaces in gaming and e-sports, was founded in February 2016. Industry groups like Girls Make Games and Pixelles, which provide training and internship programs for women to get into video game development, have also emerged.

Twitch has also ramped up its defenses against harassment. The company has introduced tools like AutoMod, which uses machine learning and natural language processing to identify and block inappropriate content during chats. Twitch has also given broadcasters the power to ban specific words and links from a chat; allowed broadcasters to assign moderators to police chats during live streams; and added a button on every channel that lets people more easily flag or report unwanted content.

“We take harassment very seriously and understand how important this is for the entire Twitch community,” Twitch’s public relations director, who uses just the name Chase, said. Of Miss-



Twitch headquarters in San Francisco. Missclicks is a channel on the Twitch video game streaming platform.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTIE HEMM KLOK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The aim was to “make it more normal to see women’s faces in e-sports and make a support network.”

clicks, he said it “has successfully cultivated an inclusive and positive community, so if other creators are striving for a similar vibe, we encourage them to check out that channel.”

Missclicks was founded in 2013 by four women in the video game and e-sports industries, including one of Twitch’s employees, Anna Prosser Robinson, a host and programming manager at the live-streaming platform. Ms. Prosser Robinson tapped Geneviève Forget of the video game publisher Ubisoft; Stephanie Harvey, a professional e-sports player; and Stephanie Powell, a community manager at Roll20, an online tabletop service for games like Dungeons & Dragons.

The four, who volunteer time to Missclicks while still engaged in their day jobs, said they created the channel after realizing how often women in the video game industry are made to feel undervalued.

“We were tired of being anomalies,” Ms. Prosser Robinson said. “It was like, ‘Oh, there’s a girl who does gaming, isn’t she a sparkly unicorn?’ We thought if we could make it more normal to see women’s faces in e-sports and make a support network, maybe they’d stick around.”



Anna Prosser Robinson, a host and programming manager at Twitch, is one of the founders of Missclicks.

On any given day, Missclicks features rotating shows and content. Unlike many other Twitch channels that are built around a single personality, Missclicks is collaborative. It has a range of hosts, and users are invited to write in and pitch ideas for shows.

One regular show on Missclicks is “Let’s Play,” in which hosts play video games and people tune in to watch. Another show is dedicated to discussing and playing Heroes of the Storm, a multiplayer online battle arena video game

published by Blizzard.

Missclicks also has a behind-the-scenes Slack channel for its creators and hosts, where people can talk openly about any issue, or ask for help if they are experiencing online abuse or bullying.

“Platforms, organizations and leagues are seeing that women, people of color, L.G.B.T.Q.I.A. folks are an important part of their user base and audience,” said T.L. Taylor, a professor of comparative media studies at M.I.T. and

director of research at AnyKey. “Making sure they are able to participate is key to the bottom line.”

The popularity of the Missclicks mission has yet to be determined. The channel has just over 23,000 followers, a fraction of the millions of followers drawn to some of the more popular Twitch channels.

Ms. Prosser Robinson, who oversees the daily operation of Missclicks with the help of one or two others, said the channel was not aiming to be huge or a giant profit-making entity. While Missclicks makes some revenue from advertisers and subscriptions, the money goes back into the streamers and the channel, she said.

More rewarding are the messages that Ms. Prosser Robinson said she now often receives from game players on how the channel makes games feel more inclusive.

On a recent day, one Missclicks viewer left a comment during one of the channel’s Dungeons & Dragons shows that read: “Back in the day when I played a lot in the late 80s and early 90s, there were not many girls playing. It’s awesome to see all the women playing these days.”

Ms. Prosser Robinson said these messages were part of the “little steps” being made toward dealing with harassment in games.

“At least people now have a general awareness that it’s important, which is very different compared to a few years ago,” she said.

Q+a

Muting videos on Facebook

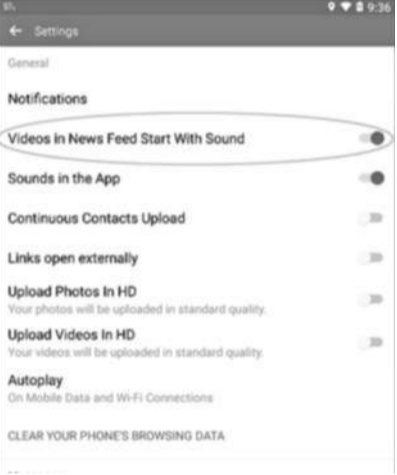
Facebook starts to play videos automatically and loudly when I use the Android app. How do I make it stop?

Facebook announced this year that it was making changes to the way videos work on its service, particularly for mobile devices. In a blog post that explained the new features, the company said that mobile users “had come to expect sound when the volume on their device is turned on” and that it had heard positive feedback about the audible autoplay behavior.

The sound of the videos fades in and fades out as you scroll through your News Feed, and the videos are not supposed to be audible at all if you have the main volume level on your phone set to silent. However, if you prefer to keep your phone’s volume set to a normal level and do not want Facebook videos blaring in public when you browse your news feed, you can disable the function in the app’s settings.

In the Android version of the Facebook app, tap the three-lined menu button in the toolbar and scroll down to App Settings. Next to “Videos in News Feed Start With Sound,” tap the button to the Off position. If you do not want videos in your feed to play automatically at all, tap Autoplay toward the bottom of the list and tap “Never Autoplay Videos” on the next screen before leaving the Settings area.

In the Apple iOS version of the Facebook app, tap the three-lined menu icon in the corner of the screen and choose Settings. Select Account Settings and then Sounds. Turn off the button next to “Videos in News Feed Start With Sound.” You can find the preferences for autoplay videos in the Videos and Photos section of the main Settings screen. J. D. BIERSDORFER



To disable the audio, go into the Facebook app’s settings and flip the button to off.

Free software to protect a PC

Are those free PC antivirus programs safe to use?

The web is full of choices, but if you are looking for free protection for your computer, go with a program from an established security software company. You can find roundups and reviews online and the AV-Test.org site has a list of well-known software creators. Programs that pepper your screen with pop-ups or try to convince you that your computer is full of worms and viruses are often spyware or scams themselves.

Several companies offer free basic versions of their more complete security suites to home users — including Avast, AVG, Bitdefender, Sophos and ZoneAlarm. As the range of malicious software has expanded to other computing platforms, some companies now offer free tools for the Mac and mobile platforms as well; Malwarebytes Anti-Malware for Mac is among the options. Free apps that specifically protect against ransomware (like Bitdefender’s Anti-Ransomware Tool for Windows) can also be found.

When browsing for software, make sure you are actually getting a copy of the company’s free antivirus tool — and not just the free trial version of a more comprehensive paid program. Depending on the program, you may be asked to share user data for research or see ads and upgrade offers within the free software. Paid versions typically provide more comprehensive protections, like network or game scanning.

Microsoft makes its own antivirus software for its Windows systems. If it is not already installed, Windows 7 users can download the Microsoft Security Essentials program from the company’s site. The current version of Windows 10 comes with the Windows Defender Security Center for blocking viruses and other threats; go to the Settings app and open the Update & Security icon to check your coverage. (Apple builds in protective features like app-screening and anti-phishing alerts into its Mac OS software, but a third-party program goes further.)

Security software can help block malicious code from invading your computer, but be on guard for more socially engineered attacks from email and other online sources. The website StaySafeOnline.org has a guide to spam and phishing lures, and other threats to avoid. J. D. BIERSDORFER

Going low-tech to solve problems

TECH WE'RE USING

BY BRIAN X. CHEN

How do New York Times journalists use technology in their jobs and in their personal lives? Brian X. Chen, The Times’s personal technology writer, who is based in San Francisco, discussed the tech he’s using.

You explain, highlight and solve tech problems for readers. How do you use tech to keep track of the issues and new tech that is coming out?

Twitter, Facebook and Techmeme.com are useful for keeping up with new gadget trends. But when it comes to staying in tune with the tech-induced headaches of average people, I turn to reader emails or conversations with non-techie friends.

Nothing beats listening to people rant about the tech they’re frustrated with. Nearly everyone seems angry about connectivity issues: sluggish, unreliable Wi-Fi, spotty cell coverage or shoddy broadband service. Other than that, battery life continues to be a source of people’s misery.

At The Times, we have access to analytics about the people reading our articles, and the consistent strong readership we get from stories about these topics reaffirms that people continue to be frustrated with these issues.

What kind of testing setup do you use to tell us if a whiz-bang gadget or app or service is for real?

Often before I start testing a product, I jot down an objective set of tests for tasks that I can reasonably expect a product to do. For example, when I compared virtual assistants last year, I drew up more than a dozen basic tasks



Brian X. Chen playing a game on the Nintendo Switch.

related to productivity, music, mapping, dining and entertainment and ran each assistant through all the tasks to see which was the most competent. After I plugged the results in a spreadsheet, Google’s was superior.

In addition to objective tests, my reviews are subjective. I keep in mind what I know average people care about when it comes to tech, other than a checklist of features.

The setup needs to be simple and intuitive, the product needs to be durable and work well, the company’s customer service needs to be delightful and a gadget’s design needs to be aesthetically pleasing enough that you would feel proud about carrying it around or leaving it on your coffee table.

What is the favorite piece of tech you have reviewed for The Times so far? The Nintendo Switch. If you’re getting

paid to play Zelda, you’re winning at life.

Plus, it was a fun gadget to test because it was essentially two products in one: a home console that converts into a portable device when you yank the tablet off the dock.

Do you still use it?

Rarely. After finishing Zelda, I’ve found some of the newer games less interesting. But I’m eager to try Super Mario Odyssey when it comes out this fall.

What was your least favorite tech product to review and why?

Probably the Echo Show, Amazon’s smart speaker with a screen built into it.

It’s a decent product, but the problem with reviewing it on Day 1 was that there were no great “Skills,” or third-party apps, available for it yet to get a feel for whether an always-on, always-



Click & Grow at work in the writer’s kitchen in San Francisco.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTIE HEMM KLOK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

watching gadget in your home would be useful. Blank-slate products like Echo Show create a dilemma for reviewers. Should we evaluate the product based on what it can do currently (which is very little), or what we think it has the potential to do in the future? I’m not a fortune teller, so I lean toward the former and render a “wait and see” verdict that seems repetitive. But even when people take the latter approach and predict a gadget’s potential, it’s unhelpful for informing people whether they should buy something today.

Beyond your job, what tech product are you obsessed with using in your daily life?

I fell down a rabbit hole with indoor gardening after I bought a so-called smart planter called the Click & Grow. It’s basically a planter with built-in drip irrigation and a timed grow light;

you can buy dirt pods containing seeds for growing different types of plants. Even if you lived in a tiny New York apartment with little natural light, you could grow fresh basil, chili peppers and cilantro. What a novelty.

In my kitchen, I’m currently growing basil and scallions, and I’m experimenting with propagating succulents and other types of nonedible house plants with the planter.

What could be better about it?

The pods are too expensive. You can buy them in sets of three for \$20, which seems like too much for dirt and seeds.

When you’ve had enough of tech and want to get away, what’s your escape?

My corgi is the boss of me, so on the weekends you’ll usually find me at a dog park, beach or mountain trail.

Business

GoDaddy turns a corner

An internet business built on salacious ads sets example for change

BY CHARLES DUHIGG

A few years after Blake Irving became chief executive of the internet company GoDaddy, he spoke at a conference where the jeers started almost immediately.

Attendees were particularly offended by GoDaddy’s history of sexist television commercials, which featured women in wet bikinis and innuendos so graphic some stations had refused the ads. But when Mr. Irving tried to explain that those advertisements, created by his predecessor, had been discontinued and that he had been hired, in part, to change the firm’s culture, he was mocked.

“Every time Blake quotes Sheryl Sandberg or calls himself a feminist, throw something at his head,” one person shouted.

Which is why it was surprising when Mr. Irving appeared as a keynote speaker a year later, in 2015, at the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing — and received a standing ovation after detailing GoDaddy’s efforts to become one of the most inclusive companies in tech.

By then, GoDaddy had been recognized as being among the nation’s top workplaces for women in tech. The company’s policies on equal pay, its methods for recruiting a diverse work force and its approach to promoting women and minorities had been lauded inside business schools and imitated at other firms.

Today, as Silicon Valley sexism again draws attention, it’s worth studying those shifts at GoDaddy. There’s a regular procession of headlines about sexual harassment scandals at venture capital firms and large tech companies. But learning to address this problem requires studying where things have gotten better, as well. And GoDaddy has become, surprisingly, a lodestar among gender equity advocates — an example of how even regressive cultures can change.

So what did GoDaddy do right? The answer is more complicated than just stamping out overt sexism. GoDaddy also focused on attacking the small, subtle biases that can influence everything from how executives evaluate employees to how they set salaries.

“The most important thing we did was normalize acknowledging that everyone has biases, whether they recognize them or not,” said Debra Weissman, a senior vice president at the company. “We had to make it O.K. for people to say, ‘I think I’m being unintentionally unfair.’”

Though GoDaddy still has work to do, the company is “evidence that things can change,” said Lori Mackenzie, executive director of the Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford, which has worked with the firm. “Oftentimes, what keeps companies from shifting is believing the existing system is already fair. Blake is really committed to undermining that.”

When Mr. Irving joined GoDaddy in



2013, the firm was succeeding by selling a commodity — website registration and hosting — through outrageous, scandalous ads, such as a 2005 Super Bowl commercial where a woman’s top kept coming undone while observers discussed her plastic surgery. Those ads were deliberately designed to attract attention through controversy. Today, GoDaddy is worth over \$7 billion.

The offensive advertising, however, was demoralizing to GoDaddy’s staff, employees from that period say, and the salaciousness, at times, spilled into the workplace. Staff members describe a hard-charging culture where people drank in the office and participated in and gossiped about interoffice affairs. There was a sexual harassment lawsuit in 2009, later dismissed, and websites like NoDaddy.com, where employees described misbehavior.

Upon becoming chief executive, Mr. Irving immediately decreed that GoDaddy would no longer run sexist ads, and reiterated the company’s commitment to combating workplace discrimination. In part, this was good business: Many of the nation’s small-business owners — the customers GoDaddy hoped to attract — are female. Mr. Irving, who had previously been a high-ranking executive at Microsoft and Yahoo, also felt GoDaddy was failing to attract talented engineers and executives — including women and minorities —

who were alienated by the firm’s image.

But to genuinely transform GoDaddy, executives decided, they needed to convince the company’s 3,500 employees, most of whom thought of themselves as fair and good people, that even a seemingly impartial workplace can be discriminatory.

“We needed to become the most inclusive company in tech,” said Mr. Irving. “We had to erase the idea that meritocracy is enough.”

Some of the problems applicants and workers faced were subtle. For years, for instance, GoDaddy’s job descriptions were needlessly aggressive, saying the company was looking for “rock stars,” “code ninjas,” engineers who could “knock it out of the park” or “wrestle problems to the ground.” Moreover, when GoDaddy’s human resource department began reviewing how the company analyzed leadership capacities, it found that women systematically scored lower because they were more likely to emphasize past team accomplishments and use sentences like “we exceeded our goals.” Men, in contrast, were more likely to use the word “I” and stress individual performance.

“There’s a lot of little things people don’t usually notice,” said Katee Van Horn, GoDaddy’s vice president for engagement and inclusion. “But they add up. They reinforce these biases you might not even realize you have.”



“There’s a lot of little things people don’t usually notice,” Katee Van Horn, above, said of GoDaddy’s changes in analyzing leadership capacities. “But they add up.” Top, young women at a coding camp at GoDaddy’s offices.

GoDaddy began focusing on countering these biases, assessing the company’s hiring, employee evaluations and promotions. In particular, executives scrutinized employee reviews, which evaluated workers using questions similar to those found at many companies: Does this person reply to emails

promptly? Have they sought leadership roles? Have they shown initiative?

“We realized a lot of those are invitations for subjectivity,” said Ms. Van Horn.

GoDaddy’s data indicated that women tended to systematically be scored lower than men on communication, in

A cinematic world built of Lego bricks

BY GREGORY SCHMIDT AND BROOKS BARNES

Lego and Warner Bros. Entertainment seem to be perfect partners: One is a multinational toy company in search of expansion, and the other is a global entertainment giant looking for more content.

But as both ramp up promotion for the September release of their third film together, “The Lego Ninjago Movie,” some are wondering whether the cinematic landscape is cluttered with too many Lego bricks.

“The Lego Movie” was a surprise smash in 2014, costing about \$60 million to make and collecting \$469.2 million worldwide. A sequel to that film is planned for 2019. But a related follow-up to the original, “The Lego Batman Movie,” released in February, took in only \$311 million, in part because girls were not as interested. And now, a short seven months later, comes “Ninjago.”

The stakes are high for Warner Bros. Few films on its schedule are more important than “The Lego Ninjago Movie,” which it sees as part of a continuing “cinematic universe” and a pillar for the studio, with additional original installments and sequels exploring different genres planned for the next decade and beyond.

But Ninjago is more than just a movie for Lego. The brand was introduced in 2011 with a martial-arts themed line of toys and a TV series. Lego anticipated a short life span, but consumer response was stronger than expected, so Lego brought it back in 2014 with new building sets and new seasons of the TV series.

“There is an affinity for the property,” said Michael McNally, the senior director of brand relations for Lego.

Still, some industry watchers say the ambitious movie slate, combined with



Justin Theroux, left, and Dave Franco provided voices for “The Lego Ninjago Movie.” At right, visitors to the Comic-Con Lego booth.



an equally elaborate merchandising push, could end up hurting.

Jim Silver, the chief executive and editor in chief of TTPM, a toy industry website, said the overall market was oversaturated with movie-related toys this year, and children were not making an emotional attachment to the brands and the characters.

“There is less attention span on their property,” Mr. Silver said. “Kids are bouncing from one to another.”

Underscoring the importance of “The Lego Ninjago Movie,” Warner Bros. and Lego headed to Comic-Con International, the annual comic book convention in San Diego, over the weekend to mount a full-court press to woo die-hard fans.

Each morning, Warner Bros. hosted a yogalike workout (“for the ninja in everyone”) on a lawn that it billed as “nin-

Few films on Warner Bros.’ schedule are more important than “The Lego Ninjago Movie,” seen as a pillar for the studio.

joga.” The studio also flew in several actors who voiced characters in the film — Dave Franco, Michael Peña, Kumail Nanjiani and Olivia Munn — for a presentation that included the unveiling of a new trailer set to Taylor Swift’s “Bad Blood.”

“The key for us is to reach both adults and kids,” Dan Lin, the producer behind the “Lego” movie series, said at the presentation. “How do we reach the broadest audience possible to introduce ‘Ninjago?’”

For its part, Lego planned building ac-

tivities, autograph signings and the unveiling of life-size Lego models at its enormous booth on the convention center floor. And in a new strategy, Lego also introduced 14 movie-themed building sets for sale at the show, a month before they will appear at mass-market retail stores in August.

It is common for toy companies to promote their hottest lines at Comic-Con with exclusive offerings, which fans line up for hours just for a chance to buy. For instance, Hasbro offered two versions of Optimus Prime from its Transformers line, as well as deluxe versions of Marvel Comics’ Daredevil and Luke Skywalker and his landspeeder.

Mattel promoted the coming “Justice League” movie with a limited-edition Cyborg action figure and a Hot Wheels Batmobile, and it offered a two-pack featuring Wonder Woman and Cheetah

from its DC Super Hero Girls line.

“We lean into our consumer insights” to give the fans what they want, said Samantha Lomow, senior vice president of Hasbro brands. “The economic model around these items is less about the financial than they are about the fan base.”

Lego has its own exclusive building sets at the convention as well, but the introduction of a retail line at Comic-Con is a first for the company.

“The timing works really well,” said Mr. McNally, creating a slow build for the movie that “stands out and drives buzz.”

All the attention at Comic-Con will help build awareness among influencers and the media, Mr. Silver of TTPM said. “Lego is keeping the brick front and center,” he said.

Still, the questions surrounding the movie percolated throughout the Warner Bros. presentation. Justin Theroux, who voices a character in the movie, said that boys 10 and under were “obsessed” with the “Ninjago” line, in part because of the Cartoon Network series “Lego Ninjago: Masters of Spinjitzu.” “If you are over that age,” Mr. Theroux said, “you don’t know it exists.”

Mr. McNally played down concerns about having back-to-back Lego movies, saying “The Lego Ninjago Movie” stood apart from its predecessor and was a good opportunity to reach a wider audience.

“That theatrical experience is then shared through a play experience,” he said, and that could result in consumers buying new sets or even playing with old ones.

“For us, the portfolio can benefit from the movie event,” Mr. McNally said, “even if the action the audience takes is to pull out the bricks they have and continue building.”

part because they were more likely to be a family’s primary parent, and so were more likely to be off email in the early evening during homework and bedtime hours. “And the more important question isn’t whether someone responds to email right away,” said Ms. Van Horn. “It’s what they say, whether their responses have impact. We shouldn’t be judging people based on how fast they communicate. We should be looking at whether they achieved the goals set for them.”

Women also, on average, scored lower than men on evaluations of taking initiative, because most of GoDaddy’s mid-level managers were men, and the culture was top-down, which made it harder for female employees to participate in and get attention for prominent projects, employees say.

GoDaddy overhauled its employee evaluation forms, replacing open-ended questions with specific criteria that evaluated employees’ impact, rather than their character. Instead of asking if someone is good at communicating, the new evaluation form asked managers to document instances when an employee shared knowledge with a colleague, or collaborated with a team.

“You can’t change a place just by hiring more women,” said Ms. Weissman, the senior vice president, who oversees a technical staff. “You have to create a safe space to talk about the assumptions all of us have. You have to work against the biases.”

Today, almost a quarter of GoDaddy’s employees are women, including 21 percent of its technical staff. Half of new engineers hired last year were female, and women make up 26 percent of senior leadership. Female technologists, on average, earn slightly more than their male counterparts.

There are critics, though. One former high-ranking woman, who requested anonymity because she worried that speaking critically would harm her reputation, said she found GoDaddy’s commitment to change uneven. Departments tended to take inequality seriously when top executives were paying attention, she said. But that focus lessened when scrutiny declined.

“We know this is a process,” Mr. Irving told me. “We know we’re not going to fix it in a day, or a year, or five years.”

And convincing the world is going to take time, as well. When Mr. Irving gave the keynote at the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing, he said, he was terrified. He began by showing the audience some of the images that GoDaddy had used in commercials.

From the stage, he saw hundreds of angry, skeptical faces. Then he walked through everything GoDaddy was doing. He promised that the company’s dedication to eradicating the gender gap would not end. He pledged to listen to any suggestion, and to pressure other firms to steal GoDaddy’s best ideas.

“It was a big moment,” said Elizabeth Ames, an senior executive at the Anita Borg Institute, an influential Silicon Valley group advocating for women in technology. “Everyone was skeptical of GoDaddy, the same way they’re skeptical about companies like Uber today. But GoDaddy was really committed to it, and it’s working.”

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BUSINESS

Big infrastructure plans? Stalled

WASHINGTON

Despite broad appetite for tackling problem, the path is uncertain

BY GLENN THRUSH

As a candidate, President Trump billed himself as a new breed of think-big Republican, pitching a \$1 trillion campaign pledge to reconstruct the roadways, waterworks and bridges in the United States — along with a promise to revive the lost art of the bipartisan deal.

In the White House, Mr. Trump has continued to dangle the possibility of “a great national infrastructure program” that would create “millions” of new jobs as part of a public-private partnership to rival the public works achievements of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower. He chastises anyone who forgets to include it near the top of his to-do list, telling one recent visitor to the Oval Office, “Don’t forget about infrastructure!”

But an ambitious public works plan, arguably his best chance of rising above the partisan rancor of his first six months in office, is fast becoming an afterthought — at precisely the moment Mr. Trump needs a big, unifying issue to rewrite the narrative of his chaotic administration.

Infrastructure remains stuck near the rear of the legislative line, according to two dozen administration officials, legislators and labor leaders involved in coming up with a concrete proposal. It

awaits the resolution of tough negotiations over the budget, the debt ceiling, a tax overhaul, a new push to toughen immigration laws — and the enervating slog to enact a replacement for the Affordable Care Act.

Mr. Trump’s team has yet to produce the detailed plan he has promised to deliver “very soon,” and the president has yet to even name any members to a new board he claimed would green-light big projects.

The collapse of his health care overhaul effort seemed to clear one item out of the way. But it also raised serious doubts about the ability of Republicans to pass anything other than regulatory rollbacks or routine spending bills.

“The president would have been better off beginning his agenda with a major infrastructure package,” said Senator Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, who has been working with the White House on the issue.

“It would give him a win on an important agenda item for him,” Ms. Collins said. “It would have been better received by Democrats, Congress and, frankly, citizens across the country.”

Senator John Thune, the South Dakota Republican leading infrastructure efforts in the Senate, said consideration of a proposal could slip into 2018. “They’re supposedly going to submit some sort of plan in the fall, so we’ll see,” Mr. Thune told reporters this month. “We’re sort of waiting on the administration to tell us what it is exactly they want to do.”

Unlike the transformative 20th-century efforts the president likes to cite at his rallies, any plan that eventually emerges will not rely exclusively on federal funds. Instead, it will try to use \$200



Installing high-speed internet cable in upstate New York. Infrastructure remains stuck near the rear of the legislative line.

billion in federal spending to attract an additional \$800 billion in investment from private investors and local governments over the next 10 years.

Its hybrid nature is its greatest virtue.

It’s also a drawback. Democrats and centrist Republicans remain skeptical of its limited scope. House conservatives remain hostile toward any big, new federal funding program. As a result, Mr.

Trump’s top advisers and Republicans on the Hill are uncertain on how to proceed and unsure what is even possible given the party divisions exposed by the Obamacare repeal effort.

Gary D. Cohn, chairman of Mr. Trump’s National Economic Council, along with the president’s legislative affairs director, Marc Short, banked on one possible political workaround: linking the plan to the administration’s push for a tax overhaul. The approach appealed to Mr. Trump.

“Infrastructure is in my opinion very popular,” the president said in April. “It’s going to be bipartisan. And I’m going to use it in another bill. That’s an important bill.”

To get it done, Mr. Trump and Mr. Cohn, a lifelong Democrat and a political novice, are open to increasing the federal share well beyond \$200 billion, according to officials.

Despite his public swagger, Mr. Cohn tends to tread gingerly on sensitive political matters and is reluctant to release details of the administration’s infrastructure proposal, or even a legislative strategy, for fear of having it shot down.

“Right now, it doesn’t appear that they have a plan,” said Richard L. Trumka, president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., who is pushing for more federal spending. “The president doesn’t know what his own party wants, and he’s not sure what he wants. He can’t get his own party to pony up the money for infrastructure.”

A White House spokeswoman, Natalie Strom, said the timetable for releasing a proposal was the same as it had always been: late summer or early fall. Mr. Cohn’s team is carefully weighing options and seeking advice from dozens of financial experts, construction executives, legislators and local officials, she said.

“Our work on infrastructure is con-

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Taming China’s ‘gray rhinos’

CHINA, FROM PAGE 1

cided not to do business with HNA.

Dalian Wanda went head-to-head with American entertainment giants, promising a year ago to defeat Disney in China. Now, the Chinese company is in retreat, selling off its theme parks and hotels.

“The downside of these new companies is that there was no one with the political or regulatory strength who could control these companies,” said Brock Silvers, the chief executive of Kaiyuan Capital, a boutique investment banking advisory service in Shanghai.

The gray rhinos have a common characteristic: a lot of debt and many deals.

For years, China’s banks readily doled out loans, eager to keep pumping money into the economy. They doubled down after the global financial crisis in 2008, to prop up growth and push down the value of the currency.

The conglomerates, with their stellar reputations and strong profits, were at the front of the lending line. HNA has secured a \$90 billion credit line from state-controlled banks. Anbang spent more than \$10 billion in three years, deals that were financed mostly by selling so-called wealth management products — opaque investments promising high rates and low risk.

With state money in hand, companies looked beyond their borders, at the urging of the government. Over the past five years, Wanda, Anbang, HNA Group and Fosun have made at least \$41 billion of overseas acquisitions, according to Dealogic, a research firm.

The country’s debt levels soared. In 2011, total credit extended to private, nonfinancial companies was about 120 percent of economic output in China. It is now 166 percent.



The opening of the Nanchang Wanda theme park in Jiangxi Province in 2016. Wanda Group is selling most of its theme parks.

“The Chinese government played the role of an indispensable enabler,” said Minxin Pei, a professor at Claremont McKenna College in California who studies Chinese politics. “If you look at how they got so big, it’s all through taking on debt.”

By 2015, China’s economy was losing steam. And the government, which had

been looking for ways to reinvest all the dollars pouring into the country, suddenly needed to prevent all the money from flowing out. Beijing had to dip into its pockets to keep the currency afloat.

The government started taking a closer look at the most prolific deal makers. In December, four big Chinese regulators, in a rare joint statement, warned

about “irrational” investments in overseas real estate, entertainment and sports, calling the areas rife with “risks and hidden dangers.”

Some of the conglomerates’ purchases appeared to fit that description.

Wanda paid a hefty \$3.5 billion last year for Legendary Entertainment. The studio had produced blockbusters like

“300” and “Godzilla” only to follow with flops like “Warcraft” and “The Great Wall.”

Fosun bought Britain’s Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club. It was among a number of Chinese deals for soccer teams, including AC Milan, Inter Milan and FC Sochaux.

Anbang was in a protracted battle for the Starwood hotel chain, bidding up the price and drawing scrutiny. It eventually walked away from Starwood, which Marriott purchased for \$13 billion.

In recent months, the political and regulatory environment has quickly shifted. Chinese officials have also become preoccupied with preventing any disruption to the Communist Party’s next congress, where the leadership is selected every five years. In the lead-up to the event this fall, the government is putting a premium on stability.

Both companies said their finances remain in good shape. “We maintain strict control over our financial risk and continue to improve our debt and cash flow,” Fosun said in a statement.

HNA said that its ratio of debt to assets had declined over the last seven years. “HNA Group is a financially strong company with a robust, diversified balance sheet that reflects our continued growth and engagement across the capital markets,” the company said. On its relationship with Bank of America Merrill Lynch, the conglomerate said, “With the exception of some modest asset-backed financing provided to some of our leasing subsidiaries, where business continues as usual, HNA Group has never engaged B.A.M.L. for any significant business.”

Wanda announced this month that it would sell \$9.3 billion worth of hotels and theme parks to Sunac China, an-

other real estate developer. But then Wanda was forced to scrap the original deal and split the portfolio between Sunac and another Chinese buyer, R & F Properties.

“Everyone is concerned about Wanda Commercial’s debt problems,” Wang Jianlin, the chairman of Dalian Wanda Group, said about the group’s main real estate subsidiary at a news conference on Wednesday.

In early May, Chinese insurance regulators, worried about Anbang’s precipitous growth, halted sales of two investment products. Since then, Anbang’s lifeblood — the sale of wealth management products — has slowed to a trickle.

Anbang said that operations were normal and that it had ample cash. The company’s longtime chairman, who has been on leave since his detention, has not been publicly charged with any crimes.

The Chinese giants now look more like gray rhinos. The term itself comes not from biology but from an eponymous business book that has become somewhat popular this year in China.

People’s Daily, the main newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, used the term last week in a strong warning after President Xi expressed concern about debt. “Risks in the financial sector are sophisticated,” said the unsigned commentary. “Therefore, precautionary measures should be taken to prevent not only ‘black swan’ but also ‘gray rhino’ events.”

Keith Bradsher reported from Shanghai, and Sui-Lee Wee from Beijing. Alexandra Stevenson contributed reporting from New York, and Brooks Barnes from Los Angeles. Ailin Tang and Amy Cheng contributed research.

tinuing to move as planned,” Ms. Strom wrote in an email last week. “Rebuilding our nation’s infrastructure has always been a major priority for the president and his team remains on track to do that.”

Mr. Trump plans to name members of the infrastructure panel in the coming weeks. But contrary to what he told The Wall Street Journal this year, the committee won’t have the authority to approve or reject projects, according to an administration official. Instead it will serve in a broader advisory capacity.

“We are working with local governments, federal agencies and our partners on the Hill to finalize a common-sense plan that will receive overwhelming public support and bipartisan majorities in Congress,” Mr. Short said when asked about the status of the plan.

But time may be running out, and Mr. Short has privately expressed frustration that the president’s team has not made infrastructure more of a priority, according to a Senate staff member who has spoken with him.

Senate Democrats are increasingly unwilling to work with Mr. Trump on anything. Nor is there consensus among Republicans on how to proceed.

Senator Mitch McConnell, the majority leader, is skeptical of wedding a tax overhaul and infrastructure — or of any deal that would require him to compromise with Democrats. He has suggested a more modest Republicans-only package. He has also discussed tacking something smaller onto a budget reconciliation bill that requires only 51 Republican votes, according to a person close to the talks.

The idea of an all-in-one bill combin-

ing tax reform and infrastructure also has internal skeptics. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin shot it down at a meeting with House members recently, arguing that a combined tax and infrastructure bill was “too big to pass,” according to notes taken by an attendee.

One senior administration aide said Mr. Mnuchin’s position had prompted Mr. Cohn to consider scrapping the idea of melding the two initiatives altogether. There are other impediments.

Mick Mulvaney, Mr. Trump’s budget director, has told associates he opposes any significant expansion of funding in the plan, according to people close to him. Mr. Mulvaney, who led efforts to shut down the government as a congressman from South Carolina, included a 13 percent cut to the Department of Transportation and reductions to other infrastructure-related programs in his draft budget for the coming fiscal year.

Mr. Cohn, according to two people who have spoken with him recently, has dismissed Mr. Mulvaney’s budget as a “total nonstarter” that no one should take seriously. And while Mr. Mulvaney remains influential with Hill conservatives, Mr. Cohn has the president’s trust. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao recently called him “the big dog” on taxes and infrastructure.

So far he hasn’t growled. A White House official directly involved in the process said Mr. Cohn’s team was hashing out a “declaration of legislative principles” but would most likely leave much of the bill drafting to House and Senate Republicans.

Still, the broad outlines are slowly coming into focus. The plan would include “massive permit reform” to cut



At work in May on a bridge in Nevada. There is broad agreement that American infrastructure problems need to be addressed. The debate is over how to pay to fix them.

approval times on major projects to two years or less, from 10; loans and grants to improve rural infrastructure; and funding for “transformative projects,” like broadband and power grid improvements. In addition, the effort would include bolstering existing programs funded through the Finance and Innovation Act and new “incentives” to encourage states and localities to bankroll their own projects, officials said.

For his part, Mr. Trump is most concerned about being able to tell voters his plan hit the \$1 trillion mark — raising concerns that the administration will simply include previously scheduled lo-

cal projects in its overall tally to claim victory.

The president — echoing his ill-received remarks about repealing the Affordable Care Act — has told people around him that he did not expect the process to be this difficult, according to one longtime adviser.

The one thing that is not in dispute is the monumental need to do something. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that \$4.6 trillion is needed to fix crumbling highways, bridges, transit systems and waterworks, and to build out the nation’s power grid and broadband networks.

Tom Naratil, the Americas president for UBS and an advocate of public-private partnerships, said: “From our investor surveys, and in other places, you can see that infrastructure is a unifying, not a dividing, issue. The demand is there.”

But lawmakers from states with rural populations are concerned that local governments will have to collect tolls or raise fees to bankroll projects that are not profitable enough to attract big investors. “My concern is, that works very well for large urban states, but it’s not really feasible for rural states like Maine, where you simply can’t generate the same kind of revenue,” Senator Collins said.

Many members of Mr. McConnell’s conference, including conservative stalwarts like Senator Richard C. Shelby of Alabama, have privately pushed for more federal money.

Sean McGarvey, president of the group North America’s Building Trades Unions, said he thought the administration needed to make “a very, very sizable public investment” for the plan to succeed. Mr. McGarvey, one of the few labor leaders close to the White House, said his union would like to see “a detailed proposal that can make it through committee, and be voted on through regular order by the end of the year.”

In the absence of a concrete proposal to sell, Mr. Trump’s staff has focused on what it can control — cutting regulations and harvesting “low-hanging fruit” to show some progress, in the words of one administration official.

But even that hasn’t gone according to plan. A big-splash proposal to privatize the nation’s air traffic control sys-

Senate Democrats are increasingly unwilling to work with Mr. Trump. Nor is there consensus among Republicans.

tem, borrowed from House Republicans, has faced tougher-than-expected opposition.

During a White House “infrastructure week” in June that was overshadowed by the testimony of James B. Comey, the former F.B.I. director, on Capitol Hill, aides raided the Republican policy cupboard for news-release-ready projects. Mr. Trump ended the week with what seemed like a genuinely new, if modest, proposal: a plan to create a council to streamline federal permitting coupled with an online “dashboard” to track federal projects.

One problem. A similar law was passed in 2015. The two senators who introduced the legislation — Senator Claire McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat, and Senator Rob Portman, an Ohio Republican — felt blindsided.

“It’s hard when you work in a bipartisan way to accomplish something meaningful and then the president announces it as if it was new, like it was something he was creating,” Ms. McCaskill said.

But Mr. Trump needed something substantive to prove he was making progress, according to White House aides.

Someone simply forgot to give the two senators a heads-up — and the president veered off script to make the project seem as if it were his idea.

INSTRUMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS™

Resorts for pets with all the trappings

Wealth Matters

PAUL SULLIVAN

Keith Clemson, a psychotherapist focused on couples therapy in Washington, worries about his dog when he goes away.

A chow chow, Ripley looks like a fluffy bear and can be sweet, but he can also be stubborn and a bit mean.

“I’m very particular about where he goes because of his temperament,” Dr. Clemson said. “For the breed, he’s perhaps the most friendly chow you’ve ever met. But every once in a while, he might snap at people.”

So when Dr. Clemson went away for eight days recently, he drove 45 minutes to a pet resort in suburban Virginia where he arranged for Ripley to have a private suite and three walks a day. At bedtime, his dog received an extra 20 minutes of “cuddle time.”

“I know when I drop him off, they’ll take care of him better than I would,” he said. “They give him a lot of attention. They all know him by name. He runs up to them. It’s that kind of interaction that I’m looking for.”

The cost? About \$1,000 for the eight-day stay. “It’s a lot of money when I think about it,” he said. “But it’s a certain type of expense that I’ll pay for.”

If people are splurging on a relaxing resort vacation for themselves this summer, then why not do the same for their dog or cat? While most people

are fine sending Fido or Fifi to the neighborhood kennel, others are choosing high-end pet hotels and spas that aim to match the service and amenities of a Ritz-Carlton or Four Seasons. For the four-legged set, that degree of luxury is very hands — or paws — on.

“We do a very intensive interview with people so we understand their dogs and what they need,” said Leah Fried Sedwick, the owner of Olde Towne Pet Resort, where Dr. Clemson’s dog stays. “We have dog swimming, an indoor track, cardio-joggers for dogs. We have an agility field that may look like serious playground equipment. We’ll cater to whatever their meal interests are. We do massages if you have an older dog.”

Amenities can be added à la carte. For \$40, a dog can have a “water workout and lap swim.” The more strenuous Iron Dog workout — jog, swim and field play — costs \$80. A sports massage afterward is \$35. Photos for owners are \$10, for four pictures.

The cost for dogs to be fluffed and powdered varies by their size and weight. But there are extras here, too, like a blueberry facial (\$10), mud bath treatment (\$30 to \$50), “pawicure” (\$15, though nail polish is an additional \$15) and “ear cleaning and hand-plucking of the hair” (\$12).

Ms. Sedwick recently opened a third resort in the Washington area to keep up with demand. The location, in Rockville, Md., cost \$9 million to build, from buying the land to developing the site, and can accommodate about 200 dogs.

One of the biggest criteria for these hotels is a high-end air filtration sys-



Bella playing in the pool at Olde Towne Pet Resort. When some people take vacations, they leave their pets at high-end spas.

tem so there is no smell.

All of this might seem a bit much, were it not for Americans’ penchant to pamper their pets. Last year, Americans spent nearly \$6 billion on pet grooming and boarding, which is separate from the nearly \$16 billion they spent on veterinarian care, according

to the American Pet Products Association. The trade group projects that the number will grow by some \$350 million in 2017.

It’s not always about the extra walks, snuggle time and massages. Sometimes it’s a room with a view, a television tuned to Animal Planet and

a camera so pet parents can keep tabs on their fur friends.

The Spa Paws Hotel, a 24,000-square-foot pet resort in Fort Worth, has 75 rooms for dogs and six for cats, with chauffeur service offered to and from the hotel. “My vision was a five-star hotel for us,” said Janice Ford

Grimes, the owner. “Everything about this place is focused on no anxiety for the pets.”

Dog suites range from \$70 to \$205 a night for the Texas King Suite, which, at 200 square feet, has space for two dogs and is equipped with a webcam, cable television and a nice window. “The irony is it’s little dogs staying in there,” Ms. Grimes said.

Amy Jo Birkenes, the owner and manager of Chateau Poochie in Pompano Beach, Fla., has themed rooms for pets. Chateau Poochie is like an activity-packed all-inclusive resort. The dogs get up at 6:30 a.m., go outside, eat breakfast and by 7:30 a.m. are in the “social lounge,” where they play until lunch. Then all the dogs take a two-hour nap. They’re back out in the afternoon for more supervised activities, often starting in the fitness center. After dinner, the dogs are given rubber chew toys stuffed with peanut butter.

“I call it the doggy martini,” Ms. Birkenes said.

If a dog still has trouble sleeping, she said, a staff member will sleep next to it — for about \$200 a night.

“We take the time to understand what our clients want,” she said. “We have clients who would literally fly into the private airport and fly onto another destination to leave their dogs here.”

When it comes to Ripley’s trips to the Olde Towne Pet Resort, Dr. Clemson said he turned his nose up at the pet pedicure and the spa experience in general. Excessive, he said.

But at Christmas, he did pay for Ripley to get a special treat. “He got a visit from Santa Claus,” Dr. Clemson said. “He got an extra dinner or a treat that night.”

Opinion

A ‘Trump Doctrine’ is born

The president promised an “America First” foreign policy, but he’s taken on something far more ambitious.

Stephen Wertheim

How did Donald Trump come to speak for Western civilization?

This wasn’t what his campaign promised. Candidate Trump put America First. He proposed a creative solution to the problem that has confronted every president since the collapse of the Soviet Union, namely that the United States lacks an adversary against which to define itself and orient its foreign policy. In place of a single enemy, Mr. Trump offered the world. He laid into everything and everyone from the Islamic State to China to NATO allies to immigrants, albeit with the notable exception of Russia.

Six months into his presidency, America First nationalism has not gone away. But President Trump has increasingly organized his foreign policy around another principle, codified in his July 6 speech in Warsaw. No longer the aggrieved victim that he portrayed during the campaign, the United States has morphed into the proud leader of the West, embedded in a “community of nations” sharing a common “way of life.” The outlines of a Trump doctrine are emerging: The president has pledged America to the “defense of civilization itself.”

Back home, the foreign policy commentariat glimpsed the maturation of a presidency. A foreign policy oriented around defending Western civilization may be uniquely capable of squaring the circle between Mr. Trump’s base of voters and the national security grandees who formed the backbone of the Never Trumpers. The base hears blood-and-soil rootedness: “the bonds of culture, faith and tradition that make us who we are,” as he intoned in Poland. The elites thank heavens that the president is talking about shared values and committing to global alliances.

Indeed, Mr. Trump’s is beginning to sound like a conventional foreign policy. Presidents throughout the 20th century identified America’s vital interests with the survival and expansion of “Western civilization,” which they claimed were threatened by Soviet-backed Communism from the East and disorderly rogues to the South. As Dwight Eisenhower declared in 1959, the true purpose of NATO was to “protect the spiritual foundations of Western civilization against every kind of ruthless aggression.” Mr. Trump is shaping up to be no less committed to defending the West — a rallying cry particularly for neoconservatives, whom he increasingly resembles. It’s no wonder he has changed American foreign policy in evolutionary more than revolutionary ways, where he has changed it at all.

Would President Trump maintain the global alliances the United States inherited from the Cold War? This was the acid test, and he has answered in the affirmative. In Warsaw, he explicitly endorsed NATO’s collective defense commitment after months of bluster. His personal relations with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany seem destined to be frosty, but he cemented his Atlanticist turn while watching Bastille Day military parades with President Emmanuel Macron of France.

Nor has the Trump administration relinquished any responsibility for upholding defense commitments in Asia. To the contrary, Mr. Trump has vowed to “solve the problem” of North Korea’s nuclear threat with or without the help of China. The president may decry globalism, but he assigns the United States no less global a role than his predecessors.

If anything, Mr. Trump’s civilizational framework makes more sense of America’s forever war in the Middle East than did Barack Obama’s language of surgical strikes. As much as Mr. Obama liked to parse the verbiage and conduct of the “war on terror,” the fact remained that he prosecuted it aggressively and widened it geographically. Mr. Trump has largely continued these policies but suggested that America is in the Middle East to police enemies of civilization. “Lawless savages,” he calls the Islamic State, evoking the worldview of European imperialists and their American admirers like Theodore Roosevelt.

One result was the most surprising action of Mr. Trump’s presidency to date: his strike in April against a Syrian government airfield in retaliation for the use of chemical weapons on civilians. Centrists raved that Mr. Trump might at long last be enforcing universal norms of the so-called liberal international order. But the president implied something else in his public justification: retaliation for a “very barbaric attack.”

In the process, he established another attribute of those who act in the name of civilized humanity — the right to decide, alone, who and what lies beyond the pale. In 2013, Mr. Obama declined to enforce his “red line” on chemical weapons after failing to gain approval from Congress or Britain’s Parliament. Mr. Trump, by contrast, may have seen the very unpredictability



SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

ty (and dubious legality) of the strike as an opportunity to send a message to the world that he would act, and bomb, as he liked.

The flip side of this fondness for civilized law and order is revealed when Mr. Trump extols the “unbelievable job” of President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines, who has orchestrated the extrajudicial killing of thousands on the grounds of fighting a war on drugs. Certain nonwhite, non-Western strongmen, it seems, can be brought into the magic circle of civilization if they are stamping out savagery.

In May, Mr. Trump took his first foreign trip to Saudi Arabia. In a red-carpeted Riyadh he found an ally against “barbaric criminals,” not to mention a lavish purchaser of American arms. In so doing, he joined a long line of presidents who backed third world autocrats as bastions of modernity and stability. This time the president dispenses with lip-service to democracy or human rights.

America First nationalism isn’t dead, though. It lingers in the background. The administration’s decision to withdraw from the Paris climate accord was pure America First, replete with paeans to Pittsburgh over the center of French civilization. The president may yet mount a serious effort to restrict trade, despite a lull after he scuttled the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Nonetheless, “civilization” seems likely to continue to occupy the fore of foreign policy under the

Trump administration. It may be the only doctrine able to reconcile Mr. Trump’s material commitment to America’s global primacy with his ideological aversion to liberal universalism.

All this makes President Trump something other than either the narrow

No longer the aggrieved victim that he portrayed during the campaign, the United States has morphed into the proud leader of the West, embedded in a “community of nations” sharing a common “way of life.”

realist that his critics fear or the passing oddity for which his critics hope. Like it or not, the emerging Trump doctrine has deep roots in American tradition. Six months in, the time has come for advocates of American world leadership to own up to a fact: Donald Trump is one of you.

To be precise, Mr. Trump appears to be evolving into a kind of neoconservative. Before

becoming associated with George W. Bush’s “freedom agenda,” many neoconservatives reviled Soviet Communism but were less than enamored with the goal of exporting democracy and human rights.

Scorning the flabby norms of the

liberal international order, they placed their trust in the muscular assertion of American power, deeming it the real guarantor of their country’s interests and the world’s civilized values alike.

Like earlier neocons, Mr. Trump looks at the world and sees unceasing threats that experts understate. In the 1970s, prominent neoconservatives formed a “Team B” to challenge the C.I.A.’s estimate of Soviet capabilities and reinvigorate the Cold War. Later, George W. Bush’s administration created an intelligence unit that hyped the Iraqi threat.

Mr. Trump, too, mistrusts professionals in the State Department, whose funding he seeks to slash, and in the intelligence agencies, whose honesty and competence he has impugned. Like neoconservatives, he glorifies martial values and seeks to build up the military. Unsurprisingly, this foreign policy has received recent praise from neoconservatives like Elliott Abrams, an erstwhile critic and former Bush and Reagan foreign policy staffer. The commentator Charles Krauthammer, a frequent Trump critic, conferred the gold standard on the Warsaw speech: “Reaganesque.”

Even so, one should not expect Mr. Trump simply to replicate the policies of neocons past. Under the banner of civilization, he gains the flexibility to cast Russia not only as an Eastern enemy but alternately as a Western ally, standing tall against terrorist barbarism and secular decadence. Such an image, promoted by President

Vladimir Putin himself, has turned Russia into the north star of right-wing authoritarians on both sides of the Atlantic.

But Trumpian civilization may be less accommodating of Iran, North Korea and, most important, China. These powers — nonwhite, non-Christian — are susceptible to being expelled from its ambit. It remains for the Trump administration to answer how far the blessings of civilization extend beyond what Stephen K. Bannon, a key Trump adviser, has called “the Judeo-Christian West.”

As for that West, Mr. Trump has taken up its mantle just as the West has recoiled from him. He is detested in Western Europe. A mere 11 percent of Germans have confidence in the American president to do the right thing in world affairs. Similarly rock-bottom ratings among the British, French and Spanish resemble the lows at the end of the Bush years — even as majorities expect relations with the United States to stay about the same. The trouble, plainly, isn’t what Mr. Trump has done; it is who he is. Hence the irony of Trump proclaiming, “The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive.” He is the one who might yet shatter the bonds of identity that form the West’s “will.”

Mr. Trump enjoys better prospects for defining the future of the American right. In policing threats to civilization, he may have stumbled upon a framework for a truly post-Cold War, right-wing foreign policy, in which the United States no longer promotes its political model against any rival.

For all that’s familiar about the defense of civilization, past presidents have linked that cause to the forward march of liberal democracy. In the 19th century, the United States appointed itself the guardian of the New World against the monarchical Old. In the 20th century, it led the Free World against the totalitarian netherworld. And in immediate decades after the Soviet collapse, American presidents were not about to abandon the formula that appeared to have won the Cold War.

But when Mr. Bush waged a disastrous war in Iraq, he discredited his freedom agenda for a generation, and counting. By the Obama years, a growing segment of the right came to perceive radical Islamic terrorism, white demographic decline and cultural pluralism as threats to Western civilization — and autocrats as its foremost defenders. Mr. Trump capitalized on this politics of civilization, and he is forging a foreign policy in its image. He may not be the last.

STEPHEN WERTHEIM is a historian at King’s College, University of Cambridge. He is writing a book on the birth of American world leadership in World War II.



TOM BRENNER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Trump trying on a cowboy hat during a “Made in America” event at the White House this summer.

The New York Times

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CALIFORNIA LEADS, AGAIN, ON CLIMATE

Extending a cap-and-trade plan to cut greenhouse gases shows the way for other states in the face of White House resistance.

California, which has long been a pioneer in fighting climate change, renewed its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions last week by extending, to 2030, its cap-and-trade program, which effectively puts a price on emissions. It's a bold, bipartisan commitment that invites similarly ambitious policies from other states, and it sends a strong signal to the world that millions of Americans regard with utmost seriousness a threat the Trump administration refuses to acknowledge, let alone reckon with.

The cap-and-trade program, which had been set to end in 2020, is the most important component of California's plan to reduce planet-warming emissions by 40 percent (from 1990 levels) by 2030. The extension, along with a companion bill to reduce local air pollution, was passed by a two-thirds majority of the State Legislature, including eight crucial votes from Republicans. They defied a Republican president who has not only reneged on America's global climate commitments, but has tried to undo every climate policy put into place by former President Barack Obama.

The hope among those who care about climate is that a combination of market forces, wider use of cleaner fuels and aggressive actions by businesses, states and cities can fill the gap left by Mr. Trump's disappearance from the battlefield. There are many positive signs. Nearly 30 states require their utilities to seek at least some of their power from renewable sources. More and more businesses are committing themselves to using renewable fuels.

California's cap-and-trade program requires power plants, natural gas utilities, fuel distributors and industries to buy permits to pollute, which decline in quantity over time. The idea is to put a price on emissions and, thus, discourage businesses and individuals from burning fossil fuels and encourage them to switch to cleaner sources of energy.

Attention now turns to the Northeast, where nine states, including New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts, are part of what is known as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which, like California's effort, is a market-based cap-and-trade program that goes beyond state boundaries. So far, R.G.G.I., as it known for short, has helped reduce emissions from power plants in the region by 40 percent between 2008 and 2016, according to the Acadia Center, a research and public interest group. States are now negotiating the future of the program beyond 2020.

Mr. Trump may be going one way, but America is going the other.

THE WALL WITH MEXICO AND XANADU

It becomes more fantastical each time Mr. Trump brings it up. But that may not keep Congress from throwing bags of money at it.

Every time President Trump revamps his campaign promise to build that "tall, powerful, beautiful" wall along the Mexican border he sounds increasingly like a developer ruminating over the blueprints for mythic Xanadu.

Mr. Trump suddenly added "beautiful" solar panels to his wall specs last month, claiming that these might somehow even pay for construction. Then again, he now says the thick wall he envisioned should be transparent enough so that border agents would not get hit by "large sacks of drugs" tossed over the wall by sneaky Mexican drug dealers. "They hit you on the head with 60 pounds of stuff? It's over," the president said, apparently believing himself.

The amazing thing about Mr. Trump's vision of an ever-shifting, ever-shrinking wall (he's halved its needed length to 700 to 900 miles, plus "natural barriers") is that House Republican appropriators somehow rate it credible enough that they approved funding last week for the administration's request of \$1.6 billion to start construction. Outside experts have estimated the ultimate cost at \$25 billion or more.

The president still insists that Mexico will be brought to heel and pay for the wall. Right now, though, Mr. Trump needs front money, and that has to come from the American taxpayer.

Is this a consolation prize for the serial failures of Trumpcare before what must be a thoroughly embarrassed Republican Congress? One line of thinking is that Mr. Trump needs to recover on Capitol Hill with a victory, any victory, to recharge his triumphalist batteries. So, back to the comfort zone of his beloved wall.

The wall's down payment is in the 2018 Homeland Security budget. If approved by both houses, it would pay for just 28 miles of new wall in the Rio Grande Valley plus fencing to be added to the hundreds of miles of existing barriers and fences.

Surely Homeland Security and the nation have more pressing needs than to advance tax revenues for a project that resonates with the grandiosity of the failed Trump casinos in Atlantic City. The Republican Congress looks only more feckless in feeding his fantasy.

Sink into the silence of summer

Michael McGirr

Summer is the silent season, when vacations offer virtually the only chance for legions of beleaguered workers to escape their responsibilities. A wanton slumber on a hot afternoon offers the luxurious expanse of wasted time. The world can keep turning without us for a while.

The word "holiday" owes its origin to religious observance, to a "holy day." It brings with it the sense that encounters with the sacred reduce us to inactivity. The word "vacation" does something of the same job. It means emptiness or vacancy, an idea that many people find so frightening that their vacation schedules seem more exhausting than their actual work. But these people will miss

out on the deeper engagement with oneself that a vacation can allow, away from the props of status and career.

Thinkers throughout history can be paired on the basis of their ideas around sleep, silence and vacation. The hero of "The Odyssey" returns to Ithaca after 20 restless years to find his bed. He won't tell his story until he has paid off his debt to sleep. The hero of "The Aeneid," on the other hand, having made a long speech, gets out of the bed he shares with Dido to go and found the Eternal City. As he sets sail from Carthage, Dido burns the bed.

Here, in a nutshell, is the difference between the mysticism of ancient Greek philosophy and the pragmatism of Roman. One moves into silence and rest; the other is driven out of bed to get things done.

Or consider the two great vacation stories of the 18th century: "Robinson Crusoe" and "Gulliver's Travels." Cru-

soe is an embodiment of the Protestant work ethic, a one-man civilization. For him, sleep is mainly about marking the time between days. Gulliver, on the other hand, lands in Lilliput and surrenders himself to the best sleep of his life. When he wakes, he is 12 times the size of

Sometimes there are worse things to do than nothing.

everybody else. Crusoe's sleep is part of the order of the world; Gulliver's is a doorway to another world.

There is a central cultural contrast here: Do you take sleep, or do you let sleep take you? I have been a teacher since Plato founded the academy. With each passing year, I observe in a number of my teenage students higher levels of both anxiety and exhaustion, two burdens

that are closely related. Both feed off the fiction that these young people have never done enough or been good enough. Silence and sleep are the two places in which students can put down these burdens. But these are skills that have to be learned. The senior counselor at our school says that poor sleep is his No. 1 predictor of poor mental health.

Every summer we take a group of incoming student leaders away for a few days. As part of the experience, we rise at 5 a.m. to visit a Cistercian monastery where a group of monks live in almost complete silence, pursuing a lifestyle that has not changed much since the 11th century. Young people find this commitment utterly confronting. It is far more outrageous to them than any possible expression of sexuality.

The monks follow "The Rule of St. Benedict," written in the sixth century, one of the more wise and humane works in Western history. It begins with the invitation "Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart. This is advice from a father who loves you." The writer Flannery O'Connor — a woman of few but well-chosen words — was sustained by this austere and beautiful tradition. Thomas Merton was a Cistercian, too. His great book "The Sign of Jonas" ends with a piece written in the heat of summer of 1952 called "Fire Watch," a meditation on sleep, silence, prayer and community. Coco Chanel spent her adolescence in the orphanage of a Cistercian abbey; Chanel No. 5 has always struck me as an ineffable combination of silence and sex.

A friend of mine, Brother Bernie, is the prior of the abbey we visit. He has lived there for 40 years and is one of the sanest people I know. I tell my students that Bernie is one of the few friends with whom I have never argued. That is because he so seldom speaks. He describes the monastery as a "fridge magnet," something that reminds the rest of the world that it doesn't have as much to say as it thinks it might. Bernie believes that God doesn't use many words either: His life involves listening to deep silence. The students are gob-smacked. So am I.

Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Jesus and the Prophet Muhammad were all deep listeners. Whether you think they were listening to God depends on many things, not least whether you are prepared to take a leap of faith. But you can't read their stories without noticing the ways in which they were all reduced to a creative silence in which their egos shrunk and their minds opened. It is no coincidence that many sacred texts reserve a special place for sleep. Mystical experience is supposed to bring into our conscious waking lives some of the most important things we do unconsciously while we are asleep.

Sleep is the most generative part of our day because it is when our ego gets out of the way. I am fascinated by sleep perhaps because I have so often struggled to achieve it — both as a sufferer of severe sleep apnea and, more happily, as the father of twins. I have learned that when you cannot sleep, the discipline of silence can serve as a substitute, a kind of waking sleep allowing us to let go and live in the present. This does not mean it is passive or vacant. It means we surrender control and begin to listen.

There are worse things to do than nothing.

MICHAEL MCGIRR, the dean of faith at St. Kevin's College in Melbourne, Australia, is the author of "Snooze: The Lost Art of Sleep."



KEVIN LUCBERT

Kushner's got too many secrets to keep ours



Nicholas Kristof

For all that we don't know about President Trump's dealings with Russia, one thing should now be clear: Jared Kushner should not be working in the White House, and he should not have a security clearance.

True, no proof has been presented that Kushner broke the law or plotted with Russia to interfere in the U.S. election. But he's under investigation, and a series of revelations have bolstered suspicions — and credible doubts mean that he must be viewed as a security risk.

Here's the bottom line: Kushner attended a meeting in June 2016 whose stated purpose was to advance a Kremlin initiative to interfere in the U.S. election; he failed to disclose the meeting on government forms (a felony if intentional); he was apparently complicit in a cover-up in which the Trump team denied at least 20 times that there had been any contacts with Russians to influence the election; and he also sought to set up a secret communications channel with the Kremlin during the presidential transition.

Until the situation is clarified, such a person simply should not work in the White House and have access to America's most important secrets.

Kushner is set to be interviewed

Monday in a closed session with the Senate Intelligence Committee, his first meeting with congressional investigators. I hope they grill him in particular about the attempt to set up a secret communications channel and whether it involved mobile Russian scrambling devices.

Similar issues arise with Ivanka Trump. The SF-86 form to get a national security clearance requires inclusion of a spouse's foreign contacts, so the question arises: Did Ivanka Trump list the Russians whom Kushner spoke with? If they were intentionally omitted, then that, too, is a felony.

Look, Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump may well be innocent of wrongdoing, and in general I agree with them much more than I do with, say, Steve Bannon. I suspect that the couple are a moderating influence on the administration, and I believe that some of the derision toward Ivanka has a sexist taint that would arouse more outrage if a liberal were the target.

All that acknowledged, it's still untenable for someone to remain as a senior White House official with continued access to secrets while under federal investigation for possible ties to the Kremlin.

The Washington Post reported in May that Kushner is a focus of a federal inquiry, and McClatchy has reported that investigators are looking into whether the Trump campaign's digital operation, which Kushner oversaw, colluded with Russians on Moscow's efforts to spread fake news about Hillary Clinton. The cloud is so great that even some Republicans are calling for Kushner to be ousted from the White House.

"It would be in the president's best

interest if he removed all of his children from the White House, not only Donald Trump but also Ivanka and Jared Kushner," Representative Bill Flores, a Texas Republican, told a television interviewer.

Increasingly, the national security world fears that there is something substantive to the suspicions about the president and Russia. Otherwise, nothing makes sense.

Why has Trump persistently stood with Vladimir Putin rather than with

allies like Germany or Britain? Why did Trump make a beeline for Putin at the G-20 dinner, without an aide, as opposed to chat with Angela Merkel or Theresa May? Why do so many Trump team

members have ties to Russia? Why did Trump choose a campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, who had been as much as \$17 million in debt to pro-Russian interests and was vulnerable to Moscow pressure?

Why the unending pattern of secrecy and duplicity about Russia contacts? Trump's defensiveness on Russian ties is creepy. Why did he take the political risk of firing Jim Comey? Why is he so furious at Jeff Sessions for recusing himself? Why does he apparently contemplate the extreme step of firing Bob Mueller during his investigation into the Russia ties?

If the Trump team is innocent and expects exoneration, why would it work so hard on a secret effort aimed at dis-

crediting Mueller, as The Times reported? Why would Trump be exploring pardons for aides, family members and himself, as The Washington Post reported?

One thing you learn as a journalist is that when an official makes increasingly vehement protestations of innocence, you're probably getting warm. So, listening to the protests from Trump, I'd say that Mueller is on to something.

What's particularly debilitating is the way the news and scandals keep dribbling out, making a mockery of White House denials and the president's credibility. If Trump has nothing to hide, he should stop trying to hide stuff.

No one should find any satisfaction in Trump's difficulties, for this credibility crisis diminishes not just his own influence but also American soft power around the world. This isn't a soap opera but a calamity for our country, affecting how others see us.

At least one leader of an American ally tells me that his government suspects that there was collusion with Moscow. I sympathize with our counterintelligence officials, who chase low-level leakers and spies even as they undoubtedly worry that their commander in chief may be subject to Kremlin leverage or blackmail.

There's no good way to manage a president who is a potential security risk (other than the standard protocol that he not meet Russians without another U.S. official present, and Trump escaped that constraint in Hamburg, Germany). But at least we can keep his son-in-law, while under investigation for possible felonies and collusion with Russia, from serving as a top White House official. It's time for Jared Kushner to find another job.

OPINION

The king’s men in Pakistan

Harris Khalique

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN Pakistan does not have a tradition of political parties that survive for long on the basis of their ideas. Every few years a new political party, mostly on the right, emerges with encouragement from the permanent establishment, dominated by the military. A revolving set of turncoats and some new defectors from other parties promptly join this new king’s party. It is then fiercely pitched against the party with the largest vote bank at that particular juncture.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) came to power in 2013 with the largest share of votes. The cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (P.T.I.) party seem to be playing the part of the king’s party, trying to unseat Mr. Sharif by using the Panama Papers’ revelations of graft and money laundering against Mr. Sharif and his family. A subsequent court-ordered probe, which included investigators from Pakistan’s all-powerful intelligence agencies, has delivered a scathing report against the Sharifs.

Here’s how to get filthy rich in Pakistan: manipulate the law, get bank loans written off, use irregular accounting practices, evade tariffs and taxes and exploit labor. Mr. Sharif and his family are no different from others who are filthy rich, some of whom have joined Mr. Khan’s P.T.I.

The Election Commission of Pakistan and a court are also scrutinizing the allegations of misappropriation against Mr. Khan, including that of foreign funding for his party, which is illegal under Pakistani law.

Though Mr. Khan may be shamefaced for his soft stance on terrorist groups, he is not in the league of Pakistan’s filthy rich and does not have a reputation for large-scale financial corruption. Yet there are doubts about the motivation and outcome of his campaign against Mr. Sharif and increasing fears that Mr. Khan’s P.T.I. is the latest version of the king’s party.

These doubts and fears appear because there are no evident signs of a break from an old, familiar pattern. Mr. Khan founded the P.T.I. in 1996, and it

became a club of well-meaning middle-class professionals inspired by the raw sincerity that Mr. Khan exuded. This has changed dramatically in the past six years, with his adversaries making obvious references to his party’s garnering the support of bureaucracy, military and intelligence agencies.

At present, the right-leaning P.T.I. represents a sizable minority of the affluent urban middle class. It has welcomed turncoats and defectors from other parties, many with a history of corruption and wrongdoing. It has been agitating for Mr. Sharif’s removal through nonelectoral means for the past few years. Panama Papers leaks have only intensified its demand.

The despairing history of king’s parties in Pakistan began in 1955 with the formation of the Republican Party. Pakistan was then divided into two parts, flanking India in the east and

The country’s military establishment always creates or supports a new political group to undermine the political party with the largest popular vote.

the west. The Republican Party was formed at the behest of the bureaucracy and military in West Pakistan to demand an unfair parity with the more populous East Pakistan, in terms of representation in legislature and allocations of economic support. The seeds of injustice sowed by the Republican Party, our first king’s party, culminated in the secession of East Pakistan in 1971. It became Bangladesh.

The Republican Party dissolved in 1958, three years after its formation, when Gen. Ayub Khan imposed martial law. A few years later, General Khan formed his own political party to wear the pretense of democracy while running the country. General Khan’s political party disintegrated soon after he left the office.

A pattern was established. After every coup, the new ruling general would encourage the formation of a new party, inviting and accepting mostly conservative politicians. The party would work hard to bring a facade of legitimacy to the general. It would disintegrate or disappear as soon as the general left the scene.

In July 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq

captured power, then decimated the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party and later hanged its leader and the prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The general formed a party. After falling out with the man he chose to run it, General Zia encouraged Nawaz Sharif, a leader of his party and the chief minister of Punjab, to lead his own faction. The Sharif faction later became the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz).

A chaotic decade — from the late 1980s to the late 1990s — followed General Zia’s mysterious death in a plane crash. Benazir Bhutto’s P.P.P. and Mr. Sharif’s P.M.L.N. were in and out of power. That was the time when Mr. Sharif played into the hands of the military to destabilize Ms. Bhutto’s popularly elected government. Mr. Sharif did to Ms. Bhutto what Mr. Khan is doing to him.

Mr. Sharif became prime minister a second time in 1997, but his relationship with the military establishment had turned sour. In 1999 Mr. Sharif tried to sack his army chief, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, but was instead removed in a coup.

Mr. Sharif was jailed after being charged with corruption and treason and was later sent into exile. In 2002, General Musharraf conjured up a new king’s party, which disintegrated with his resignation in 2008. Democracy was restored.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan has legally sanctioned every military coup in the country. The few judges who objected to such interventions were made to retire. It has endorsed the removal of elected governments and has sentenced one elected prime minister to death and disqualified another. Every democratically elected government has been removed on charges of corruption and incompetence.

The present case against Mr. Sharif will be seen as just if it leads to accountability for all: civil service, military, judiciary and big business, including those who flank Mr. Khan. If it is aimed solely at disqualifying Mr. Sharif, then there will be no rupture from our checkered past. A few years later Pakistan might see a new carriage for all the king’s horses to pull and all the king’s men to jump on.

HARRIS KHALIQUE, a poet and essayist, is the author of “Crimson Papers: Reflections on Struggle, Suffering and Creativity in Pakistan.”



Health care is still in danger



Paul Krugman

Will Senate Republicans try to destroy health care under cover of a constitutional crisis? That’s a serious question, based in part on what happened in the House earlier this year.

As you may remember, back in March attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act seemed dead after the Congressional Budget Office released a devastating assessment, concluding that the House Republican bill would lead to 23 million more uninsured Americans. Faced with intense media scrutiny and an outpouring of public opposition, House leaders pulled their bill, and the debate seemed over.

But then media attention moved on to presidential tweets and other outrages — and with the spotlight off, House leaders bullied and bribed enough holdouts to narrowly pass a bill after all.

Could something similar happen in the Senate? A few days ago the Senate’s equally awful version of repeal and replace — which the C.B.O. says would leave an extra 22 million people uninsured — seemed dead. And media attention has visibly shifted off the subject, focusing on juicier topics like the Russia-Trump story.

This shift in focus is understandable. After all, there is growing evidence that members of the Trump inner circle did indeed collude with Russia during the election; meanwhile, Trump’s statements and tweets strongly suggest that he’s willing both to abuse his pardon power and to fire

Robert Mueller, provoking a constitutional crisis, rather than allow investigation into this scandal to proceed.

But while these developments dominate the news, neither Mitch McConnell nor the White House have given up on their efforts to deprive millions of health care. In fact, on Saturday the tweeter-in-chief, once again breaking long-established rules of decorum, called on the audience at a military ceremony, the commissioning of a new aircraft carrier, to pressure the Senate to pass that bill.

This has many people I know worried that we may see a repeat of what happened in the spring: with the media spotlight shining elsewhere, the usual suspects may ram a horrible bill through. And the House would quickly pass whatever the Senate comes up

with. So this is actually a moment of great risk. One particular concern is that the latest round of falsehoods about health

care, combined with the defamation of the C.B.O., may be gaining some political traction.

At this point the more or less official G.O.P. line is that the budget office — whose director, by the way, was picked by the Republicans themselves — can’t be trusted. (This attack provoked an open letter of protest signed by every former C.B.O. director, Republicans and Democrats alike.) In particular, the claim is that its prediction of huge losses in coverage is outlandish, and that to the extent that fewer people would be covered, it would be due to their voluntary choices.

In reality, those C.B.O. predictions of coverage losses are totally reasonable, given the Senate bill’s drastic cuts to Medicaid — 26 percent by 2026, and even deeper in the next decade. You have to wonder how someone like

Senator Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia could even consider supporting this bill, when 34 percent of her nonelderly constituents are on Medicaid. The same goes for Jeff Flake of Arizona, where the corresponding number is 29 percent.

And on those claims that it’s O.K. if people drop coverage, because that would be their own choice: It’s crucial to realize that the Senate bill would degrade the quality of subsidized private insurance, leading to a huge rise in deductibles.

Current law provides enough in subsidies that an individual with an income of \$26,500 can afford a plan covering 70 percent of medical expenses, which, the C.B.O. estimates, implies an \$800 deductible. The Senate bill reduces that standard of coverage to 58 percent, which would raise the implied deductible to \$13,000, making the insurance effectively useless. Would deciding not to buy that useless insurance really be a “choice”?

By the way, remember when Republicans like Paul Ryan used to denounce Obamacare because the insurance policies it offered had high deductibles? It’s hypocrisy all the way down.

In short, the Senate bill is every bit as cruel and grotesque as its critics say. But we need to keep reminding wavering senators and their constituents of that fact, lest they be snowed by a blizzard of lies.

I’m not saying that everyone should ignore Trump-Putin-treason and all its ramifications: Clearly, the fate of our democracy is on the line. But we mustn’t let this mother of all scandals take up all our mental bandwidth: Health care for millions is also on the line.

And while ordinary citizens can’t yet do much about the looming constitutional crisis, their calls, letters, and protests can still make all the difference on health care. Don’t let the bad guys in the Senate do terrible things because you weren’t paying attention!

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Rumblings in favor of a fuzzy ‘Brexit’

GOODHART, FROM PAGE 1 winks in the last few weeks from several of the senior British political players — above all, the Brexit secretary, David Davis — suggest that the election has left its mark and that British negotiators are edging away from a hard Brexit toward a “fuzzy” one, for when serious trade talks begin in October.

This means a much longer transitional period than originally envisaged by both sides, possibly staying inside the European Union’s customs union in some modified form, and a much greater readiness on Britain’s part to compromise on continuing payments into the European Union’s budget (as well as a large onetime leaving fee) and on some continuing jurisdiction by the European Court of Justice.

Curiously, as the BBC’s political editor, Laura Kuenssberg, suggested to me, the apparent stalemate election result that swept away the Conservative’s small majority in Parliament, while leaving them comfortably the largest party, may in the end have made no difference at all to the Brexit talks.

“Part of the thinking behind Theresa May’s surprise decision to call the election for early June was that it would give her a bigger majority and thus empower her to make the compromises necessary in a long and difficult negotiation in which Britain has a relatively weak hand,” said Ms. Kuenssberg. “It now looks as if the compromises will be forced upon her by weakness rather than strength.”

About three-quarters of all members of Parliament, including a majority in all the main parties, originally voted for Remain. A more pluralistic approach to Brexit, with greater input from the British Parliament, as well as

from the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales, is now the order of the day.

Voting to leave was always going to be a lot easier than actually leaving, especially when the referendum result gave politicians no indication as to what kind of Brexit people wanted. But according to Bronwen Maddox, the director of the Institute for Government, a nonpartisan think tank, more progress in preparing for Brexit has been made behind the scenes at the highest levels of the civil service than is generally acknowledged.

“The problem is there are limits on how much preparation you can do,” she

Britain’s reputation for good government and generally getting the big decisions right has taken a battering in recent months.

generally getting the big decisions right has taken a battering in recent months. But beneath the noisy political infighting, and more by accident than design, we may now be edging toward some sort of national consensus on a “fuzzy” Brexit.

Moreover, a Brexit vote that was supposedly inspired by a narrowly provincial England, and that was predicted to tear Britain apart, has actually drawn it closer together, with both Scottish and Welsh nationalists losing ground in the June election.

There remains one big problem: the European Union itself. Since the high

point of success in the mid-1990s almost everything it has touched has turned bad — the clearest justification for Britain’s decision to leave. There was the politically overextended euro, which worsened the post-2010 euro-zone crisis; the premature enlargement to the former Communist states of Eastern Europe, including unchecked free movement of people; the failure to secure Europe’s external border, which encouraged the refugee crisis of 2015-16. Not to mention second-order messes like the mishandling of the Ukrainian crisis.

The European Union is run by Europe’s brightest and best, but many of them are driven by a post-national ideology for which there is no actual consensus. To many ordinary Europeans, the cure of European integration is worse than the disease. What is the point of pooling all that sovereignty if the resultant institutions cannot save you from global financial meltdown and cannot even regulate the new digital behemoths?

The European Union is enjoying an unusual unity in the early stages of the Brexit negotiations. But if, come March 2019, we end up with a mutually harming deal, or no deal at all, Brussels is sure to be at least as much to blame as London’s negotiators, who are now more open to compromise than seemed likely a few months ago. Maybe it is Europe’s true-believers who need to embrace the spirit of constructive ambiguity.

DAVID GOODHART, the founding editor of Prospect magazine and the head of the demography, immigration and integration unit at the Policy Exchange think tank, is the author of “The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics.”

Sports

Sport is big winner in women’s cricket World Cup

LONDON

Event helps to bridge gender gap after decades of unequal treatment

BY TIM WIGMORE

The women's cricket team from England beat India by nine runs on Sunday to win the World Cup at a place that not so long ago shunned female players. Lord's, the London ground often referred to as the Home of Cricket, drew a full house for the title game — another breakthrough in a tournament full of them.

For the first time since the Women's World Cup began in 1973 (two years before the men's tournament began), the players received daily expenses equal to those provided for men in International Cricket Council events, and the visiting teams flew to England for the tournament in business class, as has long been the norm for men.

Prize money increased to \$2 million, 10 times the figure for the previous tournament, which was held in India in 2013.

The competition, which started among eight teams on June 24, had attracted a global television audience of more than 50 million for the matches before the final, an 80 percent increase from 2013.

“There has never been a better time for girls to play,” said Heather Knight, England's captain. “The support has been fantastic throughout the tournament. Hopefully after our success, we can grow the game in this country.”

England's win, its fourth in 11 editions of the tournament, was watched by more than 26,500 ticketholders, about six times the previous high mark for a women's match at Lord's — 4,426 attended the 1993 final.

Yet perhaps the most significant legacy of the tournament will be greater interest in the women's game in India, the economic powerhouse of men's cricket. (Appearing in its second final on Sunday, India squandered a dominant position as it was on the verge of winning its first World Cup.)

“These girls have really set the platform for the upcoming generations in



ADRIAN DENNIS/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE. — GETTY IMAGES

England's Anya Shrubsole, left, celebrating after she took the wicket of India's Rajeshwari Gayakwad to win the Women's World Cup final in cricket.

India,” said India's captain, Mithali Raj. “They’ve opened up the channels for women's cricket, and they should be really proud of themselves. Every official has been very encouraging and positive about the way the team has performed.”

Raj made her international debut in 1999, and as a teenager, she said, she did not even realize there was a national women's team.

“It's not the same for the current generation of young girls,” Raj said. “A lot of young girls in school are taking up the

sport.”

In 2015, India introduced national contracts for its elite players, becoming the last of the top eight women's teams to do so. Shortly before Sunday's final, the country's Board of Control for Cricket announced a bonus of 5 million rupees, or \$77,500, for each team member, regardless of the outcome in the championship match. That figure is about three times the annual salary for a leading female player in India.

Raj said she hoped that the board

would also create a women's equivalent of the Indian Premier League, the lucrative men's competition in Twenty20 cricket, the shortest format of the sport.

The women's game “has made tremendous strides,” said Enid Bakewell, a former member of England's team who was the leading run scorer in the inaugural Women's World Cup. “It's moved on phenomenally because we're being treated more as equals — but not completely yet.”

The first World Cup, in England, fell

short of the necessary number of teams, so the field had to be padded with an International XI (a group of players who missed qualifying for the other squads) and a Young England squad (players under age 25). None of the teams in 1973 came from the subcontinent, where men's cricket is most popular, and the competition so needed publicity that Rachael Heyhoe-Flint, England's captain, wrote reports for newspapers. Lord's would not agree to stage matches.

“I had to work part time to get time off to play cricket,” said Bakewell, who was a swimming instructor. “During the tournament, I wasn't being paid, so I'd go without hairdos and makeup when I was playing.”

A generation later, Clare Connor, a former star for England who is now the head of women's cricket in the country, made her first international tour, through India in 1995. She and her teammates received no match fees and had to pay 500 pounds, or about \$650, toward their airfare and accommodations. The athletes also had to buy their own uniforms, and they played in skirts instead of the practical trousers that today's teams wear.

Connor recalled getting scars on her knees from diving.

“It was a bit weird,” she said. “It didn't feel athletic.”

By 1998, the all-volunteer association that ran English women's cricket merged into the men's England and Wales Cricket Board, opening up funding that meant free uniforms (and a farewell to the skirts). Seven years later, the International Women's Cricket Council and the International Cricket Council became one. Only since then has the Women's World Cup been held at regular four-year intervals and gained secure funding.

In 2013, Australia became the first country to provide full-time contracts for leading female cricketers, and the top players there are now paid more than \$100,000 a year. Other countries have since done similarly, though the deals are less lucrative.

For the International Cricket Council, the interest in this year's tournament has increased optimism about the organization's ambition for equal pay between the sexes within 15 years.

“The quality has been the highest we've ever seen,” said David Richardson, the council's chief executive. “It has more than justified the I.C.C. investment in prize money, and our aspiration for parity is unwavering.”

Women's cricket still requires subsidies from the men's television rights, but the council believes that could soon change.

“The women's game undoubtedly offers a huge business opportunity for the sport, and more importantly, for the growth of the game,” Richardson said.

NON SEQUITUR



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SUDOKU

No. 2507

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| | | | | | 2 | 7 | | 3 | |
| | 9 | 3 | | | 6 | 2 | | | 8 |
| | 8 | | | 9 | | | | 1 | 5 |

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

For solving tips and more puzzles: www.nytimes.com/sudoku

Solution

No. 2407

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 3 |
| 1 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 4 |
| 3 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 1 | 5 |
| 8 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| 6 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| 7 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 6 |
| 2 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 1 |
| 9 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 8 |
| 4 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 2 |

JUMBLE

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

SPEWT

FINUY

DANURO

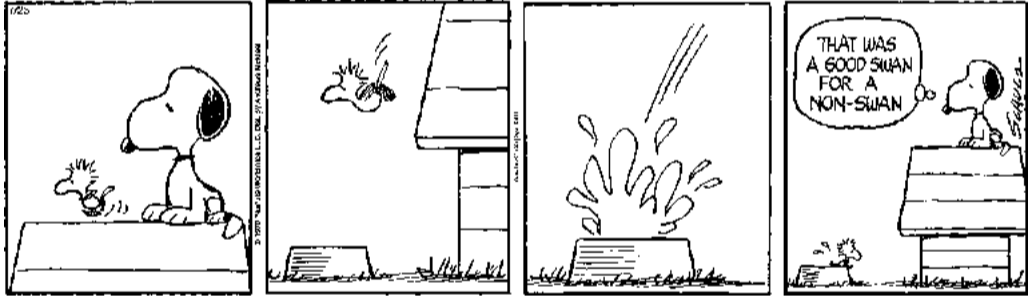
CLOYNO

THE NEW HEATING-COOLING SYSTEM WOULD BE READY WHEN THEY'VE GOT ALL THEIR...

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

Yesterday's Jumbles: OFFER GRIPE FUNGUS APPEAR Answer: The fish that started their own rock band were — GROUPERS

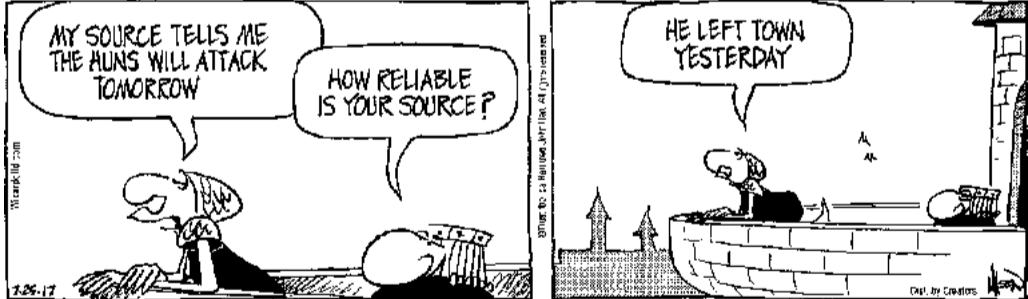
PEANUTS



GARFIELD



WIZARD of ID



KENKEN

| | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|----|--|----|
| 24x | | | 2÷ | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | 4+ | | 1- |
| | | | | | |
| 3- | | 7+ | | | |
| | | | | | 1 |

Fill the grids with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 4x4 grid will use the digits 1-4. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

For solving tips and more KenKen puzzles: www.nytimes.com/kenken. For Feedback: nytimes@kenken.com

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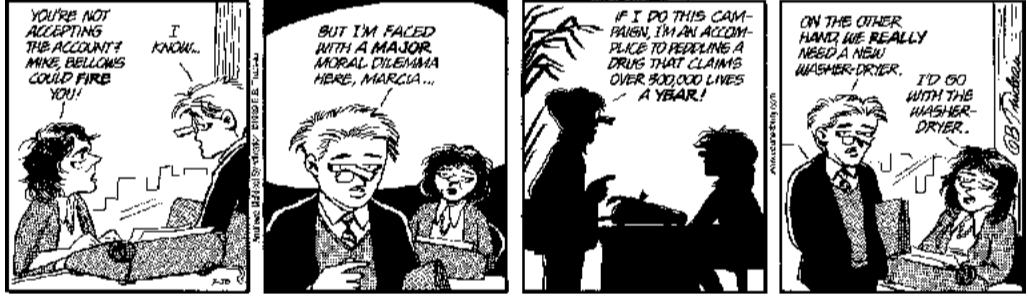
Answers to Previous Puzzles

| | | | | | |
|----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| 3 | 2÷ | | 25x | 10+ | |
| 3÷ | | | | 24x | |
| 8+ | | 24x | 2÷ | | 9+ |
| 1- | | | | 5- | |
| 5+ | 2÷ | | 54x | | |
| | 1 | | | 3- | |

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| 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

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| 4 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| 6 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

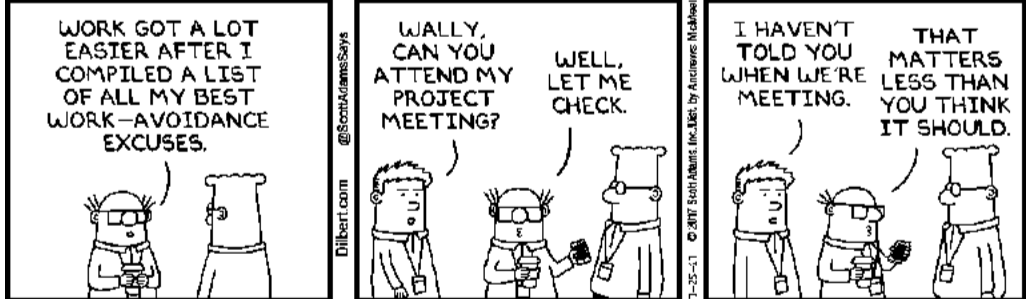
DOONESBURY CLASSIC 1989



CALVIN AND HOBBS



DILBERT



CROSSWORD | Edited by Will Shortz

- Across**
- 1 Discharge, as from a volcano
 - 5 Isn't rigid in one's ways
 - 11 Chrysler truck
 - 14 Height: Prefix
 - 15 Protective embankment
 - 16 He said that ambient music "must be as ignorable as it is interesting"
 - 17 Was loved by
 - 20 Zoë of "Avatar"
 - 21 Didn't buy, say
 - 22 Know-it-all
 - 25 Jason's vessel, in myth
 - 28 Underside of an 8-Down
 - 29 Giga- x 1,000
 - 32 No holds ____
 - 35 Captain Nemo's vessel
 - 38 Oral health org.
 - 39 Comment after a fortuitous happening
 - 41 Sound of reproach
 - 42 It isn't recorded in a walk-off win
 - 44 First female speaker of the House
 - 46 Chuck of "Meet the Press"
 - 47 Louisa May Alcott's "____ Boys"
 - 49 Erelong
 - 50 Frequently going from one post to another
 - 55 Christmas ornament, e.g.
 - 57 Puts in a box
 - 61 Evangelize ... or what this puzzle's circled squares do?
 - 64 Equal at the start?

Solution to July 24 Puzzle

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| W | A | S | A | B | I | E | N | D | A | S | H |
| F | O | R | E | M | A | N | V | A | N | T | E |
| R | O | N | Z | O | N | I | E | V | E | N | A |
| O | H | O | S | T | O | L | E | A | R | I | |
| D | O | L | L | E | D | T | O | K | C | A | U |
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| F | L | O | W | I | N | N | S | | | | |
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| L | A | I | T | I | N | O | V | O | S | H | E |
| A | G | R | A | A | I | D | E | D | L | E | N |
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| Y | E | L | L | A | T | O | M | S | G | N | I |

- Down**
- 1 ____ Club
 - 2 Defendant's entry
 - 3 Shortening for a bibliographer
 - 4 House of Elizabeth II
 - 5 The Hartford competitor
 - 6 Note in the E major scale
 - 7 Fly through, as a test
 - 8 Hound's "hand"
 - 9 Nuisance in an online comments section
 - 10 Shopping trip one may later regret
 - 11 Variety show host of 1951-71
 - 12 Cost to get in
 - 13 Emotional state
 - 18 Highlander's headwear
 - 19 Milk: Prefix
 - 23 What gives you the right to bare arms?
 - 24 "There will come ____"

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|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
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| 32 | | | 33 | 34 | | 35 | | | 36 | 37 | | |
| 38 | | | | 39 | 40 | | | | | | 41 | |
| 42 | | | 43 | | | | | | 44 | | 45 | |
| 46 | | | | | | | | | 47 | 48 | | 49 |
| | | | 50 | 51 | 52 | | | | 53 | 54 | | |
| 55 | 56 | | | | | | | | 57 | | 58 | 59 |
| 61 | | | | | | | | | 62 | 63 | | |
| 64 | | | | | | | | | 65 | | 66 | |
| 67 | | | | | | | | | 68 | | 69 | |

PUZZLE BY ALEX VRATSANOS

- 25 Toward the rear
- 26 NPR segment?
- 27 One voting to indict or not
- 30 Model-turned-actress Rene
- 31 Welcome at the front door
- 33 Certain office desk setup
- 34 Hip-hop's Kris Kross or OutKast
- 36 Call balls and strikes, informally
- 37 End of August?
- 40 Title canine in a Stephen King book
- 43 Baked brick
- 45 Chef Emeril
- 48 Is a leadfoot
- 51 ____ House (Washington landmark)
- 52 Ibsen's "____ Gabler"
- 53 Gold standard?
- 54 Pvt.'s superior
- 55 Vitamin whose name rhymes with a car engine
- 56 Chapel recess
- 58 Dustup
- 59 Dr.'s orders
- 60 Knock dead at the comedy club
- 62 Haul on a U-Haul
- 63 Rush

Culture

The American star of the Royal Ballet

LONDON

Eric Underwood wants to be host of a dance show reaching out of the elite

BY GUY TREBAY

The most shocking thing about Eric Underwood, the American-born star of the Royal Ballet in London, is not that he has a potty mouth or a dragon tattoo shooting out of his navel. It is not that he has been photographed frontally nude by David Bailey for a fashion magazine or by Mario Testino mostly unclothed with Kate Moss for Italian Vogue.

It is not that, unlike the dance drones of the “Black Swan” cinematic cliché, he enjoys an evening at the Box, a raunchy cabaret here, and has been known to gorge on burgers and fries now and then.

All of these are established elements of the 33-year-old Mr. Underwood’s reputation as an immensely likable, if impious, outlier in the rigid world of classical ballet. The shocking thing about him is what he does at home.

On those evenings when he is not performing at the Royal Opera House, or on stages around the world, he can often be found on the sofa at his house in Camden conducting one-sided geezer-type arguments with the judges on “Strictly Come Dancing,” the BBC One equivalent of ABC’s “Dancing With the Stars.”

“I’m obsessed,” Mr. Underwood said. So fixated is he, in fact, that he spent a recent morning shopping for shrubs at the Covent Garden Market to build a privacy screen shielding his living room window from a railway line that runs parallel to his house.

“Right now people now can look in at this crazy man yelling at his TV,” he said.

We were seated in a leather banquette in the bar of the Colony Grill Room at the Beaumont Hotel in the Mayfair district of London. Both the bar and the hotel are theatrical simulacra of a glamorous Art Deco watering hole and hostelry. They were conjured by the celebrated London restaurateurs Chris Corbin and Jeremy King on a site once occupied by a parking garage. The Beaumont has been one of Mr. Underwood’s favorite places ever since he spent a night there, in a suite called “Room” designed by the British sculptor Antony Gormley.

Mr. Underwood, though muscled, lean, athletic and at 6-foot-2 seemingly built for the discipline, fell into ballet as a teenager almost accidentally when, after flubbing an audition for a performing arts school, he spotted a nearby movement class underway and bluffed his way in.

“I didn’t know anything about ballet, but I could already dance,” Mr. Underwood said.

The assertion seems needlessly boastful unless you consider how central it is to Mr. Underwood’s mission to normalize and demystify his chosen profession. The technical barriers to entry in classical dance are stringent enough to discourage many potential talents from trying. And yet more than mere technique, dance artistry is created from the sum of life experiences, he said.

In his case, that experience notably



NADINE IJEWERE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Eric Underwood is an immensely likable, if impious, outlier in the rigid world of classical ballet. But when he's not performing, he is fixated on the BBC television show “Strictly Come Dancing.”

includes Friday nights spent at home in suburban Maryland, where his mother, a secretary, used to push the furniture against the walls so that she and her three children could dance to Al Green, Teddy Pendergrass and Marvin Gaye.

It was largely a happy childhood, Mr. Underwood added. While many accounts of his upbringing have emphasized the hackneyed narrative of escape from the rampant violence and gun crime of a poor neighborhood near the nation’s capital, that is not altogether how he remembers it.

“Sure, there were gangs at school and there was gunfire, but we were loved and appreciated at home,” he said. “My mother brought us up with that Ameri-

can attitude of ‘You can do anything you want if you work hard enough.’ She had this saying: ‘It’s just an obstacle. Get over it.’”

His ascent through the ranks of the classical ballet world, though hardly without obstacles, would be the envy of most in Mr. Underwood’s profession: Early in his teenage training with the ballet teacher Barbara Marks at Suitland High School Center for Visual and Performing Arts in Maryland, he was awarded a Philip Morris Foundation scholarship to study at the School of American Ballet in New York.

Graduating into the company of the Dance Theater of Harlem, he was promoted at the end of his first season to so-

loist, and joined American Ballet Theater in 2003.

Offered a spot as first artist at the Royal Ballet three years later, he relocated to London, and was quickly elevated to soloist, becoming a favorite of choreographers like Christopher Wheeldon and Wayne McGregor.

“I don’t want people to think I’m not grateful,” Mr. Underwood said, “but I always had the belief that it will happen because I will make it happen.”

If there is a consistent critical thread line in appraisals of Mr. Underwood’s work, it is his unbridled joy of movement.

The often robotic technical proficiency that characterizes certain dancers of

his generation comes with a cost to artistry, he said: “I have so much more to offer than a jump and a pretty pirouette.”

He is an easygoing firebrand who tends to flout convention, a performer magnetic in equal measure to choreographers and the fashion flock, and one whose rise to the rank of soloist has upended a number of stereotypes, not all of them about race.

Likening himself at his best to the passionate and un-self-consciously expressive ballroom children battling for runway supremacy at obscure voguing contests or the tango or waltz aficionados whose passion for anachronistic dance styles has gone mainstream thanks to shows like “Strictly Come

Dancing,” he said, “I’m ready for my next phase.”

That phase, as Mr. Underwood explained, involves his goal of being the host of a dance show much like the ones he watches at home, a forum for young people who may have never considered that the elitist world of ballet might give them a chance. “I never wanted to be the ‘black’ dancer,” Mr. Underwood said. “I wanted to be a great dancer. The challenge was that I was not seeing anyone who looked like me.”

Even early in his professional career, he said, something became clear to him: “If I was not going to take Nureyev’s path or Baryshnikov’s path, I was going to have to find a path of my own.”

Text for happiness. Or sadness. Get art back.

A playful project using cellphone messages and art turns into a viral hit

BY MELENA RYZIK

Can you trade an emoji for a Picasso? The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has given you the chance to try.

Over the last few weeks, the museum has invited people to text the number 57251 with the phrase “send me” followed by a word or an emoji — send me a sunset, for instance. The museum texts back with a related image from its collection.

The project, “Send Me SFMOMA,” has been an ingenious, playful way to inject some rarefied culture into an everyday habit. And for art lovers, it has unearthed some unexpected artworks, long hidden in storage, along the way.

Begun quietly last month, the project has become a viral hit, with more than two million text messages delivered, said Keir Winesmith, head of web and digital platforms for SFMOMA. (The service is free.)

It’s far more popular than the museum ever imagined, with people indulging in a long back-and-forth, binge texting. And it’s also revealed something surprising about its users — about how, and when, they want to interact with art, and how much they crave a personal connection with cultural authority.

Can texting a museum be the start of a meaningful cultural conversation? SFMOMA thinks so.

At a time when “public trust in institutions is very low,” Mr. Winesmith said, “Send Me” offers another kind of relationship. “We want it to feel like you’re

communicating with a friend.”

A potentially uplifting friend, at that: Most of the texts yearned for positivity, requesting love, flowers and happiness, he said.

Inspiration was another big search term, along with appeals for hope, peace and joy. But sadness ranked in the top 20 searches, too.

The top emoji requests included the robot, the heart, the rainbow, “and, of course, poop,” Mr. Winesmith said. “And then, because it’s the internet, it’s a lot of food and a lot of animals.”

He discovered that the museum had a surprising quantity of vegetable art. The cactus emoji has been a sleeper hit, too.

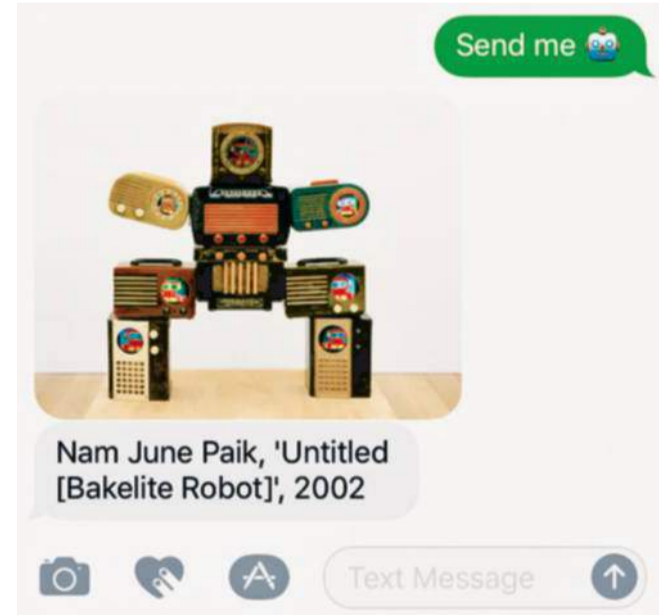
The texts that have come pouring in at night are different — more intimate, Mr. Winesmith said, with searches for words like “family” and “home.” People also ask to see nudes — but the program is designed to deny them, for now.

“We’re getting send me boobs, send me a naked woman,” Mr. Winesmith said, “and they’re all getting zero back. And if you look at the thread of what people do next, they immediately try something more interesting.”

“I love that it’s forcing people to try a bit harder,” he added.

Devilishly, the textbot also doesn’t respond to queries with artists’ names. (“Send me a Picasso” returns nothing but a “try again” message, even though the museum has Picassos.) The project creators’ hope was to lead people to more uncharted discoveries — “a sublime, semi-random search of the collection,” Mr. Winesmith said.

The idea for “Send Me SFMOMA” sprang naturally from work that the museum was already doing, especially as part of its reopening after an expansion



last year. Mr. Winesmith said they wanted a way to open up the collection of about 34,000 art works for the public — something with almost no barrier to entry, no apps or downloads. The project uses the roughly 17,000 works that are already indexed online, on the museum’s website, as its base.

But the museum’s artistic responses aren’t always obvious, and they can be humorous or ironic, with a curated feel — the result of smartly applied keywords. Heather Oelklaus, an artist from Colorado Springs, sent in the gun emoji, and received Andy Warhol’s “Triple Elvis.” (In the painting, Elvis holds a gun.)

“Send me love” might produce Robert Indiana’s famous letter assemblage, or a

Gertrude Käsebier photo of children playing, or George Herms’s 1961 multimedia “White Glove Cross” — only with a squint or a zoom can you make out the word ‘love’ atop the cross.

The rainbow flag emoji returned a portrait of Harvey Milk, the slain gay civil rights leader.

Responding to emoji texts proved to be among the biggest challenges for the developer, Jay Mollica. Mr. Mollica, the museum’s creative technologist, conceived of the project, but he is not an avid emoji user, and Mr. Winesmith admitted that his own emoji vocabulary was “limited.” So the museum recruited more fluent employees and set up a day-long “emoji boot camp” to understand the nuances of the characters. (“A peach

is euphemistic for a bottom — we didn’t know that,” Mr. Winesmith said.)

Not all the emojis or word prompts have artwork associated with them. Mr. Winesmith’s team has been busy filling the holes. On one day, “send me feminism” returned nothing; the next, a Judy Chicago work popped up.

They now have more than 200 emojis mapped. But some will never be matched: the alien head, for one. “We literally don’t have aliens in our collection,” Mr. Winesmith said.

The gaps have prompted “almost a philosophical discussion,” he said, like the question of whether a photo of someone in a turtleneck sweater could be used to respond to a turtle emoji. (No.) “We’re not taking your intent and twist-



ing it into our own perception of your intent,” he said.

Gaining access to collections with everyday language — rather than the specialized terms employed by archivists and art professionals — is “a sea change” in the way museums work, said Zachary Kaplan, executive director of Rhizome, a nonprofit that specializes in digital culture.

And it’s a shift led by our tech habits: “A generation has been raised querying Google,” Mr. Kaplan said, and now there’s an assumption that a museum should be as easily searchable. Some institutions, like the Cooper Hewitt, which allows visitors to search its archives by color, are trying to adapt.

Mr. Kaplan compared “Send Me” with entering a museum cold. “My experience with this is, ‘Oh, this is a nice way to wander,’” he said. But, he noted, “this is not a tool for context,” or traditional museum education.

To Ms. Oelklaus, the Colorado artist, that didn’t matter. She texted the museum 35 times in two days, she said, finding her own meaning. She began by typing “empty nest,” because her daughter is about to leave for college.

“I got quickly addicted to it,” she said. The more she texted, “the more interesting it was, reflecting on what I wanted to see.”

Other institutions may try the project as well: The code is open source; the museum is working on making it available in other countries. Or the project may become as ephemeral as any other text chain with a new partner.

“I think some people are going to use this as a one-off whimsy and never again, and that’s O.K.,” Mr. Winesmith said. Others might hang on. “I’m excited to see if it’s a fling, or a relationship.”

Killing the bonnet drama

‘Lady Macbeth’ defies period film tradition by refusing to be a victim

BY CARA BUCKLEY

One of the juicier observations about the new British period drama “Lady Macbeth,” which isn’t about Lady Macbeth at all, came from a critic who wrote that the film “plunges a cold, sharp knife into the back of bonnet dramas.”

This is partly because of the story’s noirish plot — it’s more Poe than Austen — and its defiant, lusty antiheroine, who finds herself married off to the much older, impotent and bilious son of a wealthy, equally bilious old man.

While “Lady Macbeth,” released in the United States earlier this month, is set in 19th-century England, it has few visual trappings common to such period films. There are no aerial shots of tail-coated men tearing through fields on horseback, no silken-gowned gentry at balls; it’s as spare as a monk’s cupboard, both by design and necessity. The film was made for a lean, mean 500,000 pounds (about \$770,000 when it was shot in 2015), and the filmmakers couldn’t afford any frippery.

The film’s director, William Oldroyd, also broke with bonnet drama tradition by casting black and minority actors in crucial roles. Mr. Oldroyd, who is also an opera and theater director, said he had simply hired the best actors for those parts, and besides, historical English photographs showed black families living in the region.

“The people who’ve gone before us have made a choice to not include black people in films, when black people were clearly there,” he said of other period films. “Ultimately, we did feel like we were more representative of that region and period.”

“Lady Macbeth” takes place almost entirely at one location, in and around a Northumberland castle that the protagonist, Katherine (Florence Pugh), has been forbidden to leave; she’s not even allowed to take in the fresh air. After failing to deflower her on their wedding night, her 40-something husband abandons her to attend to business elsewhere, whereupon the teenage Katherine begins to rebel.

She wanders the moors, she guzzles wine, and she beds a stable boy, Sebastian (Cosmo Jarvis), with whom she falls passionately in love. When the men of the house return and try to stop the affair, she lashes out murderously.

Mr. Oldroyd, a first time feature filmmaker, said he and his producer, Fodhla Cronin O’Reilly, were drawn to the story because it turned any notion of female victimhood on its head.

“Her response is not to suffer in silence, or run away, or commit suicide, as so many women have done in novels of that period, but to fight back,” Mr. Oldroyd said of Katherine. “We also see her spiral out of control, but she thinks she has to act in that way to survive.”

The script was adapted by the playwright Alice Birch from Nikolai Leskov’s 1865 novella “Lady of Macbeth of the Mtsensk District,” which was also the source of an opera by Shostakovich (it was effectively banned by Stalin), a ballet, and, in 1964, a film by the Polish director Andrzej Wajda. The story has nothing overtly to do with Shakespeare, though its title is an allusion to Lady Macbeth’s deadly plotting.

Mr. Oldroyd said Ms. Birch excelled at writing about strong women and wasn’t afraid of the power dynamics of violence. “We were so excited to see a complex female character who propels the story forward in a surprising and exciting way,” Ms. O’Reilly said.

The stripped-down script was mirrored by the spareness of the set. The tight budget meant that every expense had to be justified by how well it served the story, which Mr. Oldroyd said ended up benefiting the film.



Florence Pugh, a relative newcomer, has received raves for her performance in “Lady Macbeth.”

ANDREW WHITE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS



ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS



LAURIE SPARHAM/ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

Top to bottom: Cosmo Jarvis and Ms. Pugh in “Lady Macbeth”; Naomi Ackie and Ms. Pugh; William Oldroyd, at right, the film’s director, with the director of photography, Ari Wegner. The action takes place almost entirely at a single location.

“It really filtered down to the whole production,” he said. “There was a form of austerity in the way characters speak to each other, act to each other, what they wear, when they go outside and who they see.”

Filming largely took place in the Norman-style Lambton Castle in Northeast England, under slate-gray skies. The bloodlessness of the backdrop is completely offset by the wildness, vigor and bloom of Katherine, whom Ms. Pugh, a relative newcomer, has played to raves. Her Katherine is relentlessly modern and answerable only to her independent streak and sexual impulses (The Telegraph pithily deemed her “Lady Chatterley gone ballistic”).

Mr. Oldroyd said he looked at actresses from the United Kingdom, France and Australia, before casting Ms. Pugh, who was 19 at the time, and, he said, “very, very free.”

“She was able to make that transition between the young opportunist bride, and the woman we meet at the end,” Mr. Oldroyd said. “Plenty of people come to mind who can definitely play the femme fatale, but we didn’t want that to be up front. We needed that to be internal. We needed her to have resolve, and steel.”

Speaking by phone from Oxford, Ms. Pugh said she held Katherine in awe and saw her as being in limbo between child and woman. She is the lady of the house, yet also, at least at first, trapped. Part of what has made the film so seductive and confounding — it was released in Britain in April and has garnered glowing reviews on Rotten Tomatoes — is that

Katherine has the audience’s empathy from the start, which makes her turn to violence that much more disturbing.

“We tried to make her as young and kind of excited by life as possible in the beginning, so it’s virtually impossible not to love and support her,” Ms. Pugh said. “You’re never quite sure whether she is a bloody brilliant lady, or a kid good at playing a grown-up.”

Other tensions are more subtle. The housemaid, Anna (Naomi Ackie), whom Katherine manipulates to devastating ends, is black, adding a hint of racial strain to their dynamic.

And the upstairs-downstairs feel of Katherine and Sebastian’s coupling was no doubt helped by the vastly different ways in which the actors approached their parts. Ms. Pugh is not a method actor and finds it hard to redo scenes over and over. Mr. Jarvis, by contrast, kept his character’s Geordie accent up for the whole shoot, slept on location and helped the crew lift equipment when he wasn’t acting so that his character would seem legitimately bone weary.

Invariably, “Lady Macbeth” has been repeatedly described as a feminist film, which Ms. Pugh said is well and good, though she’s not sure why that description is needed at all.

“Part of me goes, ‘Yes, let’s champion that word and use it all over,’” she added. “And another part of me goes ‘Why, why do we need it?’ She’s a woman who goes and gets what she wants, and yes gets a man in the meantime. She’s so amazing we don’t need to put a label on it.”

Everyone knows your caste

BOOK REVIEW

ANTS AMONG ELEPHANTS: AN UNTOUCHABLE FAMILY AND THE MAKING OF MODERN INDIA
By Sujatha Gidla. 306 pp. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. \$28.

BY MICHIKO KAKUTANI

In this unsentimental, deeply poignant book, Sujatha Gidla gives us stories of her family and friends in India — stories she had thought of as “just life,” until she moved to America at the age of 26 and realized that the “terrible reality of caste” did not determine one’s identity in other countries, that being born “an untouchable” did not entail the sort of ritualized restrictions and indignities she took for granted at home.

Although foreigners may assume that the momentous changes sweeping across India — education, economic growth and a technological boom — have blunted, if not erased, ancient caste prejudices, “Ants Among Ele-

phants” gives readers an unsettling and visceral understanding of how discrimination, segregation and stereotypes have endured throughout the second half of the 20th century and today.

“In Indian villages and towns,” Gidla writes, “everyone knows everyone else. Each caste has its own special role and its own place to live. The Brahmins (who perform priestly functions), the potters, the blacksmiths, the carpenters, the washer people and so on — they each have their own separate place to live within the village. The untouchables, whose special role — whose hereditary duty — is to labor in the fields of others or to do other work that Hindu society considers filthy, are not allowed to live in the village at all. They must live outside the boundaries of the village proper. They are not allowed to enter temples. Not allowed to come near sources of drinking water used by other castes. Not allowed to eat sitting next to a caste Hindu or to use the same utensils.”

Gidla’s family was educated by

Canadian missionaries. Her parents were college lecturers, and she attended the Indian Institute of Technology in Madras, where she became a research associate in the department of applied physics, working on a project funded by the Indian Space Research Organization. Despite their education, she and her family were daily subjected to reminders of their caste status, and the author found herself thinking, incessantly, about the relation between religion and caste, between caste and social status, social status and wealth.

Her precocious mother, Manjula, struggled in school with the poor grades she received from one professor, who realized that “she was poor and untouchable” and reacted with disgust. She was also rejected from — or harassed at — teaching posts for similar reasons. Gidla’s uncle Satyamurthy (also known as Satyam) felt himself “an ant among elephants” in college, and was dumped by a well-to-do young woman, who had started a flirtation with him, only to announce: “We are brahmins. You are have-nots,



NANCY CRAMPTON

Sujatha Gidla left India at the age of 26.

we are have. You are a Communist. My father is for Congress. How in the world can there be anything between us?” He realized that life was not like the movies so popular after independence, in which “the rebellious daughters of rich, evil men” fall “in love with a champion of the poor.”

An accomplished poet, Satyam did, in fact, become a champion of the poor, though an oddly spoiled one, who had followers do those things he “wouldn’t do for himself: shaving his chin, clipping his nails,” carrying his things. In the 1970s, he organized a Maoist guerrilla group, aiming, Gidla writes, “to liberate the countryside village by village, driving off the landlords and gathering forces to ultimately encircle the cities and capture state power.”

Although Gidla’s account of her uncle’s political activities — from his student days through his life in the Communist underground — can grow tangled for the reader unfamiliar with Indian politics, she writes with quiet, fierce conviction, zooming in to give us sharply drawn, Dickensian portraits of relatives, friends and acquaintances, and zooming out to give us snapshots of entire villages, towns and cities.

Gidla, who now works as a conductor on the New York City subway, conveys the strain of living in the sort of abject poverty she knew as a child, where some neighbors were skeletal from hunger, and an apple was a pre-

cious Christmas treat. She chronicles the horrifying violence that could break out between the police and Maoist rebels and among local hooligans, hired at election time to intimidate voters. And she captures the struggles of women like her mother to pursue careers in the face of caste and misogynist bias, while raising children and helping to support, in her case, as many as two dozen relatives.

When asked about caste — and in India, she says, “you cannot avoid this question” — Gidla writes that an “untouchable” like herself has a choice: “You can tell the truth and be ostracized, ridiculed, harassed,” or “you can lie.” If people believe your lie, she goes on, “you cannot tell them your stories, your family’s stories. You cannot tell them about your life. It would reveal your caste. Because your life is your caste, your caste is your life.”

In these pages, she has told those family stories and, in doing so, the story of how ancient prejudices persist in contemporary India, and how those prejudices are being challenged by the disenfranchised.

