



# The New York Times

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## An absence stirs anxiety at a summit

Peter Hakim  
Michael Shifter

### OPINION

**WASHINGTON** Although perhaps justified by the tragic events in Syria, President Trump's last-minute decision to skip the eighth Summit of the Americas, which begins this week in Lima, Peru, was discouraging to his Latin American and Caribbean counterparts. Most probably see it as confirmation of his continuing indifference to the region. His aggressive rhetoric and erratic policies have already roiled inter-American relations and left the hemisphere's leaders disconcerted.

Several White House decisions have been criticized as openly hostile to Latin America, including the ordering of National Guard troops to the Mexican border and the undoing of programs that now shield millions of immigrants from deportation. Particularly unnerving has been the president's obsession with erecting a wall along the border. Also resented are the Trump administration's threat to unilaterally rewrite international trade rules, levy protectionist tariffs and possibly scrap

**Mr. Trump's plan to skip the Summit of the Americas further unnerves his neighbors to the south.**

the 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement.

Washington's moves to revive the futile "war on drugs" are unwelcome. So is the renewed hard-line approach to Cuba, reversing much of President Barack Obama's opening, which was heralded throughout the region and brought Raúl Castro to his first summit meeting three years ago. He is expected in Lima as well.

With few encouraging gestures or initiatives from the White House, it is no surprise that Gallup reports only 16 percent of Latin Americans approve of Trump, a fraction of Mr. Obama's 62 percent first-year approval.

Further muddying the waters are the alarms raised by senior United States officials about China's expanding role in the region, which have stirred unpleasant memories of a long-past era when Washington considered Latin America its "backyard." Many in the region wonder whether the administration's new, more hawkish foreign policy team might resurrect the Monroe Doctrine, again giving the United States self-appointed authority to intrude on the region's sovereignty.

Washington is already insisting that Latin America make the United States **HAKIM, PAGE 15**

*The New York Times publishes opinion from a wide range of perspectives in hopes of promoting constructive debate about consequential questions.*



LYNSEY ADDARIO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Keeping watch** A member of the Texas National Guard at an outpost along the Rio Grande in Starr County, Tex. The Guard allowed a group of journalists to shadow some of its troops on the United States-Mexico border, an early look at the new deployment called for by President Trump. **PAGE 2**

## 'Chemicals, chemicals!' they yelled

BEIRUT, LEBANON

### Attack on Syrian town draws a retaliatory threat. But what really happened?

BY BEN HUBBARD

For two days and a night, the computer science student had been huddling with his family in the basement of their apartment building as pro-government forces rained bombs down on their rebel-held Syrian town.

After night fell, they heard the whirring of helicopter blades followed by the whistling sounds of objects falling from the sky. Soon, a strange smell wafted down the stairs.

"People started shouting in the streets, 'Chemicals! Chemicals!'" the student, Mohammed al-Hanash, 25, said by phone from Syria.

The attack in the town of Douma on Saturday, which witnesses and medical workers said used chemical weapons, has resonated far beyond the war-scarred community's destroyed buildings, ratcheting up tensions among world powers and threatening to escalate Syria's multi-sided civil war.



EMAD AL-DIN/EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK

**A picture said to show victims of a chemical attack on the Damascus suburb of Douma. Aid and antigovernment groups said dozens of Syrians were killed.**

President Trump has vowed to punish not only President Bashar al-Assad of Syria for the attack, but also Syria's Russian and Iranian allies. On Wednesday, a Russian official said that any American missiles fired at Syria would be shot down, and Mr. Trump responded in a tweet that Russia should "get ready" for

missiles that would be "nice and new and smart."

Syria, Russia and Iran have denied the rebels and rescue workers of concocting the story to gain sympathy as their defeat loomed.

International investigators have yet

to visit the site to determine whether chemicals were used, but the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is sending a team. The United States State Department said that the symptoms reported were "consistent with an asphyxiation agent and of a nerve agent of some type."

While much about the attack remains unclear, a New York Times review of more than 20 videos of its aftermath, an examination of flight records compiled by citizen observers and interviews with a dozen residents, medics and rescue workers suggest that during a military push to break the will of Douma's rebels, pro-government forces dropped charges bearing a chemical compound that suffocated at least 43 people and left many more struggling to breathe.

"You imagine yourself on Judgment Day, and there is death all around you," said Mr. Hanash, the student. "It was a scene that you don't want anyone to have to see: old men, women and children screaming and suffering."

Regardless of the munitions used, the attack worked. Hours later, as rescuers lined up bodies in the street, the rebels agreed to hand over the town and be bused with their families to another rebel-held area.

Douma, a modest town northwest of **SYRIA, PAGE 4**

## Lack of will is barrier to reining in Facebook

THE SHIFT  
WASHINGTON

While task is complex, first job in regulation is identifying the problem

BY KEVIN ROOSE

When it comes to regulating Facebook, Congress is in over its head. But does that matter?

The marathon testimony this week by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's chief executive, revealed the limited understanding many lawmakers have of what the social network is and how it works. Members of Congress came with mixed concerns for Mr. Zuckerberg, including a few incisive points about Facebook's privacy and data collection policies and a lot of off-topic ramblings about how computers work, but these questions never amounted to a unified theory of Facebook's troubles, or suggestions of how they might be solved.

It's tempting to claim that technological illiteracy is the problem — that some older and tech-phobic lawmakers are fundamentally incapable of regulating Facebook properly. But I want to suggest another takeaway. The biggest obstacle to regulating Facebook is not Congress's lack of computer literacy, which gave Mr. Zuckerberg the upper hand this week. It's a lack of political will and an unwillingness to identify the problems they're trying to fix.

After all, Congress typically does not require subject matter expertise of its members. Most politicians in Washington did not understand the complexities of mortgage-backed securities in 2009, when Wall Street executives testified after the financial crisis. The lawmakers also are not pharmaceutical experts, or transportation policy wonks or deeply knowledgeable in many of the other complex issues that come before them. And yet, Congress — with the help of staff experts and outside advisers — has managed to pass sweeping legislation to prevent excesses and bad behavior in those sectors.

"It's never an issue of the members being able to do it — their staff is often incredibly dedicated and can dig into these issues," said Ashkan Soltani, a former chief technologist at the United States Federal Trade Commission. The challenge, Mr. Soltani said, is that there's a "lost in translation" problem of trying to condense multifaceted issues into easily digested sound bites that will play well with constituents.

"This isn't just about news," Mr. Soltani said of Facebook's issues. "It's not just about privacy and commercialization, it's not just about political **FACEBOOK, PAGE 12**

**FACEBOOK HAS A TROVE OF DATA ON YOU** It knows the ads you've clicked on, and it also knows who you unfriended years ago, writes Brian X. Chen. **PAGE 12**

## Hit the ground munching in Bangkok

With the future in doubt, a race to take in the city's rich food culture

BY MATT GROSS

It was a few minutes after 6 p.m., and Lim Lao Sa, a fishball noodle stand tucked into an alleyway near the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok, had just opened. Rain was falling, hard. A series of deftly arranged tarps sheltered patrons sitting on red plastic stools at a handful of tables. Water dripped off the tarp edges, down the concrete walls and past exposed wiring. Fluorescent bulbs cast harsh shadows. Lim Lao Sa's owners — a brother and sister who'd inherited the 60-year-old business from their father — bickered vigorously.

My friend Win Luanchaison, a real-estate developer and fervent culinary explorer, and I tucked into our bowls. The quenelle-like fishballs were at once springy and creamy, the rice noodles supple, the broth clear and sure of pur-



DAVID RAMA TERRAZAS MORALES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**A popular curry restaurant on a street near Bangkok's Chinatown, where officials, in walking back plans for a citywide ban, said street food would be preserved.**

pose. It was easy to understand why Lim Lao Sa cooked annually for the Thai princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. "She eats egg noodles served dry," said Pawita Boriboonchaisiri, the elder sister.


In fact, given all of this — the setting, the food, the feeling that Lim Lao Sa could be washed away in an instant, by a bad mood or even worse weather — I decided that Lim Lao Sa was the platonic ideal of street food. And it was precisely why I'd come to Bangkok.

Last April, the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority made headlines when it announced the city of more than eight million would ban street food vendors — often considered the world's best — to make sidewalks more accessible. The B.M.A. soon walked back its statement, saying street food would be preserved in Chinatown and the Khao San Road backpacker district, but elsewhere it would be eliminated, the vendors relocated from "vital walkways," as the Tourism Authority of Thailand put it, to "designated zones and nearby **BANGKOK, PAGE 19**

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## PAGE TWO

## Troops, seen and unseen, watch the border

STARR COUNTY, TEX.

## Texas National Guard is carrying out a controversial mission

BY MANNY FERNANDEZ

The soldier stood on a cliff above the swift green waters of the Rio Grande, peering into the brush with binoculars, an M-4 carbine rifle at his chest, a 9-millimeter pistol in a holster low on his thigh. The rainstorm was over, but a thick layer of mud clung to the bottom of his combat boots.

He was one of 250 Texas National Guard troops stationed on the border with Mexico, part of President Trump's latest plan to stanch the flow of immigrants entering the country illegally. The troops at the observation post chatted very little. They stared into the brush, took a few steps to change their position, then stared some more.

Then it happened — one of the soldiers saw a raft in the river. The troops got on their radio and summoned the Border Patrol down below, fulfilling, military officials said, one of the primary missions of the National Guard's controversial mobilization on the southern border: to observe and report.

On Tuesday, the Guard allowed a group of journalists to shadow some of its troops on the border, an early look at the new deployment that follows a surge in illegal crossings into South Texas. The Department of Homeland Security said more than 37,000 people were detained in March. Though the flow of asylum seekers into Texas regularly goes up in the springtime, detentions this year were three times the levels in March of last year.

"We're like an extra pair of eyes and ears," said a Texas National Guard captain, one of several positioned at two observation posts in rural Starr County in the Rio Grande Valley. Like other troops, he had been instructed by his commanders to speak anonymously; many of them live and work on the border, and there are fears that the soldiers could become potential targets for cartel-linked smugglers.

At another watch post farther down the river, male and female soldiers were also focusing their binoculars intently on the brushy river banks, and the landscape beyond.

Across the river, a Mexican neighborhood hummed with life. Children waded into the water at the river's edge and a man fished near a smoky barbecue grill. A rooster crowed as a soldier wiped smudges from the lenses of his binoculars with his uniform. A white car peeled out on the Mexican side and then sped out of the neighborhood; one soldier noticed that it was the car's third pass-through that afternoon.

"Hey!" a man on the Mexican side shouted at the troops.

The soldiers ignored him and kept their binoculars trained ahead.

At the observation posts and at the Guard's army headquarters in the nearby town of Weslaco, the troops could be seen embarking on two seemingly contradictory missions: standing out, and blending in.

Up high on the edges of the river, the



Discarded ladders used by immigrants to scale a border fence near the Rio Grande. Below, a Border Patrol officer talking with a member of the Texas National Guard.

## The face of the deployment to thwart illegal immigration is made up of men and women of Mexican-American heritage.

troops were meant to be seen and feared. They were heavily armed, dressed in battle fatigues and equipped with military vehicles. The chatter from their radios filled the air.

But out on the streets of the South Texas cities they traveled through, they were all but invisible as they sat in ordinary civilian pickup trucks. Many people still associate the calling-up of the National Guard with disasters and riots, and the troops' lack of visibility in border communities is an attempt to soften their presence.

At one point on Tuesday, troops in a minivan and Ford 4x4 pickup trucks sat at a four-way stop as a group of high school students got off a yellow school bus. Many of the students crossing the streets did not look twice at the waiting vehicles. They had interrupted a military convoy that was cutting through their town, but didn't know it.

In Texas, the National Guard had already been deployed on the border as part of a state ordered call-up, and this low-key visibility in border cities has helped ease any worries that the military was invading. "They were just embedded so efficiently that really you couldn't tell that they were out there,"

said Pete Saenz, the mayor of the border city of Laredo who supports the new deployment of troops. "If they do it the way it's been done, using the National Guard the way it's been done in the past, I think it's acceptable."

As part of the president's order, Gov. Greg Abbott announced that Texas would deploy more than 1,000 troops to the state's 1,200-mile border with Mexico, adding about 300 troops a week to the current contingent of about 250 troops. Mr. Trump said he expects a total of 2,000 to 4,000 troops along the southwest border, including additional deployments in New Mexico and Arizona.

In an interview on Fox Business on Tuesday, Mr. Abbott said the Guard presence on the border had no end date in sight as the Trump administration seeks to complete a border wall.

"They're going to be there, I perceive, for a long time — years — because if you just look at what the president said, he said that this is a gap filler until he gets funding for the wall and greater border security," the governor said. "We are prepared for the long run to have National Guard presence there, to make sure we're doing everything we can to better secure the border."

Gov. Jerry Brown of California said on Wednesday that his state, too, would accept federal funding to add about 400 National Guard troops, to help combat transnational criminal gangs, human trafficking and the smuggling of drugs and weapons along the border.



California has about 250 Guard members employed in such operations, including 55 along the Mexico border.

"But let's be crystal clear on the scope of this mission," Mr. Brown said in a statement. "This will not be a mission to build a new wall. It will not be a mission to round up women and children or detain people escaping violence and seeking a better life. And the California National Guard will not be enforcing federal immigration laws."

In South Texas, the observation posts are the front lines of the stepped-up border operation.

At the cliffside post that spotted the raft (it was unclear whether it was carrying people or cargo), the soldiers' headquarters had four big wheels: a green Humvee. Mounted on top of the vehicle was not a machine gun but a giant optic system — effectively a boxy, superpowered pair of binoculars — and next to a rear tire, a red portable cooler. One soldier was operating the Humvee's optic system, while the others paced back and forth on the cliff, watching. Some were in their 20s; others, their 40s and 50s.

The majority seen Tuesday were His-

panic. Here, the visible face of the president's deployment to thwart illegal immigration is made up of men and women of Mexican-American heritage whose relatives were immigrants themselves. They are citizen soldiers, on loan in a sense from their jobs and their families.

"When I'm called up to do my duty, I'm a Texan helping Texans, and I'm sure that the majority of the troops feel the same way," said the captain, who is Hispanic.

Texas has maintained a continuous and costly National Guard presence on the border since 2014. Rick Perry, then the governor, sent 1,000 troops to the border in July of that year and his successor, Mr. Abbott, kept the troops there, though in smaller numbers. About 100 troops were stationed on the Texas border when Mr. Trump ordered the new deployment.

Officials say the troop presence is freeing up Border Patrol agents to focus on apprehensions. The soldiers are prevented from detaining immigrants trying to illegally cross into the United States. A Defense Department deployment memo stated that National Guard personnel "will not perform law enforcement activities or interact with migrants or other persons detained" without the approval of the secretary of defense, and are to be armed only in "circumstances that might require self-defense."

Yet such deployments are costly and have not been without controversy in tax-conscious Texas.

The use of civilian rental vehicles illustrates the expense of border deployments, both in the state-run mobilization and the new one ordered by the president. The rentals prevent wear and tear on military vehicles, and also help troops blend into civilian communities. In 2016, Texas National Guard documents obtained by NBC 5 in Fort Worth showed that the Guard had spent \$1.8 million on rental cars at that point. One van was rented for \$1,100 but driven only 47 miles; another was driven only nine miles at a rental cost of \$1,300.

By 2017, the total price tag for the state-ordered Guard deployment and other border-related Texas Military Forces expenses was nearly \$63 million. Officials estimate that the state deployment lately has been running a tab of about \$1 million a month.

State officials and Guard leaders defend the costs, and say the state deployment has been a success. "The addition of National Guard on the border has proved to have a meaningful impact to reduce the flow of people and illegal activities coming across the border," Mr. Abbott said in a statement.

Political opponents, especially those in border communities, are raising questions nonetheless.

"That money could be better used," said State Senator Juan Hinojosa, a Democrat whose district includes Mission and other border towns. "I think there's no doubt that we want to secure our border, that we as a nation have a right to defend our border and define our border. But let's do it in a smart way," he said. "We have the tools and the resources to do that without getting the military involved. This is not a war zone."

Dave Montgomery contributed reporting from Austin, Tex.

## Competitive aviator set an altitude record

FRAN BERA  
1924-2018

BY DANIEL E. SLOTNIK

Fran Bera's fascination with flight began when she took an airplane-themed carnival ride as a young girl in Michigan in the 1930s.

As a teenager she hitchhiked more than 30 miles to an airfield, where she worked odd jobs and saved for flight lessons. She earned her pilot's license at 16, and by 24, the youngest allowable age, she became a designated examiner, allowed to certify new pilots.

Ms. Bera went on to win more than a dozen air races. She set an unbroken National Aeronautic Association record for highest altitude attained in a twin-engine Piper Aztec, pushing that turbo-prop plane to an altitude better suited for a jet. And, she said, she once flew a small plane from California to Siberia on a whim.

Ms. Bera also oversaw more than 3,000 check rides, or licensing examinations, for new pilots, and in the 1980s stopped counting her flight hours after she had accumulated 25,000.

Leslie Day, a friend whose plane was in a hangar near Ms. Bera's at Gillespie Field in El Cajon, Calif., outside San Diego, estimated in an interview that Ms. Bera had spent the equivalent of more than three years in the pilot's seat.

Ms. Bera last flew her white Piper Comanche 260 (decorated with pink and magenta stripes and the phrase "Kick Ass" stenciled on the fuselage) in January 2016, when she was 91.

She stopped flying when chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arthritis



Fran Bera in the pilot's seat in an undated photograph and, right, in front of her airplane in 2014. She once flew a small plane from California to Siberia on a whim.



and other health problems made clambering into the cockpit — getting to it by first climbing onto her plane's right wing — too arduous.

Ms. Bera died on Feb. 10 at her home in San Diego after having a stroke, Ms. Day said. She was 93. Her death was not widely reported at the time.

She and Ms. Day were members together of the San Diego chapter of the Ninety Nines, an international group of female pilots whose first president was Amelia Earhart. (Ms. Day remains a member.)

Ms. Bera was a consummate aviator, licensed to fly propeller and jet planes, helicopters and hot air balloons. She worked as a flight instructor, sold airplanes for Beechcraft and Piper and was

a test pilot; in the 1960s, she flew an experimental helicopter with no tail rotor.

Female pilots were unusual when Ms. Bera started flying, in the 1940s, but breaking aviation boundaries came naturally for her.

"She said, 'It wasn't that I was a woman's libber, it's that this is what I love to do and it's my calling,'" Ms. Day said.

At first glance, Ms. Bera did not necessarily fit the conventional image of a dashing pilot: She stood under 5 feet tall and often flew wearing a dress. But she was fearless and, when racing, highly competitive.

"There's different lines on the air-speed indicator," Ms. Day said. "You want to be in the green line; yellow line, you're pushing it, and red line is where

you don't want to be. And she would always joke that she would always red-line her engine."

Ms. Bera's penchant for speeding contributed to seven wins, most of them during the 1950s, in the All Woman Transcontinental Air Race, better known as the Powder Puff Derby; and seven wins, most of them in the 21st century, in the Palms to Pines All Women's Air Race, in which participants flew from Santa Monica, Calif., to central Oregon.

In another race, from London to Victoria, British Columbia, in the early 1970s, Ms. Bera and her co-pilot rushed to refuel in Glasgow and get back in the air.

"It was so fast, my girlfriend accident-

tally popped her Mae West," Ms. Bera told The San Diego Union-Tribune in 2007, using World War II slang for an inflatable life jacket. "She flew across the Atlantic with it inflated. It was terrible."

Ms. Bera set her altitude record in 1966, climbing to 40,154 feet — so high that she needed to use bottled oxygen in the perilously thin atmosphere.

In 1993, she flew her Piper 235 Cherokee from California to Siberia "just for the fun of it" she told The Lakewood News of Lake Odessa, Mich., a local newspaper based near her hometown. Soon afterward she decided to upgrade to her swifter Comanche, explaining, "I'm getting older, I need to get places faster."

She was born Frances Sebastian to

Elizabeth and Fred Sebastian, Hungarian immigrant farmers, on Dec. 7, 1924, in Mulliken, Mich. The youngest of eight children, she developed a passion for flying as a girl; she would sneak off to study aviation and take flight lessons without mentioning any of it to her parents. They learned about her flying, she said, when she needed their written permission to fly solo at 16.

After graduating from high school in Lake Odessa, Mich., she sought to join the Women's Airforce Service Pilots, a unit, known as the Wasps, that flew military aircraft on noncombat missions during World War II. But she was rejected because of her height.

She became an adept parachutist, however, and after the war, when the military began selling off surplus aircraft, she flew planes to buyers around the United States.

She also got a job as a flight school instructor near Grand Rapids, Mich., and in 1947 married Gordon Bera, the school's owner. They moved to Santa Monica in 1951. Though the marriage ended in divorce later that decade, Ms. Bera kept his surname even after remarrying twice.

Eudene McLin, her husband of nearly 50 years, died in 2016. She is survived by a stepdaughter, Jackie Bera; and a sister, Edna Baldwin.

Ms. Bera received numerous honors for her aerial feats, including a spot on the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum's Wall of Honor.

But she said that the most gratifying part of her long career was still the sensation of being airborne.

"It still fascinates me after 65 years of flying," she said in 2007. "And I'm still learning."



# World

## Confessions seen as tool in Chinese propaganda

BEIJING

Group says prisoners coerced as warning to not challenge the government

BY STEVEN LEE MYERS

In the unpolished video that appeared on state television one October morning in 2015, Wang Yu, one of China's most prominent lawyers, denounces her own son.

While she was herself under arrest, the young man had been detained after leaving the country without permission or the proper papers. He first flew to the southern province of Yunnan and then rode on the back of a motorcycle into Myanmar, his movements captured on closed-circuit cameras.

"I strongly condemn this type of behavior," Ms. Wang says in a monotone, sitting inside a featureless room. "This kind of action is very risky and is illegal."

It was all a lie, as her colleagues suspected when the video first aired.

Ms. Wang's videotaped contrition is considered an example of how the Chinese authorities routinely coerce detainees into making statements that serve the government's propaganda needs.

A human rights organization, Safeguard Defenders, has now detailed her case and others like it to draw attention to a practice it says violates fundamental due process and international legal standards — and to call out the media organizations in China and in Hong Kong that abet the practice by circulating the "confessions" and in some cases even participating in them.



In an image from a video shown on state television in 2015, Wang Yu, a prominent lawyer in China, denounced her son.

Critics have long assumed these televised acts of confession and contrition were frauds. The organization's report, released this week, analyzes 45 high-profile examples recorded and broadcast from July 2013 to February 2018.

More than half of them involved lawyers, journalists and others who promoted human rights in China. Many were shown "confessing" even though the formal legal proceedings against them had not yet begun, ignoring the presumption of innocence that is embedded even in Chinese law.

In 12 cases, the organization's researchers interviewed those who were forced to record confessions, documenting in detail how the videos were carefully scripted and then broadcast.

What follows are examples of how the security forces use the confessions to demonstrate their raw jurisdictional power and to score propaganda points in an effort to deflect criticism at home and abroad. They ultimately show how powerless detainees are once they are swept into the Chinese legal system.

"I don't expect everyone to understand," Ms. Wang said, explaining the agonizing decision she made to agree to the interrogators' demands in exchange for her release. "I just want to say that my son is everything to me. Perhaps I had no other choice."

### CONFESSIONS SEND A MESSAGE

Lam Wing-kee was the manager of Causeway Bay Books in Hong Kong, a store that sold titles that displeased the authorities in Beijing. In 2015, he was arrested as he crossed the border from Hong Kong to the mainland, swept up in a series of cases against booksellers that continue to reverberate in Hong Kong, a special administrative region of China.

Mr. Lam reappeared in February 2016 on Chinese television, where he "confessed" that his books — which included titillating descriptions of the private lives of Chinese leaders — were sensationalized and misleading.

In the Safeguard Defenders report, Mr. Lam told researchers that he had to make a dozen recordings before those holding him were satisfied. He said they were made to seem like interviews and, in one case, a court proceeding, with a police officer posing as a witness. When Mr. Lam was released, he held an explosive news conference in Hong Kong, after which the authorities broadcast more recordings in an effort to embarrass him further.

Confessions are "much more than simple admissions of guilt," the report said. They are meant as warnings to others who would challenge the state, and to discredit accusations of abuses of power by the Communist Party or the state security organs.

"China's televised confessions are reminiscent of violent and degrading episodes of political persecution from history," the report added, noting Stalin's show trials and the public shaming sessions that were characteristic of the Cultural Revolution in China.

### DEFLECTING CRITICISM

Gui Minhai, a Swedish citizen, was another of the Hong Kong booksellers caught up in the sweep in 2015. In his case, he was abducted from his vacation home in Thailand and taken to China. There he faced charges under mysterious circumstances that provoked international condemnation and the involvement of the government of Sweden.

Mr. Gui has since appeared in three recorded videos. In the first, he declared that he had gone to China voluntarily, which his relatives and colleagues strongly dispute.

The latest, shown in February, came after a bizarre turn of events. Mr. Gui, who was released from prison last year but was kept under close scrutiny in the city of Ningbo, near Shanghai, was arrested in January aboard a train traveling to Beijing while he was accompanied by Swedish diplomats, who were ostensibly escorting him to medical treatment.

In a video broadcast on state television, Mr. Gui appeared tense, often pausing or repeating himself, saying the Swedes were using him as a pawn.

He was also shown being interviewed by the media in Hong Kong. The video appeared on the website of The South China Morning Post. The newspaper faced criticism for its role but later said the interview was done without preconditions, though with the cooperation of the authorities.

Mr. Gui's daughter, Angela, who has campaigned for his release, told the Safeguard Defenders report's researchers that it was painful to watch. "It's the kind of thing nobody should ever have to experience," she said, "so there shouldn't be words for it."



Rusal, which has an aluminum smelter in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, has felt the sting of sanctions. The company is one of the assets of the billionaire Oleg V. Deripaska.

## Oligarchs face a tough choice

MOSCOW

Latest U.S. sanctions leave Russian companies with isolation or uncertainty

BY NEIL MACFARQUHAR

Compared to the sunny, palm-lined offshore tax havens where Russians typically stash their fortunes — think the British Virgin Islands or Cyprus — two chilly, windswept Russian islands would seem to offer little.

Yet October Island, a glorified swamp in Russia's European exclave of Kaliningrad, and Russian Island, a former pasture facing the far eastern port of Vladivostok, were highlighted by Moscow this week as potential alternatives.

Washington's imposition of unexpectedly tough sanctions against several leading oligarchs is in many respects a game changer for Russia, with repercussions that are only slowly coming into view. Establishing tax havens within the country was just one reaction by the Kremlin, seemingly caught off guard as aftershocks rippled through currency and financial markets.

"Russia has no strategy on how to react to this situation, to these new economic circumstances," Evgeny Gontmakher, an opposition economist, said.

The most immediate effect is being felt by Oleg V. Deripaska and his aluminum giant, Rusal, which has lost about one-third of its value on the Moscow stock exchange. "This is a new stage," Mr. Gontmakher said. "This is targeting for isolation a very big, export-oriented company. That is very painful."

The ramifications could also be felt by wealthy Russians in London, as Washington warned British banks on Tuesday that they could face severe penalties if they continued dealings with any

of 24 Russians named in the sanctions, including seven oligarchs.

Paradoxically, the sanctions could help President Vladimir V. Putin to accomplish a long-held goal of putting more of the economy under state control and pressuring billionaires to bring their money home.

Yet the sanctions might also work against Mr. Putin's interests, forcing some of the wealthiest Russians to decide just how closely they want to be identified with the Kremlin by financing militias, political organizations or other adventures abroad. "Anyone who wants to help the Kremlin outside will think twice," said Konstantin Gaaze, an analyst and frequent contributor to the Moscow Carnegie Center website.

In a larger sense, the sanctions are expected to have a limited overall effect after the initial shock wears off, because they targeted just a handful of companies. But the virtual sequestering of a critical Russian commodity producer, Rusal, has introduced a strong element of uncertainty into dealings with all Russian raw materials, the taproot of the country's income, which is likely to further isolate Russia from the world.

The initial government response was muted, with Dmitri S. Peskov, the spokesman for Mr. Putin, telling reporters that "it would be wrong to make hasty decisions" and predicting that the value of the ruble and the Russian stock market would bounce back once emotions settled down.

Given the tiny size of the Russian economy — around 2 percent of global gross domestic product — and its limited trade with America, there was little expectation of economic retaliation. Any Russian response was likely to come in places like Syria or Ukraine, analysts said, where the Kremlin might ratchet up tensions in order to leverage any solution on ending the sanctions. With an American strike in Syria possible at any moment, in response to what was sus-

pected to be a chemical weapons attack by the forces of President Bashar al-Assad, an occasion for that eventuality might materialize quickly.

The two most prominent industrialists targeted were Mr. Deripaska, whose Rusal company employs an estimated 60,000 in Russia, and Viktor F. Vekselberg, one of the richest men in Russia, whose projects include trying to develop the country's tech sector.

Overall, the sanctions were imposed on seven Russian oligarchs, 12 companies they control and 17 senior government officials who the United States Treasury said profited from the Russian state's "malign activities."

"It is not clear what are the key sins that got people transferred from the big list to the small list," said Kirill Rogov, an

**"There is a big possibility that this is only the beginning of the campaign."**

independent political and economic analyst. "The logic is not clear, which increases the risk for all others."

More possible sanctions are already in the pipeline, following the poisoning in Britain last month of a Russian former spy, Sergei V. Skripal, and his daughter, Yulia. In the end, the most important ramifications of this round of sanctions is the uncertainty they introduce to all of Russia's dealings with the West. "There is a big possibility that this is only the beginning of the campaign," Mr. Gontmakher said.

The government said it would address that uncertainty by providing whatever support was needed to keep the targeted companies functioning and their employees in jobs.

Most analysts suggested that the Kremlin was likely to buy Rusal, for example, and try to rebrand it to avoid it

being stigmatized on the world market and to sell the aluminum at rock-bottom prices just to keep Russians employed. This might well provide a multibillion-dollar payday for Mr. Deripaska.

To the dismay of liberal economists, Mr. Putin has pushed state ownership of the economy to 50 percent to 70 percent from about 35 percent, and taking over Rusal would further expand government control.

Russia weathered a round of sanctions over the annexation of Crimea in 2014 that limited Russian access to Western capital markets, cut off arms sales and limited technology transfer. The latest are narrower but more intense, analysts said, since they effectively shut out a giant commodity producer from Western markets.

The Kremlin has been trying to force rich Russians to bring their money home, and the sanctions might help. "As one of our clients said, when sanctions were introduced it was the wrong way to destroy Russia," said Oleg Kouzmin, the chief economist at Renaissance Capital, a Moscow investment bank. To really wreak economic havoc in Russia, he joked, the West should roll out the red carpet for assets from the oligarchs, effectively stalling the Russian economy.

Habitually, tycoons have feared falling afoul of the Kremlin and having their assets in Russia seized, but any oligarch cut off completely from international financial markets might be more amenable to shifting money home. Still, it would be only a short-term fix, noted several analysts, because Russia is not a big enough or an attractive enough market for sustained investment.

"We have to understand that we are entering a new reality — Russia is being turned into a toxic asset," said Vladislav S. Zhukovsky, an economist and investment consultant.

Ivan Nechepurenko and Andrew E. Kramer contributed reporting

## Steep slide in currency sets off a panic in Iran

TEHRAN

BY THOMAS ERDBRINK

All this week panicked Iranians have gathered in throngs outside banks and other financial businesses hoping to buy dollars, as the government seeks to head off a collapse in the rial, the national currency.

But they have met with nothing but frustration, told that there were no dollars or other currencies for them to buy at the official government rate. In an effort to stop the run on foreign exchange, the government has forbidden anyone from holding more than the equivalent of \$10,000 in dollars or euros, which account for most of the foreign exchange in Iran.

Long on a downward path, the rial plunged this week, losing 35 percent of its value against the dollar and hitting what has been widely described as a record low. The government is seeking to impose an exchange rate of 42,000 to the dollar, but in Tehran's black-market exchanges this week the going rate was 60,000. When President Hassan Rouhani took office in 2013, the rate was 36,000.

In an effort to squelch currency speculation, the government sent riot police into the bazaars on Wednesday, where

they arrested several money changers. One senior cleric, Ayatollah Nasser Makarem-Shirazi, said that some money changers ought to be executed to set an example.

However, many of those changing money in the bazaars were ordinary people seeking to protect themselves against rising prices and fearful of further declines in the currency.

Others, like Mohsen Yekta, a university professor, said they needed the foreign exchange for personal business.

**The government blames unilateral United States sanctions that continue to limit bank financing.**

"Every month I send some money to my daughter in Paris," he said. "I need foreign exchange to help her out. I don't know what to do."

Amid rising tensions in the region, the rial has been sliding for weeks, but it went into free fall on Saturday. The government blames unilateral United States sanctions that continue to limit bank financing, despite the 2015 nuclear agreement that lifted international banking sanctions. Market insiders say that fears are also rising that President Trump will withdraw from the nuclear

agreement next month, when it comes to him to be certified once more.

Ordinary Iranians agree with most of these explanations, but also blame the government for poor planning and bad management of the economy. They also view the black-market rate as one of the few trustworthy indicators of the country's economic health.

Earlier this year, complaints about economic conditions and corruption exploded into a more general protest against political conditions in more than 80 cities across Iran. There are no signs so far that the current troubles are leading to unrest.

The currency slide is taking its toll on business, with many companies that sell foreign products halting all sales, unable to determine prices. The manager of a paint factory said that he had sent his 70 employees on a paid vacation because he did not know what price to ask for products that were based on foreign ingredients bought with foreign exchange.

While Iran has endured similar currency crises in the past, some commentators said they were not seeing light at the end of this particular tunnel.

"Our economy is based on bad planning — it's wishy-washy," said Farshad Ghorbanpour, an analyst close to the government. "Don't expect things to get any better."



Checking exchange rates in Tehran. In an effort to squelch currency speculation, the government sent riot police into bazaars.



## WORLD

# Syria attack brings fear and questions

SYRIA, FROM PAGE 1

Damascus under opposition control since the early years of the uprising, had been the last rebel-held town in an area known as Eastern Ghouta.

On Friday, negotiations with the rebels collapsed and the Syrian government began a new offensive against the town, shelling it heavily while jets and helicopters bombed it from above, residents said.

As roofs caved in and walls collapsed, people sheltered on the ground floors of their buildings or in basements intended for storage. To avoid going outside, they cooked and baked bread underground, venturing out during lulls to fetch water for cooking and bathing, said Mahmoud Bweidany, 19, who had spent much of the past few months crowded in a two-room basement with 10 other people.

"You just sit and think about the strikes," he said. "Are they close or far? Was that a bomb or a missile?"

After a strike on Saturday afternoon, 15 people started choking, according to Mahmoud Adam of the Syrian Civil Defense, a volunteer aid group also known as the White Helmets. Witnesses said it smelled like chlorine, which has been used repeatedly as a weapon in this war.

Later that night, Mr. Hanash heard the helicopters and the whistling sound that he said was caused by barrel bombs carrying some sort of chemical.

"After the barrels came down, we started smelling a smell," he said. He described it as "sweet."

But people hiding in a nearby basement started screaming, and rescuers later carried out six people who had passed out, he said. He did not know what had happened to them.

Another canister landed on a bed on the upper floor of a damaged building and did not explode, according to a video shot by an activist who found it.

A third canister was found on the roof of a crowded, four-story apartment building near the city center, according to a video of the canister and an activist who visited the building the next day.

Rescue workers and the activist, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of government reprisals, found dozens of men, women and children lying lifeless on the floor below. In videos of the scene, the dead bore no visible signs of trauma, but some had white foam coming from their mouths and nostrils. Some appeared to have burned corners.

The activist said it appeared that when the smell entered the basement, some people had tried to go upstairs, unknowingly getting closer to the source.

A number of residents recalled hearing the sounds of helicopters near the time of the attack. A network of citizen observers that tracks Syrian aircraft said that two Mil Mi-8 helicopters, which they said belonged to the Syrian government, had been seen flying from the Dumayr air base toward Douma

near the time of the attack.

After the strikes, a wave of victims arrived at a local clinic, according to a medical student who was working there at the time and spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals from the Syrian government.

Exhausted and low on supplies, the medics doused the patients with water and tried to treat the rest with their limited respirators and medicine, he said. One patient had muscle spasms and struggled to breathe before passing out, coughing up blood and dying, he said.

"Most of the serious cases died in the hospital," he said.

The Syrian Civil Defense compiled the names of 35 people it said had died in the attack, and said that eight more bodies were unidentified.

The next morning was quiet. When residents emerged from their homes and shelters, they learned that the rebels had surrendered. The government would retake control of Douma for the first time in more than five years, and the rebels and tens of thousands of residents would be bused to a rebel-held area in northern Syria.

"They never announced anything, but it was clear that there was a deal because the shelling stopped and we came out and saw that the whole town was destroyed," Mr. Bweidany said.

On Sunday, rescuers removed the bodies from the building where dozens of people had died and laid them out in the street, according to a video. After dousing them with water, they loaded them onto a truck to be buried.

On Monday, officers from the Russian military police entered Douma and visited the same building the rescuers had pulled the bodies from, according to videos of the visit.

In a statement, Russia's Ministry of Defense said the visit had "refuted all reports of chemical weapons use in the city."

It called the accusations and the photos and videos posted online "fake" and an effort to disrupt the agreement that had ended the fighting.

The United States has not said when it would carry out its response.

Douma's residents were less concerned about Mr. Trump's response than with a basic question: whether to remain in Douma and live under the government that had bombed them, or relocate to an area many had never visited.

Few expected an American intervention to affect their lives.

Mr. Bweidany planned to leave Douma because he feared getting arrested by the government or drafted into its military.

"We here as civilians have lost all faith in the things people say," he said. "I see a lot of talk, but I don't see any action."

*Hwaida Saad contributed reporting from Beirut, and Malachy Browne from New York.*



President Trump with Vice President Mike Pence and the national security adviser, John R. Bolton, right. Mr. Trump urged an attack on Syria before Britain was on board.

## Trump's triumph of contradiction

WHITE HOUSE MEMO  
WASHINGTON

### Tweets on Syria, Russia and China leave officials more bewildered than usual

BY MARK LANDLER

President Trump's fusillade of tweets about Syria, Russia and China this week set a new standard for contradictory and inconsistent positions in Mr. Trump's approach to war, trade and relations with adversaries.

The president promised never to telegraph military action against an enemy, yet all but showcased a coming missile strike on Syria. He threatened Russia and called its relations with the United States worse than during the Cold War, yet blamed the ill will not on Moscow but on the special counsel's investigation.

He praised President Xi Jinping of China for his "enlightenment" on trade in a highly anticipated speech by the Chinese leader, but in it Mr. Xi actually offered little to change what Mr. Trump has called decades of predatory practices by Beijing.

Mr. Trump might argue, like Ralph Waldo Emerson, that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." But the latest reversals and back flips were so jarring that they left foreign officials more bewildered than usual about Mr. Trump's next moves.

The tweets also appeared divorced from the administration's policies on Russia, where the United States is expelling diplomats and imposing sanctions on cronies of President Vladimir V. Putin. They are at odds with policy on China, where the United States appears ready to escalate the confrontation over trade. They are at cross-purposes with the latest actions on Syria, where the ad-

ministration is trying to cobble together a coalition before it unleashes a strike against President Bashar al-Assad for his suspected use of chemical weapons in a Damascus suburb last weekend.

"His administration may have drafted a Russia policy through the interagency process," said Michael A. McFaul, a former American ambassador to Russia, "but Trump seems completely disconnected from it, like he seems to be on many foreign policies."

Administration officials and diplomats say foreign governments have learned to discount many of Mr. Trump's tweets, particularly those clearly aimed at spinning up his political base or goading foreign adversaries. But they acknowledge it is hard to decide what to ignore and what to take seriously.

Mr. Trump drew chuckles with his tweets last year about sitting down to make a deal with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un. Now, White House aides are planning a summit meeting for the two men.

Mr. McFaul said Mr. Putin would find things to like and dislike in Mr. Trump's three Russia-related tweets on Wednesday morning. Mr. Putin would bridle at Mr. Trump's threat to send "nice and new and 'smart'" missiles to Syria, where they could hit Russian forces, not to mention his assertion that the relationship "is worse now than it has ever been, and that includes the Cold War."

But Mr. McFaul said Mr. Putin would welcome Mr. Trump's odd claim that the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, is fomenting anti-Russian sentiment in the United States. More than anything, however, Mr. McFaul said the Russians would view Mr. Trump's scattershot approach as weakness.

"My sense is that the Kremlin has given up on their previous hope that Trump might repair relations because he is not focused and not in control of foreign policymaking," he said.

On Syria, Mr. Trump's promise of a coming missile strike not only violated his own promise never to predict such action — it also put him ahead of America's allies. While France has been steadfast in its support for strikes, the British government is still deliberating.

The administration, officials said, would like its allies to be part of a united front.

As a practical matter, Mr. Trump's foreshadowing might enable Mr. Assad to move some aircraft to get them out of the way of a missile strike. But analysts said any such movement would not alter the outcome, given the military superiority of the United States.

"We can pick off his equipment at will," said Andrew J. Tabler, an expert on

**"The Kremlin has given up on their previous hope that Trump might repair relations because he is not focused and not in control."**

Syria at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

The lack of swift action after Mr. Trump's tweet, however, could add to the perception of a White House not in sync. It comes after a week in which the president at first pushed for a rapid withdrawal of American troops from Syria, only to later acquiesce grudgingly to his generals, who argued that the troops should remain in the country for a few more months to train local forces and stabilize Syrian towns liberated from the Islamic State.

The president seemed similarly confused last week when he blamed his predecessor, Barack Obama, for the Syrian government's suspected gas attack in the Damascus suburb.

"If President Obama had crossed his stated Red Line In The Sand," Mr. Trump tweeted, "the Syrian disaster

would have ended long ago! Animal Assad would have been history!"

It was Mr. Assad, not Mr. Obama, who crossed the president's red line by using chemical weapons in 2013. Mr. Obama shelved a missile strike against Syria for that, earning widespread criticism from those who said it emboldened both Mr. Assad and the Russians.

If Mr. Trump's words on Syria have been tougher than his actions, it is the reverse with China. The administration has met China, tariff for tariff, in their trade confrontation. Officials like Robert Lighthizer, the United States trade representative, and Peter Navarro, the director of the White House National Trade Council, seem committed to a long battle.

But Mr. Trump has seized on any sign of conciliation from the Chinese. When Mr. Xi promised in his speech to relax restrictions on financial services, protect intellectual property and open up foreign investment in the auto industry, Mr. Trump thanked him on Twitter for his "kind words on tariffs and automobile barriers . . . also, his enlightenment on intellectual property and technology transfers."

Mr. Xi's tone was solicitous, to be sure. But China experts said his proposals broke little new ground and were familiar from trade negotiations conducted during the Obama administration. Those are the same talks that Mr. Trump and his aides say produced nothing for American companies, and opened Mr. Trump up to the same charge he has leveled against his predecessors — that they swallowed Beijing's empty promises.

"Trump's tweet suggested he is willing to take a quarter of a loaf," said Evan S. Medeiros, who served as a China adviser to Mr. Obama. "Was he trying to set up space to declare victory? Because I can't imagine the China hawks or the trade hawks accepting that."



A child being treated at a hospital in Douma, Syria, after a suspected chemical attack. Citizen observers said they had seen government helicopters headed toward the town.

## Rape and murder of 8-year-old fuels India's sectarian tension

NEW DELHI

BY JEFFREY GETTLEMAN

In early January, Asifa Bano, an 8-year-old girl in a purple dress, was grazing her horses in a meadow in northern India. A man beckoned her into a forest. She followed.

According to the police, he grabbed her by the neck and forced her to take sleeping pills. With the help of a friend, they say, he dragged her to a nearby temple and locked her inside.

For the next three days, the police say, the two men and at least one other raped her, again and again. They told investigators that their motive had been to drive Asifa's nomadic community out of the area. In the end, she was strangled, after one of the men allegedly insisted on raping her one last time.

Days later, Asifa's crumpled body was found in the forest, in the same purple dress, now smeared with blood.

Eight men have been arrested in connection with the case, and several have confessed, according to the police in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, where the killing took place. Two of the accused are police officers said to have accepted thousands of dollars to cover up the crime. One of the arrested suspects said he was 15, though police officers, based

on a medical examination, believe he is at least 19.

It seemed another isolated, horrific episode of sexual violence in India, perpetrated against a powerless girl by brutal men. But in the months since Asifa's murder, the case has become another battleground in India's religious wars.

Hindu nationalists have turned it into a rallying cry — not calling for justice for Asifa, but rushing to the defense of the accused. All of the men arrested are Hindu, and Asifa's nomadic people, the Bakarwals, are Muslim.

Some of the police officers who investigated the case are also Muslim, and for that reason, the Hindu activists say, they cannot be trusted.

This week, a mob of Hindu lawyers physically blocked police officers from entering a courthouse to file charges against the men. The officers retreated to a judge's house later in the evening to complete the paperwork.

Protests and counterprotests are now spreading. On Wednesday, much of Kathua, a small town in northern India near where Asifa was killed, was shut down by demonstrators, including dozens of Hindu women who helped block a highway and organize a hunger strike.

"They are against our religion," said Bimla Devi, one of the protesters. If the accused men aren't released, she said, "we will burn ourselves."



Anti-Muslim demonstrators shut down much of the town of Kathua in northern India in defense of the men, all Hindus, accused in the death of a child.

Police officials say they have physical evidence and DNA tests linking the defendants to Asifa's death. They also say they have interviewed more than 130 witnesses, who "unequivocally corroborated the facts that emerged."

Several prominent members of India's dominant political force, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, are

pushing to have the case taken out of the hands of the state police, arguing that the Central Bureau of Investigation would be a better, more neutral agency to handle it. Many suspect this is an attempt to win leniency for the accused, noting that the bureau is an arm of the central government, which the Bharatiya Janata Party controls.



Asifa Bano's horrific death was aimed at terrorizing Muslims, the police said.

That a Hindu temple is at the center of the crime makes this case even more combustible. The police say that Sanji Ram, the temple's custodian, devised the plan as a way to terrorize the Bakarwals, and that he enlisted a nephew and some friends to kidnap and kill Asifa. The police say the culprits selected Asifa simply because she was by herself and "a soft target."

For generations, Bakarwal nomads, who drift with their herds across the plains and hills of northern India, have leased pastures from Hindu farmers for their animals to graze in winter. But in recent years, some Hindus in the Kathua area have begun a campaign of abuse against the nomads. Villagers

said Mr. Ram was their ringleader.

"His poison has been spreading," said Talib Hussain, a Bakarwal leader. "When I was young, I remember the fear Sanji Ram's name invoked in Muslim women. If they wanted to scare each other, they would take Sanji Ram's name, since he was known to misbehave with Bakarwal women."

Feelings between the two communities are so bitter that when Asifa didn't return from the meadow, her parents immediately suspected that something terrible had been done to her.

They summoned the police and went to the small temple run by Mr. Ram. He insisted that he had not seen the girl. The temple was locked. According to the police, at that moment Asifa was being starved inside, hidden under a table and some plastic mats.

Mohammad Yusuf Pujwala, Asifa's father, said his daughter was killed for one reason: to drive the Bakarwals away.

"But we have land here and life here," he said. "This is home for us." He sounded almost too tired to grieve.

He said Asifa had never been to school, even though her brothers had. Her favorite thing to do was to play in the meadow.

*Suhasini Raj contributed reporting from New Delhi, and Sameer Yasir from Kathua, India.*



# Republican election plans are upended

WASHINGTON

BY JONATHAN MARTIN  
AND ALEXANDER BURNS

Fifteen months after the Republicans took full control of Washington, the man long seen as central to the party's future is abandoning one of the most powerful jobs in the capital, imperiling the party's grip on the House of Representatives and signaling that the political convulsions of the Trump era are taking a grave toll on the right months before congressional elections.

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan's retirement announcement this week blindsided many House Republican candidates and their campaign leaders who were counting on him to lead them to victory in the November midterm elections. His decision to leave Congress at age 48 sent an undeniably pessimistic message to Republicans: that stable, steady leadership is lacking in their deeply divided party as they head into a campaign season defined by the whims of President Trump.

And for a White House bracing for a potential Democratic impeachment inquiry, the ominous impact of Mr. Ryan's retirement was unmistakable. He has made it more difficult to stave off Democrats' taking control of the House, where Republicans currently hold a 23-seat majority.

As many as 50 House Republican seats are at risk in competitive races this year. Private polling indicates that Mr. Trump's approval rating is well below 40 percent in some of those tossup districts, the sort of low political standing that often dooms candidates of the president's party.

"This is the nightmare scenario," said former Representative Thomas M. Davis III, a Virginia Republican. "Everybody figured he'd just hang in there till after the election."

Already, some veteran Republicans are suggesting that the party shift its focus from the House to protecting its one-seat Senate majority.

"It seems clear now that the fight is to hold the Senate," said Billy Piper, a lobbyist and former chief of staff to Senator Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader. "The first thing a Democrat House majority would do is begin impeachment proceedings. The second would be to undo tax reform. A G.O.P.



STEPHEN CROWLEY/THE NEW YORK TIMES

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan, left, with President Trump and Representative Kevin McCarthy, right, who is likely to compete with Representative Steve Scalise for the speakership.

Senate will stop both of those things and continue to put conservatives on the bench at a record pace."

Mr. Ryan's exit is a destabilizing blow to the Republicans' 2018 plans on nearly every front. The one-time Republican vice-presidential nominee has been the party's most important fund-raiser in the House, attending fund-raisers nearly every night he is in Washington and raising more than \$54 million so far for this election. In contrast to a president who embraces chaos, Mr. Ryan has also been a reassuring figure for the business community and a source of perceived stability for restless lawmakers pondering retirement.

And Mr. Ryan has been the most important voice on the right calling for an upbeat and inclusive message and a campaign focused on the economy and taxes, rather than the hard-right culture war issues Mr. Trump delights in stoking.

"Paul is relentlessly positive and wanted to run an ideas-oriented campaign," said former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. "But I guarantee you that would not have worked this fall."

But any campaign-trail embrace of angry grievance politics — of the sort that Mr. Trump ran on in 2016 — alarms other Republicans who fear it will only exacerbate their difficulties in the sub-

urbs and create long-term difficulties.

"This is a huge moment of truth," said Representative Tom Rooney of Florida. "I don't think that campaigning or governing by fear is ever going to work or ever going to be a lasting message. You can only scare people so much. And if we try that, we're not going to be in power much longer."

Mr. Ryan indicated to advisers that he knows retiring will create political difficulties for the party but that he felt he could not in good conscience commit to another full two-year term, according to two Republicans familiar with the conversations.

Yet his explanation that he wanted to

spend more time with his three teenage children, as expressed at a news conference Wednesday, is of little comfort to Republicans on the ballot who were expecting Mr. Ryan to raise millions for and campaign with lawmakers across the country. Even though he vowed to colleagues that he would keep fulfilling those political responsibilities, he will not be nearly as big a draw at fund-raisers now that he is a lame duck.

Former Representative Thomas M. Reynolds of New York, who sits on the board of a Republican outside-spending group tied to the speaker, said that Mr. Ryan had effectively scrambled the party's fund-raising machinery.

"It will be a difficult task for Paul to hold his strong, vibrant fund-raising," Mr. Reynolds said. "When you're a lame duck, it changes those dynamics."

And with the candidate filing period still open in 19 states, Mr. Ryan has lost any real power to convince other wavering Republicans to run again.

More than three dozen other Republicans are leaving the House to retire or seek other offices, and several more have resigned in personal scandals or for private-sector jobs.

Mr. Ryan's announced exit also threatens to divide the rest of the Republican House leadership team: The second- and third-ranking House Republicans, Kevin McCarthy of California and Steve Scalise of Louisiana, are competing to succeed Mr. Ryan.

Mr. Gingrich said the heirs to Mr. Ryan must quickly seize control or else doom the party.

"There will be a period of depression and confusion lasting anywhere from two to six weeks," he said. "And then McCarthy and Scalise will realize the burden is on them to save the majority."

In a sign that Republican retirements are likely to continue, Representative Dennis A. Ross of Florida, who holds a conservative-leaning but not safe seat, announced on Wednesday morning that he would leave at the end of his current term. He said on CNN that the negative atmosphere in Washington was "a factor" in his decision and urged his soon-to-be-former colleagues to brandish a Ryan-like message in the fall.

Representative Peter T. King of New York, a long-serving Republican, said Mr. Ryan had played down the impact of his decision and predicted that no one would "win or lose an election based on whether Paul Ryan is the speaker."

But newer members, who may never have served under a speaker other than Mr. Ryan, had grown to see him as a kind of political security blanket, Mr. King said. There was a reassurance in trusting that Mr. Ryan "would be there if they needed campaign contributions," he added.

"It was just a comfort zone, knowing that Paul Ryan was there, for a lot of these people," Mr. King said, warning: "They'll have to really learn how to run a real race."

Jonathan Martin reported from Washington, and Alexander Burns from New York.

## A focus on Trump's lawyer

Warrant aimed to find out if he had suppressed damaging information

BY MAGGIE HABERMAN,  
MATT APUZZO  
AND MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT

The Federal Bureau of Investigation agents who raided the office and hotel of President Trump's lawyer, Michael D. Cohen, were seeking details on his relationship with the Trump campaign and his efforts to suppress negative information about Mr. Trump, according to three people briefed on the matter.

Prosecutors are interested in whether Mr. Cohen, who had no official role in the 2016 campaign, coordinated with it to quash the release of anything detrimental to it and whether that violated campaign finance laws — a new front in the investigation into Mr. Cohen.

The warrant executed this week by the agents was striking in its breadth, according to those people. It demanded documents related to the "Access Hollywood" tape in which Mr. Trump was heard making vulgar comments about women, and to other materials related to secret agreements Mr. Cohen made with women in exchange for them not speaking publicly about sexual encounters with Mr. Trump.

The warrant also covered emails and other documents that could reveal Mr. Cohen's private communications with Mr. Trump during a tense period in the presidential campaign when Mr. Trump confronted the possibility of embarrassing details of his extramarital affairs. And it delved deeply into Mr. Cohen's past, including documents about Mr. Cohen's personal and business finances, including his work as a New York taxi fleet manager.

The additional details the agents were seeking came a day after it was revealed that the authorities sought documents from Mr. Cohen related to payments made to two women who claim they had affairs with Mr. Trump, Karen McDougal and Stephanie Clifford, the pornographic film star known as Stormy Daniels, as well as information on the role of the publisher of The National Enquirer in silencing the women.

The investigation is being run by Robert S. Khuzami, whose boss, Geoffrey S. Berman, the interim United States attorney in Manhattan, has recused himself. Mr. Khuzami is a veteran federal prosecutor who spoke at the 2004 Republican National Convention in support of President George W. Bush and later led the enforcement division of the Securities and Exchange Commission during the Obama administration.

**The president's allies call the raids overreach by prosecutors.**

Though the raids on Mr. Cohen's office and hotel room were overseen by Mr. Khuzami, people close to Mr. Trump and Mr. Cohen regard the investigation as a surreptitious attempt by the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, to pry into Mr. Trump's personal life by using other prosecutors as his proxy in focusing on a lawyer who has represented him for more than a decade.

Asked for comment on Wednesday, Stephen Ryan, a lawyer for Mr. Cohen, referred to his earlier description of the raids as "completely inappropriate and unnecessary." He has described the raids as an overreach by prosecutors into the privileged communications between Mr. Cohen and his client, Mr. Trump.

Mr. Trump, furious about the raids,

has cooled on the idea of sitting for an interview with Mr. Mueller and is considering a more adversarial approach to the special counsel's investigation.

Since Mr. Mueller was appointed last May, Mr. Trump had taken a largely non-confrontational approach to the investigation, providing tens of thousands of pages of emails, notes, memos and other documents as part of an effort to show he has nothing to hide and to hasten the end of the investigation.

As recently as December, Mr. Trump said he believed Mr. Mueller would treat him fairly. And Mr. Trump has repeatedly said in public and in private that he wanted to sit with Mr. Mueller for an interview. After the search warrant, Mr. Trump now is convinced that his initial belief that Mr. Mueller is simply out to destroy his presidency was correct.

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, criticized Mr. Mueller's investigation on Wednesday for going beyond its mandate to look into Russia's meddling in the 2016 election and into the ties between Mr. Trump's campaign and Russia. "The president certainly has been clear that he has very deep concern about the direction that the special counsel and other investigations have taken," Ms. Sanders said in response to a question about a report that Mr. Trump came close to firing Mr. Mueller in December. "This investigation started off as Russian collusion, of which there was none."

It is not clear what role, if any, Mr. Cohen played regarding the "Access Hollywood" tape, which was made public a month before the election on one of the more memorable days of the campaign.

But Mr. Cohen has acknowledged paying \$130,000 to Ms. Clifford, who said she had a sexual encounter with Mr. Trump and signed a nondisclosure agreement promising not to discuss the matter. Mr. Cohen has insisted there was no relationship, but that he sought to keep a damaging story from emerging regardless.

Mr. Cohen also had a long relationship with David J. Pecker, the publisher of The National Enquirer, who is also friends with Mr. Trump and who engaged in the practice of "catch and kill" with negative stories, meaning women who made accusations of sexual relationships with the candidate received payments or contracts with the magazine.

Mr. Cohen had no formal role on the campaign, and Mr. Trump and his top campaign aides sought to limit his involvement. Still, Mr. Cohen was able to fill certain political voids that no one else seemed able to, such as forming a so-called diversity coalition of African-American, Hispanic and Muslim supporters, and he also raised money for the campaign and later for Mr. Trump's inaugural committee.

Benjamin Weiser contributed reporting.

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Michael D. Cohen, President Trump's personal lawyer, in New York. Prosecutors are interested in whether Mr. Cohen's actions violated campaign finance laws.



## WORLD



PEDRO PARDO/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

The Houston Texans' cheerleaders during a game in Mexico City in 2016. Professional cheerleaders are often required to attend team-sponsored promotional events where they face unwanted touching and abusive comments from fans.

## For cheerleaders, groping is part of the job

Many with pro teams dread being sent to interact with drunk and unruly fans

BY JULIET MACUR AND JOHN BRANCH

Cheerleaders for American professional sports teams are often dancers with backgrounds in ballet, jazz, modern, hip-hop and tap. After beating out dozens of other dancers for the job, they have a chance to show off the athletic and dancing skills they have honed for years.

But they quickly learn that performing at sporting events is only a small part of their job description. They are also required to fulfill what often is the unsavory side of the job: interacting with fans at games and other promotional events, where groping and sexual harassment are common.

In interviews with dozens of current and former cheerleaders — most from the National Football League, but also from the National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League — they described systematic exploitation by teams that profit by sending them into pregame tailgating and other gatherings where they are subjected to offensive sexual comments and unwanted touches by fans.

“When you have on a push-up bra and a fringed skirt, it can sometimes, unfortunately, feel like it comes with the territory,” said Labriah Lee Holt, a former cheerleader for the Tennessee Titans in the N.F.L. “I never experienced anything where someone on the professional staff or the team said something

“When you have on a push-up bra and a fringed skirt, it can sometimes, unfortunately, feel like it comes with the territory.”

or made me feel that way. But you definitely experience that when you encounter people who have been drinking beer.”

Team officials are aware of the situation, the cheerleaders said, but do little to prevent harassment. Cheerleaders for most professional sports teams are required to mingle with fans at games and promotional events where encounters with intoxicated people can be harrowing. A former cheerleader for the Washington Redskins recalled a particularly uncomfortable assignment: She and five teammates were sent to a fan's home, where several men were drinking and watching a football game.

When venturing into tailgate areas of parking lots, cheerleaders sometimes go in pairs or small groups to feel safer.

“There wasn't any protection from it,” Ms. Holt said. “You have to run around the tailgates, go to the tents, mingle with fans and shake the pompoms. And you sometimes get the disgusting old men who have been drinking and will say something inappropriate. It is common, and the industry knows that.”

A longtime cheerleader for the Dallas Cowboys recalled a home game when

her squad walked near a group of Philadelphia Eagles fans. “We were walking by, waving and smiling, and one guy caught my eye,” said the cheerleader, who requested anonymity because she, like many others, was forced to sign a nondisclosure agreement. “He looked at me and said, ‘I hope you get raped!’ That's the kind of stuff we'd have yelled at us. Even from our fans, once they get drunk, they yell things, and you're like, ‘Really?’ It's part of the job. It comes with it. You're supposed to take it.”

The Cowboys and the Titans did not respond to requests for comment. The N.F.L. declined to address cheerleaders' specific claims. In a statement, a spokesman for the league said: “The N.F.L. and all N.F.L. member clubs support fair employment practices. Employees and associates of the N.F.L. have the right to work in a positive and respectful environment that is free from any and all forms of harassment.”

Some teams address harassment in training and in handbooks given to cheerleaders and dance team members. It does not stop the teams from sending women into tailgate parties, suites of high rollers or the stands.

The Dallas Cowboys taught their cheerleaders and dancers what to say to people who said offensive things or touched them inappropriately. The women were told never to upset the fans.

“We were taught, if someone's getting handsy on you, how to navigate that,” said the former longtime Cowboys cheerleader. “We were told what to say, like, ‘That's not very nice.’ To be sweet, not rude. Say, ‘Can I ask you to step over here?’ Use body language to help deter the situation. Never be mean. Never. Always courteous. Because if it's not for the fans, we wouldn't be here — that's how we were supposed to think of this.”

“Now I'm like, no, we shouldn't be trained on how to handle that situation. We should be trained how to raise our hand and say, ‘Security, get this man away from me!’ I wish I could tell my 20-year-old self that.”

The cheerleaders and dancers in Dallas, as in most N.F.L. stadiums, were required to visit tailgate parties and areas that are essentially standing-room-only bars. They visited high-priced luxury suites, and came to dread certain ones.

“You knew the alcohol was flowing and that they would be handsy,” she said. “Arms around the waist, kisses on the cheek. You knew they would, and you couldn't say anything.”

If they did object? “You'd be dismissed from the team.” Most fans were polite, recalled Lisa Kelly, who spent a season with the Carolina Panthers about a decade ago while working full time as a paralegal. But moving through rowdy crowds, she said, usually meant trouble.

“Some of the fans' behavior was stunning, even for me,” she said, crediting the Panthers with keeping security nearby. “What shocked me was that people said things even with the presence of security.”

### POSSIBLE LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS

Debra Katz, a Washington lawyer who

for three decades has been bringing sexual harassment cases, including ones against politicians for both parties, said professional sports teams have a legal obligation to protect their cheerleaders from unwanted contact with fans.

“When they're selling their looks and that's part of what's being promoted, it's not unexpected that these employees could be subject to unwelcome touching, grabbing and the like,” Ms. Katz said. “The employers knew or reasonably should have known that the employee would be harassed, and so they have liability. They have an obligation to protect their employees.”

The fact that some teams require their cheerleaders to sign nondisclosure agreements, or N.D.A.s, raises a red flag in these situations where harassment is likely to take place, Ms. Katz said.

“When employees with little power sign N.D.A.s, it creates an environment where sexual harassment or improper pay can proceed because people are

“It's like every other abuse dynamic. You don't feel like you have the liberty to say, ‘I'd prefer not to do this.’”

fearful of speaking out,” she said. “Anytime you have a profession or an industry where sexual harassment can be anticipated, putting someone under an N.D.A. is designed to clearly protect the image and the team.”

Cheerleaders rarely report harassment cases, either because they believe that it is an expected part of their job or out of fear of being removed from the team. For countless women who have worked for teams over the years, the statute of limitations, which varies by state, has most likely expired.

Handbooks and contracts provided to cheerleaders rarely have detailed information on how to handle or report harassment from fans beyond legal boilerplate. The San Francisco 49ers, who outsource oversight of their Gold Rush cheerleaders to a third party — another

possible complication to claims made against some teams — included this line in the 2016 contract:

“If there is ever a case where you feel uncomfortable or sense a fan that is acting inappropriately, please get immediate assistance or contact your director immediately and she will notify the security authorities.”

But few women report the situations to supervisors out of fear of retribution.

“Every employee is afraid to report sexual harassment — this is the problem,” said Minna Kotkin, a professor in employment law at Brooklyn Law School. “The courts have not been sympathetic to that argument, unfortunately. You really do have to report it, unless you can prove that reporting it is futile.”

Women who say they have been harassed by fans said that there is inherent pressure to keep quiet.

“We beat out hundreds of other girls for this position,” the former cheerleader for the Cowboys said. “It was very apparent, always there — there is always somebody else who can do this job. We never talked about these things, never questioned them.”

### “LIKE CALLING FOR AN ESCORT”

Cheerleaders are sent to hospitals, birthday parties, bar mitzvahs, office parties and supermarkets to help promote their teams. Often, they are sent without security.

A former cheerleader for the Washington Redskins recalled one especially unusual assignment.

Several years ago, she said, she and five teammates were told to drive to an address the Redskins had given them. To their surprise, it was not a business — it was a house. Inside, there was no party, no charity event, or even a large gathering of people. There were seven men in their 40s who quickly sized up the cheerleaders.

“O.K., who's single and who's married?” said the homeowner, according to the former cheerleader.

The men were drinking and asked the women to join in, but they declined.



STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES

Cheerleaders say inappropriate comments and threats come from home and opposing fans alike. And if cheerleaders object? “You'd be dismissed,” said one.

Then the women did a two-minute dance for the men in the basement and spent the rest of the afternoon walking around the house or having awkward conversations with the men while they were watching an N.F.L. game on TV.

The way this cheerleader saw it, it was unfair that the team was making money off its cheerleaders who were paid so little. Someone just had to call the team and the managers would ask, “How many girls do you want for how many hours?” and “Do you want the girls to dance, or not?”

“It's literally like you're calling for an escort,” the cheerleader said, recalling that she was paid \$100 for a promotional event, while the team would charge \$1,200 per cheerleader.

“It's not like somebody grabbed my boobs, and nobody told me, ‘Have sex with me right now.’ It's a lot more nuanced,” the former Redskins cheerleader said. “It's like every other abuse dynamic. You don't feel like you have the liberty to say, ‘I'd prefer not to do this.’ In turn, you're treated poorly and are paid hardly anything and are ragged on in rehearsal for not wearing the right lipstick. The whole thing is so messed up.”

In an email statement, a spokesman for the Redskins said: “The safety and security of all of our employees, including our cheerleaders, is now and has always been a top priority for our organization.”

“We are unaware of any reports of any promotional appearances that made Redskins cheerleaders uncomfortable. We take such reports very seriously and will continue to take all steps necessary to ensure the safety and security of our cheerleaders.”

### UNCOMFORTABLE INTERACTIONS

For many cheerleaders, intoxicated fans at games create the most objectionable situations.

Bailey Davis, a former cheerleader for the New Orleans Saints, initiated the recent reckoning in cheerleading when she filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency that enforces civil rights laws, over her treatment by the Saints.

“They tell us that we're celebrities and to present ourselves well, but then they throw us out there with these drunk fans,” she said.

She added: “You have to take pictures with anyone who asks. You can't refuse a picture with anyone. If there's a sloppy drunk who you just want to put his hands on you, you just have to deal with it and do it.”

Like others, she became accustomed to nasty comments and unsolicited touches.

Sara Blackwell, a lawyer representing Ms. Davis in her discrimination case against the Saints, agreed that teams and leagues might argue that women did not complain. “The response would be that you bullied them into not complaining,” Ms. Blackwell said.

In response to Ms. Davis's claims, the Saints said in an emailed statement: “The Saints organization does not tolerate harassment of any kind. The Saints want all of its employees to be treated with dignity and respect by not only

their co-workers, but also by the fans. Ms. Davis is correct that the Saints want their employees to be good ambassadors for the organization and the community.

“At no time during the eight months that Ms. Davis worked for the Saints did she ever report that she believed she had been harassed by anyone.”

Many cheerleaders, including one who recently worked for the Cleveland Cavaliers, said that most fans were respectful and that uncomfortable situations just came with the territory.

The Cavs cheerleaders, known as the Cavalier Girls, had security guards with them when they were posted at entrances to the arena, where they posed for photos or signed autographs. The Cavs cheerleader said there were times when male fans would put their arms around her waist and, because she was wearing a two-piece, would touch her bare skin. She would cringe a bit, even more so when some fans would give her waist a squeeze, she said, but she never felt threatened.

“I remember getting my butt grabbed by a 12-year-old who should've been kicked out of the game,” she said. “For whatever reason, fans think they own you.”

“I was 19 and was just a baby,” she added, saying she was most upset with what she considered management's disrespectful and substandard treatment

“We were walking by, waving and smiling, and one guy caught my eye. He looked at me and said, ‘I hope you get raped!’”

of the Cavs Girls. “If I had more world experience, there's no way I would've put up with all that. Now that I'm working in a professional environment, I realize that the way we were treated there was absolutely illegal.”

In an email, the Cavaliers said: “All of our game entertainment team members should be able to perform and engage with our fans without enduring harassment of any kind or inappropriate interaction or contact. We take that very seriously, have training elements and procedures in place to support their well-being when interacting with fans and will always strive to maintain a positive and secure environment for them.”

A spokesman for the N.B.A. said, “Team dancers are valued members of the N.B.A. family and, as for all employees, we work with our teams to ensure they're provided safe, respectful and welcoming workplaces.”

Lacy Thibodeaux, who cheered for the Raiders in 2013 and 2014, said cheerleaders were taught to hold their pompoms in a way that would block fans from touching their bare waists or if fans' hands “got too close to our butts” during photos. The cheerleaders were empowered to walk away from a situation in which they felt that fans were going too far.

“If someone got too handsy, we could just turn around and leave,” she said. “But we still had to be gracious and say, ‘Thank you very much.’”



# The murky perils of quitting antidepressants

Long-term use is soaring, partly because withdrawal symptoms are so severe

BY BENEDICT CAREY  
AND ROBERT GEBELOFF

Victoria Toline would hunch over the kitchen table, steady her hands and draw a bead of liquid from a vial with a small dropper. It was a delicate operation that had become a daily routine — extracting ever tinier doses of the antidepressant she had taken for three years, on and off, and was desperately trying to quit.

“Basically that’s all I have been doing — dealing with the dizziness, the confusion, the fatigue, all the symptoms of withdrawal,” said Ms. Toline, 27, of Tacoma, Wash. It took nine months to wean herself from the drug, Zoloft, by taking increasingly smaller doses.

“I couldn’t finish my college degree,” she said. “Only now am I feeling well enough to try to re-enter society and go back to work.”

Long-term use of antidepressants is surging in the United States, according to a new analysis of federal data by The New York Times. Some 15.5 million Americans have been taking the medications for at least five years. The rate has almost doubled since 2010, and more than tripled since 2000.

Nearly 25 million adults, like Ms. Toline, have been on antidepressants for at least two years, a 60 percent increase since 2010.

The drugs have helped millions of people ease depression and anxiety, and are widely regarded as milestones in psychiatric treatment. Many, perhaps most, people stop the medications without significant trouble. But the rise in longtime use is also the result of an unanticipated and growing problem: Many who try to quit say they cannot because of withdrawal symptoms they were never warned about.

Some scientists long ago anticipated that a few patients might experience withdrawal symptoms if they tried to stop — they called it “discontinuation syndrome.” Yet withdrawal has never been a focus of drug makers or government regulators, who felt antidepressants could not be addictive and did far more good than harm.

The drugs initially were approved for short-term use, following studies typically lasting about two months. Even today, there is little data about their effects on people taking them for years, although there are now millions of such users.

Across much of the developed world, long-term prescriptions are on the rise. Prescription rates have doubled over the past decade in Britain, where health officials in January began a nationwide review of prescription drug dependence and withdrawal.

In New Zealand, where prescriptions are also at historic highs, a survey of long-term users found that withdrawal was the most common complaint, cited by three-quarters of long-term users.

Yet the medical profession has no good answer for people struggling to stop taking the drugs — no scientifically backed guidelines, no means to determine who’s at highest risk, no way to tailor appropriate strategies to individuals.

“Some people are essentially being parked on these drugs for convenience’s sake because it’s difficult to tackle the issue of taking them off,” said Dr. Anthony Kendrick, a professor of primary care at the University of Southampton in Britain.

With government funding, he is developing online and telephone support to help practitioners and patients. “Should we really be putting so many people on antidepressants long-term when we don’t know if it’s good for them, or whether they’ll be able to come off?” he said.

Antidepressants were originally considered a short-term treatment for episodic mood problems, to be taken for six to nine months: enough to get through a crisis, and no more.

Later studies suggested that “maintenance therapy” — longer-term and often open-ended use — could prevent a return of depression in some patients, but those trials very rarely lasted more than two years.

Once a drug is approved, physicians in the United States have wide latitude to prescribe it as they see fit. The lack of long-term data did not prevent doctors from placing tens of millions of Americans on antidepressants indefinitely.

## SHARP RISE

The Times analyzed data gathered since 1999 as part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Over all, more than 34.4 million adults took antidepressants in 2013-14, up from 13.4 million in the 1999-2000 survey.

Adults over 45, women and whites are more likely to take antidepressants than younger adults, men and minorities. But usage is increasing in older adults across the demographic spectrum.

White women over 45 account for about one-fifth of the adult population in the United States but account for 41 percent of antidepressant users, up from about 30 percent in 2000, the analysis found. Older white women account for 58 percent of those on antidepressants long term.

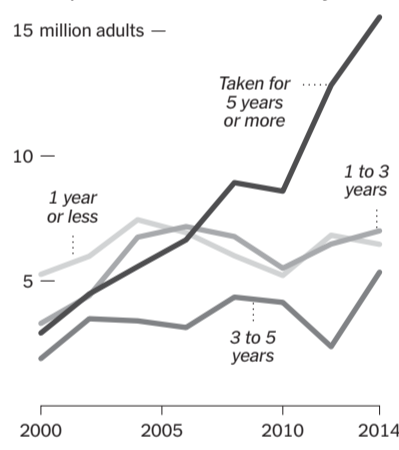
“What you see is the number of long-term users just piling up year after year,” said Dr. Mark Olfson, a professor



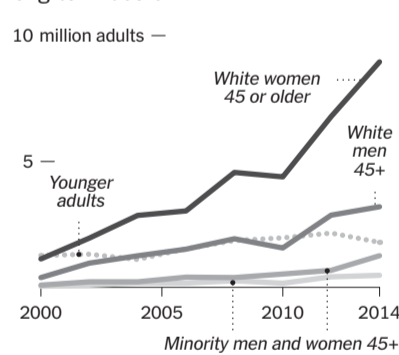
Victoria Toline slowly decreased her dosage of the antidepressant Zoloft over nine months, suffering dizziness, confusion and fatigue as she tried to wean herself from the drug.

RUTH FREEMAN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

**NEARLY 7 PERCENT** of American adults have taken prescription antidepressants for at least five years.



**WHITE WOMEN AGE 45 OR OLDER** account for 58 percent of those long-term users.



Source: National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey THE NEW YORK TIMES

of psychiatry at Columbia University. Dr. Olfson and Dr. Ramin Mojtabai, a professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University, assisted The Times with the analysis.

Still, it is not at all clear that everyone on an open-ended prescription should come off it. Most doctors agree that a subset of users benefit from a lifetime prescription, but disagree over how large the group is.

Dr. Peter Kramer, a psychiatrist and author of several books about antidepressants, said that while he generally works to wean patients with mild-to-moderate depression off medication, some report that they do better on it.

“There is a cultural question here,

which is how much depression should people have to live with when we have these treatments that give so many a better quality of life,” Dr. Kramer said.

Antidepressants are not harmless; they commonly cause emotional numbing, sexual problems like a lack of desire or erectile dysfunction, and weight gain. Long-term users report in interviews a creeping unease that is hard to measure: Daily pill-popping leaves them doubting their own resilience, they say.

“We’ve come to a place, at least in the West, where it seems every other person is depressed and on medication,” said Edward Shorter, a historian of psychiatry at the University of Toronto. “You do have to wonder what that says about our culture.”

Patients who try to stop taking the drugs often say they cannot. In a recent survey of 250 long-term users of psychiatric drugs — most commonly antidepressants — about half who would down their prescriptions rated the withdrawal as severe. Nearly half who tried to quit could not do so because of these symptoms.

In another study of 180 longtime antidepressant users, withdrawal symptoms were reported by more than 130 patients. Almost half said they felt addicted to antidepressants.

“Many were critical of the lack of information given by prescribers with regard to withdrawal,” the authors concluded. “And many also expressed disappointment or frustration with the lack of support available in managing withdrawal.”

Drug manufacturers do not deny that some patients suffer harsh symptoms when trying to wean themselves from antidepressants.

“The likelihood of developing discontinuation syndrome varies by individuals, the treatment and dosage prescribed,” said Thomas Biegi, a spokesman for Pfizer, maker of antidepressants like Zoloft and Effexor. He urged that patients work with their doctors to wean themselves by taking shrinking doses.

The drug maker Eli Lilly, referring to two popular antidepressants, said in a statement the company “remains committed to Prozac and Cymbalta and their safety and benefits, which have been repeatedly affirmed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.” The company de-

clined to say how common withdrawal symptoms are.

## NAUSEA AND “BRAIN ZAPS”

As far back as the mid-1990s, leading psychiatrists recognized withdrawal as a potential problem for patients taking modern antidepressants.

At a 1997 conference in Phoenix sponsored by the drug maker Eli Lilly, a panel of academic psychiatrists produced a lengthy report detailing the symptoms, like balance problems, insomnia and anxiety, that went away when the pills were restarted.

But soon the topic faded from the scientific literature. And government regulators did not focus on these symptoms, seeing rampant depression as the larger problem.

“What we were concentrating on was recurrent depression,” said Dr. Robert Temple, deputy director for clinical science in the F.D.A.’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. “If people’s heads went through the roof from withdrawal, I think we would have seen it.”

Drug makers had little incentive to mount costly studies of how best to quit their products, and government funding has not filled the research gap.

As a result, the drugs’ labels, on which doctors and many patients rely, provide very little guidance for ending a prescription safely.

“The following adverse events were reported at an incidence of 1 percent or greater,” reads the label for Cymbalta, an antidepressant. It lists headaches, fatigue and insomnia, among other reactions in patients trying to stop.

The few studies of antidepressant withdrawal that have been published suggest that it is harder to get off some medications than others. This is because of differences in the drugs’ half-life — the time it takes the body to clear the medication once the pills are stopped.

Brands with a relatively short half-life, like Effexor and Paxil, appear to cause more withdrawal symptoms more quickly than those that stay in the system longer, like Prozac.

In one of the earliest published withdrawal studies, researchers at Eli Lilly had people taking Zoloft, Paxil or Prozac stop the pills abruptly, for about a week. Half of those on Paxil experienced serious dizziness; 42 percent suffered con-

**“A year and a half after stopping, I’m still having problems. I’m not me right now; I don’t have the creativity, the energy.”**

fusion; and 39 percent, insomnia.

Among patients who stopped taking Zoloft, 38 percent had severe irritability; 29 percent experienced dizziness; and 23 percent, fatigue. The symptoms appeared soon after people were taken off the drugs and resolved once they resumed taking the pills. Those on Prozac, by contrast, experienced no initial spike in symptoms when they stopped, but this result was not surprising. It takes Prozac several weeks to wash out of the body entirely, so one week’s interruption is not a test of withdrawal.

In a study of Cymbalta, another Eli Lilly drug, people in withdrawal experienced two to three symptoms on average. The most common were dizziness, nausea, headache and paresthesia — electric-shock sensations in the brain that many people call brain zaps. Most of these symptoms lasted longer than two weeks.

“The truth is that the state of the science is absolutely inadequate,” said Dr. Derelie Mangin, a professor in the department of family medicine at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

“We don’t have enough information about what antidepressant withdrawal entails, so we can’t design proper tapering approaches.”

In interviews, dozens of people who had experienced antidepressant withdrawal recounted similar stories: The drugs relieved mood problems, at first, but after a year or so, it wasn’t clear whether the medication was having any effect.

Yet quitting was far harder, and stranger, than expected.

“It took me a year to come completely off — a year,” said Dr. Tom Stockmann, 34, a psychiatrist in London, who experienced lightheadedness, confusion, vertigo and brain zaps, when he stopped taking Cymbalta after 18 months.

To wind the prescription down safely, he began opening the capsules, removing a few beads of the drug each day in order to taper off.

“I knew some people experienced withdrawal reactions,” Dr. Stockmann

said, “but I had no idea how hard it would be.”

Robin Hempel, 54, a mother of four who lives near Concord, N.H., began taking Paxil 21 years ago for severe premenstrual syndrome on the recommendation of her gynecologist.

“He said, ‘Oh, this little pill is going to change your life,’” Ms. Hempel said. “Well, did it ever?”

The drug blunted her PMS symptoms, she said, but also caused her to gain 40 pounds in nine months. Quitting was nearly impossible — at first, her doctor tapered her prescription too quickly, she said.

She succeeded in 2015 by tapering over months to 10 milligrams, then five, down from 20 milligrams and “finally all the way down to particles of dust,” after which she was bedridden for three weeks with severe dizziness, nausea and crying spells, she said.

“Had I been told the risks of trying to come off this drug, I never would have started it,” Ms. Hempel said. “A year and a half after stopping, I’m still having problems. I’m not me right now; I don’t have the creativity, the energy. She — Robin — is gone.”

At least some of the most pressing questions about antidepressant withdrawal will soon have an answer.

Dr. Mangin, of McMaster University, led a research team in New Zealand that recently completed the first rigorous, long-term trial of withdrawal.

The team recruited more than 250 people in three cities who had been taking Prozac long-term and were interested in tapering off. Two-thirds of the group had been on the drug for more than two years, and a third for more than five years. The team randomly assigned the participants to one of two regimens. Half tapered slowly, receiving a capsule each day that, over a period of a month or longer, contained progressively lower amounts of the active drug.

The other half believed they were tapering but got capsules that in fact maintained their regular dosage. The researchers followed both groups for a year and a half. They are still working through the data, and their findings will be published in the coming months.

For now, people who haven’t been able to quit just by following a doctor’s advice are turning to a method called microtapering: making tiny reductions over a long period of time, nine months, a year, two years — whatever it takes.

“The tapering rates given by doctors are often way, way too fast,” said Laura Delano, who had severe symptoms while trying to get off several psychiatric drugs. She has created a website, The Withdrawal Project, that provides resources on psychiatric drug withdrawal, including a guide to tapering off.

Dr. Stockmann, the London psychiatrist, wasn’t entirely convinced withdrawal was a serious issue before he went through it himself. His microtapering strategy finally worked.

“There was a really significant moment,” he recalled. “I was walking down near my house, past a forest, and I suddenly realized I could feel the full range of emotions again. The birds were louder, the colors more vivid — I was happy.”

“I have seen lots of people — patients — not being believed, not taken seriously when they complained about this,” he added. “That has to stop.”



Robin Hempel began taking the antidepressant Paxil 21 years ago for severe premenstrual syndrome. After quitting the drug in 2015, she was bedridden for three weeks.

CHERYL SENTER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



Dr. Anthony Kendrick has questioned whether so many people should be put on antidepressants long term when it isn’t known “whether they’ll be able to come off.”

ALEX ATACK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



## WELL



JEFF BRASS/GETTY IMAGES

Competitors help themselves to bananas after running a marathon in Auckland, New Zealand. The carbohydrates in bananas help in prolonged exertion and recovery.

## Bananas vs. sports drinks

### Fitness

GRETCHEN REYNOLDS

A banana might reasonably replace sports drinks for those of us who rely on carbohydrates to fuel exercise and speed recovery, according to a new study comparing the cellular effects of carbohydrates consumed during sports.

It found that a banana, with its all-natural package, provides anti-inflammatory and other benefits for athletes comparable to or greater than those from sports drinks. But there may be a downside, and it involves bloating.

For decades, athletes and their advisers have believed, and studies have confirmed, that eating or drinking carbohydrates during prolonged exertion can enable someone to continue for longer or at higher intensities and recover more quickly afterward than not eating during the workout.

The carbohydrates rapidly fuel muscles, reducing some of the physiological stress of working out and prompting less inflammation afterward.

The most digestible and portable form of carbohydrates is sugar, whether glucose, fructose or sucrose, and for athletes, this sugar frequently is provided through sports drinks.

But sports drinks are not a substance found in the natural world. They

are manufactured and can contain flavorings and chemicals that some people might wish to avoid.

So a few years ago, researchers at the North Carolina Research Campus of Appalachian State University in Kannapolis, began to wonder about fruits as a healthier alternative to sports drinks during exercise.

Most fruits, including bananas, are sugary and high in fructose; fructose, after all, means fruit sugar. But they also contain other natural substances that might have an impact on sport performance and recovery, the researchers speculated.

In a preliminary experiment, published in 2012, the scientists found that cyclists performed better during a strenuous bike ride if they had either a banana or a sports drink compared to only water. They also developed lower levels of inflammation in their bodies afterward.

But that study had left many questions unanswered, particularly about whether and how the carbohydrates might be aiding athletes' recovery.

So for the new experiment, which was published last month in PLOS One, the researchers decided to use more sophisticated techniques to track molecular changes inside cyclists' bodies.

(Dole Foods, which sells bananas, partially funded both studies. According to a statement in the study, the company did not have any involvement in "the study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish or preparation of the manuscript.")

The researchers asked 20 competitive cyclists, male and female, to complete a grueling 47-mile (75-kilometer) bike ride on several occasions at the campus performance lab. During one ride, they drank only water. In the others, they had water, but also eight ounces of a sports drink or about half of a banana every 30 minutes.

The scientists drew blood before the workout, immediately after, and at several additional points, stretching out to 45 hours later.

They then checked the blood for markers of inflammation and levels of hundreds of molecules, known as metabolites, that can change during and after exertion and signify

how much stress the body feels.

They also isolated blood cells to look at the activity of certain genes involved in inflammation.

As they had expected, the scientists found that swallowing only water resulted in relatively high levels of inflammatory markers in the riders' blood. These markers were much lower if the cyclists had consumed fruit or the sports drink.

The volunteers also showed less-stressed metabolite profiles if they had had carbohydrates during their rides, whether those calories had come from a bottle or a banana.

But there were differences in the activity of some genes. In particular,

the scientists found that the riders' blood cells produced less of a genetic precursor of an enzyme known as COX-2 if they had eaten bananas during their workout. This effect was not seen if they had drunk the sports drink or only water.

The COX-2 enzyme prompts the production of prostaglandins, which, in turn, intensify inflammation. Less of the genetic precursor in cells after a workout should mean less COX-2 and reduced inflammation, says David Nieman, the director of the human performance lab at Appalachian State University and the study's lead author.

He points out that anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen work by inhibiting COX-2, but, until now, researchers had not considered that bananas might perform comparably.

How the fruit manages to affect the cells' gene expression after exercise is still not known, however, he says.

He and his colleagues also do not know whether half of a banana every 30 minutes is the ideal amount of the fruit during exertion. It provided as many carbohydrates as in a cup of the sports drink, it also resulted in "quite a bit of bloating," he says.

He and his colleagues plan to explore those issues in future studies and also look into the effects of other fruits. "Dates have even more sugar than bananas," Dr. Nieman says.

In the meantime, he says, for exercisers who might prefer a natural, inexpensive and neatly packaged alternative to sports drinks, "bananas look pretty good."

## Pluses and minuses of a calcium scan

### Personal Health

JANE E. BRODY

My brother returned from a calcium scan of his heart a few years ago with the happy news that his coronary arteries were free of hardened plaque that could suggest serious underlying heart disease.

Although the test was not covered by insurance, he thought the hundreds of dollars it cost at the time were well worth it. He is a negligence lawyer who was then nearing age 70. The result was a great relief, given his age, stress-filled profession, a not always heart-healthy diet and our family history. Three male blood relatives, including our father and grandfather, had suffered heart attacks in their 50s, and all three had succumbed to heart disease by their early 70s.

Fortunately, my brother did not assume that calcium-free arteries meant he could throw caution to the winds, eat anything he wanted and forget about exercise, controlling his weight and taking medication to keep his blood pressure and cholesterol within healthy limits.

I do wonder, however, if a clean score on a calcium scan prompts some people to ignore well-established measures to protect their hearts and blood vessels. As Dr. John Mandrola wrote in a Medscape commentary in February after President Trump's physical exam, "Will knowing he has coronary calcium, which is present in about 85 percent of white men his age, lead to better cardiac health?" Or will he and countless others continue to dine on cheeseburgers and fries loaded with saturated fat and calories?

The cost of a coronary calcium scan, though still not covered by insurance, has come down significantly — to about \$100, in some cases — and could be of great value for millions of aging people at risk of life-threatening heart disease. It is one of two currently popular noninvasive X-ray techniques to assess cardiac risk and help determine who could benefit from treatments to ward off a crippling or fatal heart attack. The other test, a CT angiogram, is usually covered by insurance in the United States but is most often done only when other tests or symptoms suggest possible blockages in the arteries that feed the heart.

A cardiac calcium scan is a specialized type of low-dose X-ray that highlights calcium deposits in the plaque that can line and clog arteries feeding the heart. The more calcium, the more plaque a person is likely to have and the greater the risk of a blockage that can precipitate a heart attack if a piece of plaque breaks loose. The procedure, multi-slice computerized tomography, does not require that a dye be injected into the bloodstream to visualize the coronary arteries, though the findings are less precise than those from a CT angiogram, which requires a dye.

A calcium scan is most useful to assess patients considered to be at moderate risk of heart disease, as well as those whose risk is uncertain. Someone who has 5 percent to 7.5 percent chance of suffering a heart attack in the next 10 years, based on standard risk factors like age, gender, race, cholesterol level, blood pressure, smoking behavior and the presence of diabetes, is considered to be at moderate risk. The scan can also be helpful for patients deemed at low risk but with a

family history of heart attack at a relatively young age, as in the case of my brother.

Dr. Mandrola, a cardiac electrophysiologist at Baptist Health in Louisville, Ky., recently reviewed the main benefits and limitations of a cardiac calcium scan. He pointed out that the accepted nonmedical way of assessing a person's risk of a heart attack — based on standard risk factors — is imprecise and often overestimates the risk of underlying heart disease, although it is frequently used to decide whether the patient should be taking medication, like a statin to lower cholesterol.

But when findings on a calcium scan are combined with the presence of these traditional risk factors, the result gives a clearer picture of a person's risk of suffering a heart attack in the next decade. Also, if the calcium score is zero, it might mean the person can safely skip taking a statin or other heart-protective medication.

On the other hand, Dr. Mandrola suggested, if the scan shows calcium deposits, it might motivate some people "to make healthy lifestyle changes." As shown in one analysis of six studies involving 11,000 patients, those told they had coronary calcium were two to three times more likely than those with zero calcium to start taking a baby aspirin or a drug to lower cholesterol or reduce blood pressure and to adopt heart-saving behaviors like quitting smoking or exercising more.

But measuring coronary calcium is not a surefire indication of a person's risk. For one thing, the test measures arterial plaque that is hardened and firmly attached to the lining of coronary vessels. It does not measure the soft plaque that can rupture and travel through the coronary circulation until it reaches a narrowing it cannot pass, leading to a heart attack or stroke.

Dr. Udo Hoffmann, a radiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston, told me, "Coronary calcium does indicate the extent of coronary disease. If there's a lot of calcium, there's likely a lot of atherosclerosis in general and a greater chance of a seriously narrowed artery or plaque that is vulnerable to rupture." However, he said, even a person with no coronary calcium and very little atherosclerosis could still have a small area that can spell future trouble.

In other words, having zero coronary calcium is not a license to ignore well-established cardiac risk factors like elevated cholesterol and blood pressure, smoking, excessive weight and a sedentary lifestyle. "It's not a ticket to be reckless, but it can help reduce a person's anxiety about their risk of a heart attack," Dr. Hoffmann said. "The calcium score is a risk assessment tool, helpful in tailoring medical therapy, diet and exercise."

There is still no definitive evidence from randomized controlled clinical trials to show that patients with elevated calcium scores who are treated to lower their risk actually experience a reduced rate of cardiac events. Researchers at the Wake Forest School of Medicine in North Carolina have calculated that it would require a costly trial of about 30,000 people deemed to be at a low-intermediate risk of a future heart attack to show such a benefit.

## A perplexing and painful condition linked to marijuana use

BY RONI CARYN RABIN

By the time Thomas Hodorowski made the connection between his marijuana habit and the bouts of pain and vomiting that left him incapacitated every few weeks, he had been to the emergency room dozens of times, tried anti-nausea drugs, anti-anxiety medications and antidepressants, endured an upper endoscopy procedure and two colonoscopies, seen a psychiatrist and had his appendix and gallbladder removed.

The only way to get relief for the nausea and pain was to take a hot shower.

He often stayed in the shower for hours at a time and could be in and out of the shower for days.

When the hot water ran out, "the pain was unbearable, like somebody was wringing my stomach out like a washcloth," said the 28-year-old, who works as a production and shipping assistant and lives outside Chicago.

It was nearly 10 years before a doctor finally convinced him the diagnosis was cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome, or C.H.S., a condition that causes cyclic vomiting in heavy marijuana users and can be cured by quitting marijuana.

Until recently, the syndrome was thought to be uncommon or even rare. But as marijuana use has increased, emergency room physicians say they have been seeing a steady flow of patients with the telltale symptoms, especially in states where marijuana has been decriminalized and patients are more likely to divulge their drug use to physicians.

"After marijuana was legalized in Col-

orado, we had a doubling in the number of cases of cyclic vomiting syndrome we saw," many of which were probably related to marijuana use, said Dr. Cecilia J. Sorensen, an emergency room doctor at University of Colorado Hospital at the Anschutz medical campus in Aurora who has studied the syndrome.

"C.H.S. went from being something we didn't know about and never talked about to a very common problem over the last five years," said Dr. Eric Lavonas, director of emergency medicine at Denver Health and a spokesman for the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Now a new study, based on interviews with 2,127 adult emergency room patients under 50 at Bellevue, a large public hospital in New York City, found that of the 155 patients who said they smoked marijuana at least 20 days a month, 51 heavy users said they had during the past six months experienced nausea and vomiting that were specifically relieved by hot showers.

Extrapolating from those findings, the authors estimated that up to 2.7 million of the 8.3 million Americans known to smoke marijuana on a daily or near-daily basis may suffer from at least occasional bouts of C.H.S.

"The big news is that it's not a couple of thousand people who are affected — it's a couple million people," said Dr. Joseph Habboushe, an assistant professor of emergency medicine at New York University Langone/Bellevue Medical Center and lead author of the new paper, published in Basic & Clinical Pharmacology & Toxicology.



JOSHUA LOFT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Thomas Hodorowski quit smoking marijuana after learning it was the cause of his pain and nausea. But not before he had his appendix and gallbladder removed.

Others questioned the one-in-three figure, however. Paul Armentano, the deputy director for the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), said that even with more widespread use of marijuana, "this phenomenon is comparatively rare and seldom is reported" and strikes only "a small percentage of people."

And several physicians who routinely prescribe medicinal marijuana for conditions ranging from chronic pain to epilepsy said they have not seen the cyclic vomiting syndrome in their pa-

tients, but noted that they typically prescribe compounds that are not designed to produce a high and contain very low amounts of the psychoactive ingredient THC.

Dr. Habboushe said doctors in other parts of the country may be unfamiliar with C.H.S. or mistake it for a psychiatric or anxiety-related syndrome. And even if they are aware of it, many regard it as a "rare, kind of funny disease," replete with anecdotes of patients who spend hours in the shower.

But the condition can be quite serious.

One 33-year-old military veteran who asked not to be identified by name described bouts lasting up to 12 hours in which he felt "like a puffer fish with sharp spikes was inflating and driving spikes into my spine from both sides. I've broken bones, and this blew it out of the water."

"I know patients who have lost their jobs, gone bankrupt from repeatedly seeking medical care and have been misdiagnosed for years," Dr. Habboushe said.

"Marijuana is probably safer than a lot of other things out there, but the discussion about it has been so politicized and the focus has been on the potential benefits, without looking rigorously at what the potential downside might be," he said. "No medication is free from side effects."

Patients often arrive at the hospital severely dehydrated from the combination of hot showers and the inability to keep food or liquids down, and that can lead to acute kidney injury, said Dr. Habboushe.

But since many patients develop the syndrome only after many years of smoking pot, they don't make the connection with their pot habit and have a hard time accepting the diagnosis.

The confusion is understandable, Dr. Sorensen said. "Marijuana is viewed as medicinal, and it's given to people with cancer and AIDS. People know it's used to help with nausea and stimulate the appetite, so it's difficult to get patients to accept that it may be causing their nausea and vomiting."

It's unclear why marijuana can

produce such discordant effects in some users. But Dr. Sorensen often tells patients that it's similar to developing an allergy to a favorite food.

Getting the right diagnosis often takes a long time. The average patient makes seven trips to the emergency room, sees five doctors and is hospitalized four times before a definitive diagnosis is made, running up approximately \$100,000 in medical bills, Dr. Sorensen's study found.

"They get really expensive workups, lots of CT scans and sometimes exploratory surgery" to rule out dangerous conditions like appendicitis or a bowel obstruction, Dr. Sorensen said. "At the end of the day they're told, 'You're smoking too much pot.'"

The symptoms of C.H.S. often do not respond to drug treatment, though some physicians have had success with the antipsychotic haloperidol (sold under the brand name Haldol) and with capsaicin cream.

The good news is that C.H.S. has a pretty simple cure: abstinence. Patients stop having pain and vomiting episodes when they quit smoking, experts say. And if they start smoking again, they are likely to have a recurrence.

Mr. Hodorowski said he quit smoking once he accepted that marijuana was the cause of his problems, but acknowledges he was in denial for a long time. Now he's telling his story so other people can learn from his experience.

"I hope they'll be honest with themselves so they don't have to go through what I've been through," he said. "I'm very lucky to have survived this."



# Business



IVAN PIERRE AGUIRRE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A plant in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. In Nafta talks, the White House has not significantly ceded ground on rules aimed at bringing manufacturing back to the United States.

## U.S. wants quick Nafta deal

WASHINGTON

But its reluctance to bend makes agreement unlikely by target early next month

BY ANA SWANSON

The Trump administration is pushing to reach a deal on the North American Free Trade Agreement by the beginning of May. But the timeline could be complicated by its refusal to budge from contentious proposals aimed at bringing manufacturing back to the United States.

The administration has not significantly softened its position on rules that automakers would need to meet to qualify for zero tariffs under Nafta, according to a summary of the American proposal reviewed by The New York Times. While the administration has removed a requirement about the percentage of a car that must be made in the United States, it has added other rules that North American automakers say could be costly and complicated to meet.

The proposal is throwing a wrinkle into recently revived talks with Canada and Mexico, which had begun to show signs of movement after months of stalled negotiations. After high-level talks concluded last week, officials on both sides see the administration's goal of announcing a deal in principle as



PETER POWERS/REUTERS

A steel plant in Hamilton, Ontario. Mr. Trump's Nafta negotiators want to require that 70 percent of certain auto parts made of steel and aluminum be made in North America.

early as this week as too ambitious.

Some in the administration had been pushing for an announcement to coincide with the president's trip to Peru this weekend to attend the Summit of the Americas, where President Trump was expected to appear alongside leaders from Canada and Mexico.

On Tuesday, the White House announced that the president was canceling his trip to focus on the escalating conflict in Syria. Now, negotiators say they are pushing to conclude the agreement by May.

Trump administration officials are eager to conclude negotiations quickly, largely because they must secure a deal by May to meet all of the necessary

deadlines to have their revised Nafta agreement approved by the current Republican-controlled Congress. Some trade advisers say the possibility of Democrats retaking the majority in the House in November's midterm elections could put congressional approval of Mr. Trump's Nafta deal at risk, given that many Democrats oppose Nafta.

Mexico is also facing a presidential election July 1 that could complicate talks by bringing a different political party into power. Trump administration trade advisers are also enmeshed in an escalating conflict with China that threatens to become a trade war.

On Monday, the president said the United States was "fairly close" on a

Nafta deal, but he also reiterated his threat to withdraw from the pact if a new agreement were not reached.

The administration's desire to quickly resolve Nafta could give Canada and Mexico more leverage. Trade experts say a Nafta deal seems more likely than it has in months, since the United States sees new urgency to conclude talks and is at least offering different proposals.

But the United States does not appear to be ceding much ground. Larger concessions will need to be made to reach a deal, observers say — and those could come in the final moments.

Antonio Ortiz-Mena, a former Mexican diplomat in the United States, said he believed a deal would be possible in the coming weeks if negotiators were prepared to compromise. But, he said, "I think the biggest threat to Nafta is the United States overplaying its hand and not being flexible enough."

The Nafta provision regarding automobiles has been among the most contentious, given Mr. Trump's focus on the car industry and its importance to the economies of all three nations.

American negotiators have dropped an earlier demand that half of the value of an automobile be made solely in the United States to qualify for Nafta's zero tariffs. Instead, they are asking for an unspecified percentage of each vehicle to be made by workers earning at least an average wage rate for the North American industry, to be recalculated each year. According to preliminary

NAFTA, PAGE 12

## Beijing not amused by start-up's apps

BEIJING

Government monitors expanding their role in censoring internet content

BY RAYMOND ZHONG

A Chinese start-up that appears to have mastered the art of keeping people glued to their smartphones also has a knack for something else: drawing the ire of China's censors.

The country's top media regulator has ordered the company, Bytedance, to shut down its app for sharing jokes and silly videos. Vulgar content on the Neihan Duanzi app had "caused strong dislike among internet users," a brief notice from the State Administration of Radio and Television said. The company was told to clean up its other platforms, too. The shutdown was only the latest blow for Bytedance, one of the world's most successful technology start-ups. Just a day earlier, its flagship app, a popular news aggregator called Jinri Toutiao, had been pulled from app stores for unspecified reasons.

And last week, Huoshan, the company's platform for sharing slice-of-life video clips, vanished from app stores after China's official television broadcaster rapped it for glorifying underage pregnancy.

In a statement posted Wednesday morning, Zhang Yiming, Bytedance's founder and chief executive, said he had spent the previous, sleepless night in deep reflection, gnawed by "a guilty conscience."

"Content had appeared that did not accord with core socialist values and was not a good guide for public opinion," Mr. Zhang wrote. "Over the past few years, we put more effort and resources toward expanding the business, and did not take enough measures to supervise our platform."

He added that Bytedance would expand its team for monitoring content to 10,000 people from 6,000 currently.

The company's travails show how the government in Beijing has broadened its restrictions on what people see and say on the internet. Regulators are increasingly suppressing content that they deem pornographic or in poor taste, and not merely material that touches on politically sensitive topics such as regime change or personal freedoms.

The authorities are also scrambling to keep up as a new wave of Chinese apps, many of them built around short, spontaneously recorded video clips or live streams, helps people communicate and express themselves in new and hard-to-supervise ways.

Bytedance — which investors valued at more than \$30 billion recently, putting it in the financial league of Airbnb or SpaceX — has assembled a large assortment of these buzzy new apps. And it has made no secret of its desire to dominate phone screens across the rest of the world, too.

The company says it uses artificial intelligence technology to figure out what users like, then makes sure they are fed more and more of it. Read a few articles on the trade spat between the United States and China, and soon your Toutiao

feed will be populated with news on international relations. Watch a bunch of stand-up comedy shows, and before long the app will suggest new comics who might appeal.

Bytedance has spent top dollar hiring engineers and software experts to fine-tune its recommendation technology.

At an event in Beijing last month, Mr. Zhang said he hoped that more than half of the company's users would come from outside China within the next three years.

At the moment, he said, one in 10 of its users was overseas.

First, though, the company needs to continue thriving in China. Bytedance's detractors say that salty, unwholesome material — the sort that has the Chinese government on edge these days — is exactly what the company's apps have specialized in, and is a major reason for its popularity.

"Will a cleaned-up Toutiao still have an edge?" said Neil Arora, an American investor who previously worked in venture capital in Beijing.

"Toutiao's strong team, refined algorithms and locked-in users may help it adapt," said Mr. Arora, who is not a Bytedance shareholder. "However, the bigger danger is that all news apps may lose out, with users pulling away from sanitized news feeds for entertainment elsewhere."

Hans Tung of GGV Capital, a venture firm that operates in both China and the United States and is a Bytedance shareholder, said he was confident the company would continue to add more types of material — not just the lowbrow kind — to its platforms. "The Toutiao we see today is not the Toutiao it will be five years from now," he said.

Toutiao aside, three other popular news apps — including one run by Tencent, the giant Chinese conglomerate — were also taken down from stores this week.

Another fast-growing video app, Kuaishou, was removed last week alongside Huoshan, and also for featuring videos made by teenage mothers. In response, Kuaishou's parent company said it would increase the size of its content-monitoring team to 5,000 from 2,000.

A posting from Kuaishou on one hiring website last week says the company is looking for people with bachelor's degrees or higher.

Candidates with "good political awareness" and "strong political sensitivity and discernment" are preferred. Being a member of the Communist Party or Communist Youth League is also a plus, the listing says.

Duanzi, Bytedance's now-shuttered humor app, trafficked in dirty jokes, goofy comedy sketches and well-worn but persistent gender stereotypes. One post that appeared on the app before it was closed down declared that the way to know that a man won't cheat on his wife is to place a beautiful woman before him — but the way to test a woman's fidelity is to try seducing her with a lot of money.

Even Bytedance's news app, Toutiao, featured plenty of edgy material that kept users coming back, sometimes reluctantly, for more. Xiao Lin, a 29-year-old programmer in Beijing, called the app "spiritual opium."

Karoline Kan contributed research.

## Xi promotes openness, but restrictions enclose him

BOAO, CHINA

BY ALEXANDRA STEVENSON

The International Monetary Fund chief praised his openness. A senior British banker lauded his authoritarian rule. The Philippine president said he loves the man.

President Xi Jinping of China took center stage at his country's annual Boao Forum for Asia this week welcomed by many in the global elite. He portrayed himself as a champion of free trade and world order, speaking to a group that included Ban Ki-moon, the former secretary general of the United Nations, and Pascal Lamy, the former director general of the World Trade Organization, and his words helped move markets around the world.

The forum, held every year on the southern Chinese island of Hainan, has long been a platform for China to portray itself as an economic powerhouse and regional leader.

But this year's meetings took on an elevated role, as a platform for Beijing, a result of a growing trade dispute between China and the United States. It was an opportunity for Mr. Xi to present himself as a foil to President Trump, who has rejected globalization and focused on an "America First" policy, targeting China, in particular, with a series of protectionist moves.

Plaudits from foreign leaders like President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore, as well as leading figures of the economic and diplomatic

world, have helped to cement this image. "I congratulate you, Xi Jinping, for this new life that you have identified, for the openness that you have celebrated and advocated," Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said in a speech, "for the innovation and inclusiveness that you have encouraged."

Yet even as Ms. Lagarde and Mr. Xi talked about that openness, forum attendees were unable to use Google, log on to Facebook or post to Twitter about the event unless they found a way to bypass China's army of internet censors. In fact, aspects of the forum stand in stark contrast with the many ways China remains closed and intransigent. Not only does the country restrict access to the internet, it has ramped up surveillance efforts in recent years. And while Chinese companies increasingly look overseas for new markets, foreign businesses routinely complain that they are unable to freely sell to customers in China.

To some of the more cynical China watchers, there is a sense that the pledges Mr. Xi offered to the forum, and the world, may amount to less than they appear.

While Mr. Xi's vow at the forum to ease tariffs and open China's markets cheered investors, it mostly repeated Beijing's earlier promises. His plan to lower charges on imported cars, an oft-cited complaint of Mr. Trump's, came with a new deadline — before the end of the year — but left out crucial details, like by how much they would fall. He promised to improve intellectual property safeguards, another longtime



JOSEPH CAMPBELL/REUTERS

Reporters watched President Xi Jinping of China delivering his speech at the Boao Forum for Asia. He pledged to ease tariffs and open the country's markets.

American frustration, as well.

The timing of reducing trade restrictions may not matter. China's tariffs in the automotive sector, for example, have already been successful in getting foreign companies to shift a large part of their supply chains to China, where they make most of the cars they sell in the country.

In this respect, Mr. Xi's gesture is seen as too little too late. For many years, Chinese officials have said that they would reduce protectionist policies in the automotive industry when they are ready to move into Western markets, to prevent the possibility of reciprocal tariffs.

There was no chance for American political maneuvering, though, as no United States officials were present.

On Wednesday, China's central bank governor, Yi Gang, also partly fleshed out how China plans to open the country's financial services sector to foreign investors.

Mr. Yi did not go into details, but he said that restrictions on foreign insurers and on foreign ownership of securities would be loosened by the end of June. He added that China planned to create a connected stock market between Shanghai and London that would allow investors in either market to invest in

the other, despite China's tight control on the flow of money over its border.

"There is clearly a lot of room for improvement when it comes to opening up and creating level playing fields between China and the rest of the world," said Hans-Paul Bürkner, chairman of the Boston Consulting Group.

In any case, such criticism was drowned out by a focus on celebrating Mr. Xi, who has progressively strengthened his control over the government and the economy. Just last month, for example, he did away with the term limits that had bound his predecessors for decades.

"China is wonderful for us in business," Gerry Grimstone, deputy chairman of the British bank Barclays, told Bloomberg television on the sidelines of the forum. "The fact that Xi is prepared to give such strong authoritarian guidance within the context of a market economy is great for companies like mine."

Many of the nearly 2,000 members of the news media — a figure cited by Boao organizers — who came to this sunny island for the three-day conference have dutifully carried similar messages of a strong and responsible China. Transcripts and state media clips were quickly available for those who missed out on any panels, and social media was overwhelmed with quotes from dignitaries and corporate executives about China's new position on the global stage.

Mr. Duterte helped to set the tone just before heading to Boao, telling reporters back home: "I need China. More than anybody else at this point, I need China."

Any criticism was drowned out by a focus on celebrating Mr. Xi.

He added: "I simply love Xi Jinping. He understood, he understands my problem and is willing to help, so I would say thank you, China."

Absent from the panels at Boao was much discussion about how trade tariffs could affect the Chinese economy. Instead, the message was that the United States would be left behind.

"China will open up more to the whole world, but if America carries on with its protectionist measures, the U.S. will be left out," said Li Daokui, director of the Center for China in the World Economy at Tsinghua University.

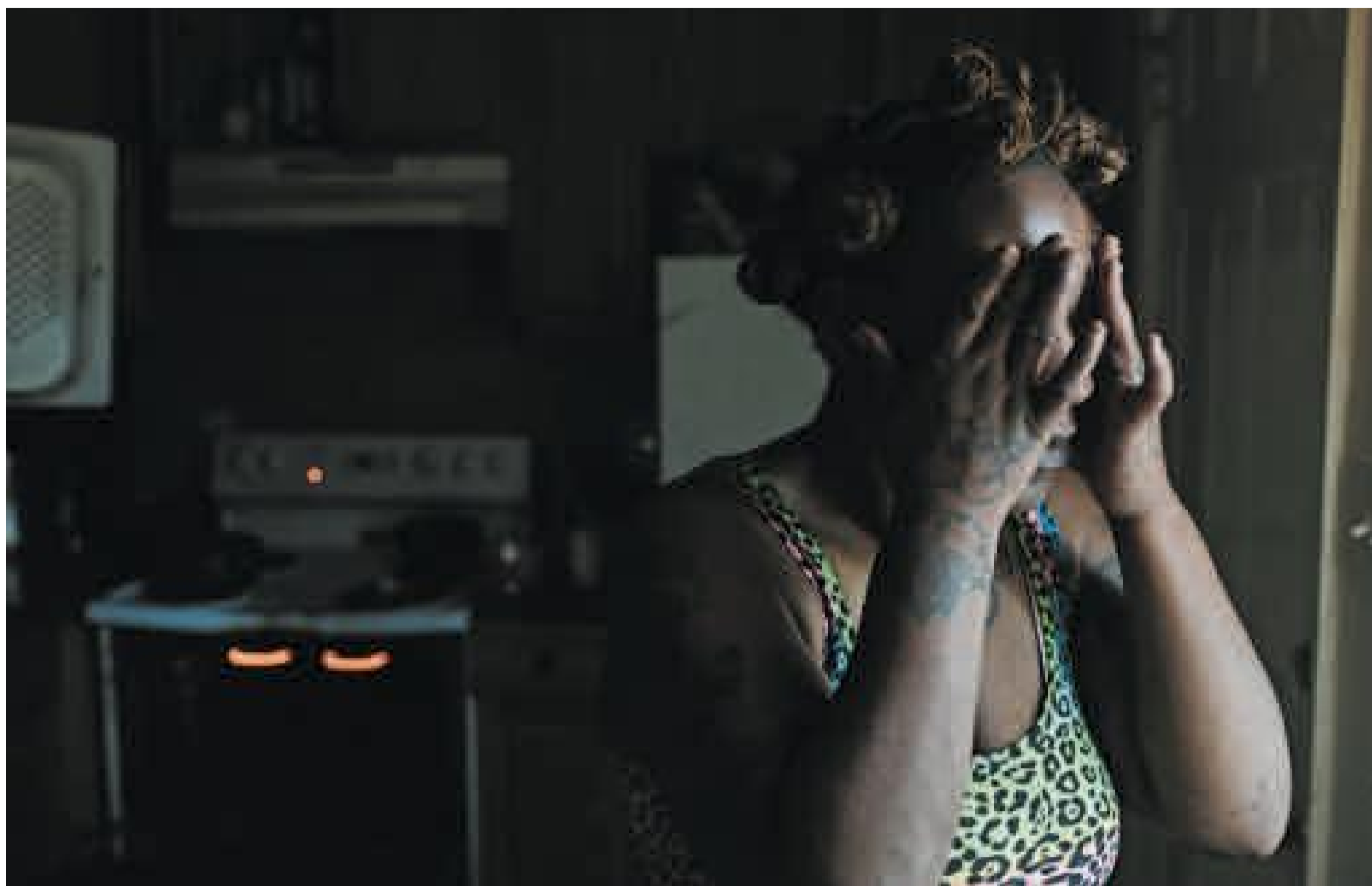
Should Mr. Trump follow through with threatened tariffs on \$150 billion worth of Chinese exports, there would be an impact on the Chinese economy, said Xu Sitao, chief China economist for Deloitte China. "In the end, the effect will be some tax on the economy," Mr. Xu said.

The telecommunications sector, and specifically telecom equipment, would bear the brunt of the tariffs, he added. If that spurred any concern among China's technology entrepreneurs, though, few expressed it at the forum. They broadly warned that closing borders would stifle innovation, but did not specify how a trade dispute with the United States could affect their bottom line.

Keith Bradsher contributed reporting from Beijing, and Cao Li contributed research.



## BUSINESS



MATT EICH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

After Whitney Gulley was evicted over \$569 in rent her landlord said she had not received, Ms. Gulley and her three children stayed with relatives, in a long-term motel and in a shelter for the homeless.

## Pattern of woe in evictions

### TheUpshot

BY EMILY BADGER  
AND QUOCTRUNG BUI

**RICHMOND, VA.** Before the first hearings of the day, a line starts to clog the lobby here at the John Marshall Courthouse. No cellphones are allowed, but many of the people who have been summoned don't learn that until they arrive. "Put it in your car," the sheriff's deputies suggest. That advice is no help to renters who took a bus. To make it inside, some tuck their phones in nearby bushes.

This courthouse handles every eviction in Richmond, a city with one of the highest eviction rates in the United States, according to new data covering dozens of states and compiled by a team led by the Princeton sociologist Matthew Desmond.

Two years ago, Mr. Desmond turned eviction into a national topic of conversation with "Evicted," a book that chronicled how poor families who lost their homes in Milwaukee sank ever deeper into poverty. It became a favorite among civic groups and on college campuses. Bill Gates and President Barack Obama named it among the best books they had read in 2017.

But for all the attention the problem began to draw, even Mr. Desmond could not say how widespread it was. Surveys of renters have tried to gauge displacement, but there is no government data tracking all eviction cases in America. Now that Mr. Desmond has been mining court records to build such a database, it's clear even in his incomplete national picture that evictions are more rampant in many places than what he saw in Milwaukee.

Mr. Desmond's team found records for nearly 900,000 eviction judgments in 2016, meaning landlords were given the legal right to remove at least one in 50 renter households in the communities covered by this data. That figure was one in 25 in Milwaukee and one in nine in Richmond. One in five renter households in Richmond were threatened with eviction in 2016. Their landlords began legal proceedings, even if those cases didn't end with a lasting mark on a tenant's record. For landlords, these numbers represent a financial drain of unpaid rent; for tenants, a looming risk of losing their homes.

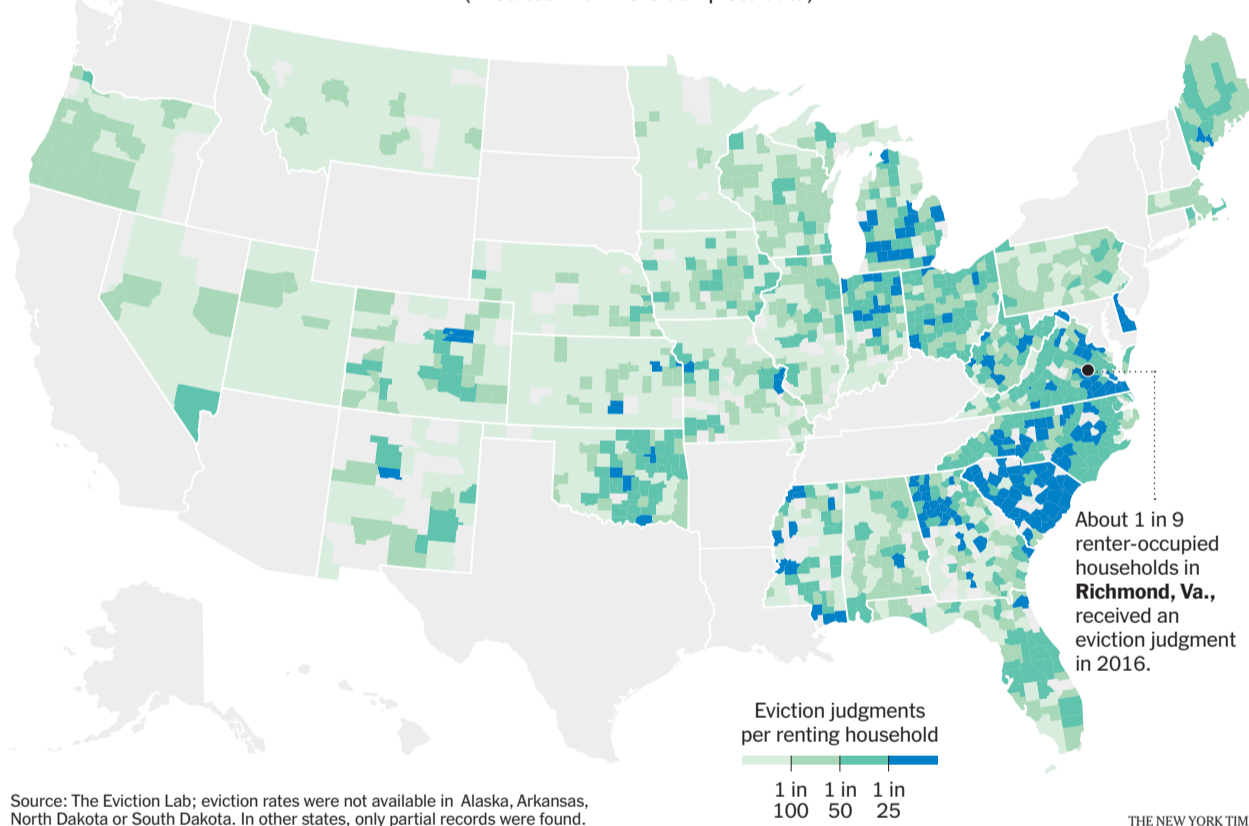
In Richmond, most of those evicted never made it to a courtroom. They didn't appear because the process seemed inscrutable, or because they didn't have lawyers to navigate it, or because they believed there is not much to say when you simply don't have the money. The median amount owed was \$686.

In the courtroom, cases sometimes brought in bulk by property managers are settled in minutes when defendants aren't there. "The whole system works on default judgments and people not showing up," said Martin Wegbreit, the director of litigation at the Central Virginia Legal Aid Society. "Imagine if every person asked for a trial. The system would bog down in a couple of months."

The consequences of what happens in court then spread. The Richmond public school system reroutes buses to follow children from apartments to homeless shelters to pay-by-the-week motels. City social workers coach residents on how to fill out job applications when they

### Where evictions are more likely

(In states with more complete data)



Source: The Eviction Lab; eviction rates were not available in Alaska, Arkansas, North Dakota or South Dakota. In other states, only partial records were found.



Candace Williams was evicted from this Richmond, Va., home. America's eviction epidemics are not in expensive cities, data suggest.

have no answer for the address line. Families lose their food stamps when they lose the permanent addresses where renewal notices are sent.

"An eviction isn't one problem," said Amy Woolard, the policy coordinator at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Richmond, the capital of Virginia. "It's like 12 problems."

The new data, from about 83 million court records going back to 2000, suggest that the most pervasive problems aren't necessarily in the most expensive regions. Evictions are accumulating across Michigan and Indiana. And several factors build on one another in Richmond: It's in the Southeast, where the poverty rates are high and the minimum wage is low; it's in Virginia, which lacks some tenant rights available elsewhere; and it's a city where many poor African-Americans live in low-quality housing with limited means of escaping it.

"This isn't by happenstance — this is quite intentional," said Levar Stoney, Richmond's mayor. A quarter of the

households in the city are poor, leaving many just a car repair or a hospital visit away from missing the rent check. But that poverty collides with a legal structure that responds to such moments swiftly. This is a state, Mr. Stoney and others say, that favors property owners, as it has since plantation days. And aid to the poor has been limited.

Mr. Desmond's eviction calculations are probably conservative: They include only households that touched the legal process, not those in which people moved with an informal warning. The data undercount places where eviction records can be sealed or are harder to collect. In his eviction rates, Mr. Desmond counts the moment when a court delivers a judgment, not when the sheriff shows up. Tenants often have left by that point.

In Richmond, property managers say that filing an eviction is their only recourse when tenants have not paid, and that they allow many to stay even after court judgments if they pay in full before

who works on property management issues and has written provisions in the state's landlord-tenant law. Efficiency is good public policy, he argues: Neither the landlord nor the tenant benefits from a drawn-out process that would burden renters with even more unpaid rent, late fees and attorney costs.

"The landlords are the victims because they're the ones not being paid when they're supposed to be paid," Mr. Dicks said. "What happens when you don't pay your car payment? They come and take your car. What happens when you don't pay your mortgage payment? They come and foreclose on your house."

Poor tenants in Richmond, however, are not ensured access to legal aid or shielded from steep rent increases, as in some cities. And they have no right, as tenants in some states do, to deduct their own repair costs from the rent.

Laura Lafayette, the chief executive of the regional real estate agents' association, fears that this system can become a "churning machine" that fails to distinguish between the tenant who made one mistake and the tenant who habitually flouts the lease.

After Whitney Gulley was evicted in 2014, she and her three children passed through many of the places people go when they carry an eviction on their record: They stayed with relatives, in a long-term motel, in a shelter for the homeless. They finally found an apartment willing to risk an evicted family — with a two-month deposit up front.

Ms. Gulley was evicted over \$569. Her landlord said she did not receive the check, and Ms. Gulley did not go to court because she said she believed she could not bring her children with her.

In that home she remembers happily, Ms. Gulley was in recovery from an addiction to pain pills. After the eviction, she said, she relapsed.

"I felt stripped down," she said. In the eviction she lost the writing journals she used as therapy. "It was like the only power and inspiration and the motivation had been taken out of me."

This part of the process — what happens after the eviction — isn't efficient for anyone. Landlords, too, have to turn over vacant apartments. And they face a rental pool full of potentially disqualified tenants.

The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, which was responsible for about 9 percent of the eviction judgments citywide in 2016, spends on average 50 days turning over apartments, costing the agency more in lost rent than unpaid rent cases are often worth. The median amount owed on a public housing eviction here was \$328.

The agency provides housing of last resort. But it is also a property manager. "I don't think you ever eliminate that tension," said Orlando Artze, the housing authority's interim chief executive.

That tension is built into public housing, just as it is embedded in a school system that struggles to serve transient children while producing well-educated ones, or in a court system that tries to offer due process but in mass quantity.

"A lot of people get caught up in: 'Oh, is it the tenant's fault? Oh, is it the landlord's fault?'" said Elora Raymond, an assistant professor at Clemson University who has studied eviction in Atlanta. "I think it really doesn't matter," she said. "Because this doesn't work. As a societal way of renting housing, this doesn't work."

## The spoiler that turned out to be a big prank

'Westworld' creators pull stunt on superfans, including those on Reddit

BY DANIEL VICTOR

It seemed as though Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy, the creators of HBO's "Westworld," had given up. No plot twist could ever escape the imagination of theorists, the element of surprise was dead, striving for a spoiler-free television show in 2018 was futile. Reddit had defeated them.

So, like a soon-to-be-exiled employee insisting "You can't fire me because I quit," they told their Reddit superfans on Monday that they would reveal the entire plot of the second season in a 25-minute video, released less than two weeks before its premiere on April 22.

You can't spoil me because I spoil you. The theory: If all the plot details were known ahead of time, the community's moderators could potentially squelch any open discussion of them, protecting the rest of the community from stumbling upon the truth. Everyone would get what they wanted.

If such a video were posted, it would upend every viewer expectation of secrecy and surprise in modern television serials. For those who chose to watch the video, spoilers wouldn't drip out through questionable sources — they'd be confirmed, complete and present top-of-mind throughout the viewing experience.

For those who chose to stay in the dark, every day on the internet would become a more challenging slalom. News sites earnestly dissected the decision to create the video and its implications, while Reddit commenters tied themselves in knots debating whether they'd watch.

The video opens with Jeffrey Wright, who plays Bernard and narrates the video, waking up on a beach next to a champagne flute. He says he can't remember how he got there or what happened, and he's questioned by park security.

There are bodies littering the beach, and a gunshot is fired.

Viewers would have no reason to think these aren't real plot details, the sort of innocuous teases you might find in any trailer.

Bernard rides a train to town — then, 90 seconds into the video, everyone freezes. The camera switches to Angela Sarafyan, who plays Clementine in the show, in front of a piano as a familiar riff starts to play.



JOHN P. JOHNSON/HBO

Anthony Hopkins in "Westworld." Reddit users predicted the first season's twists.

Evan Rachel Wood, who plays Dolores, appears and softly sings "We're no strangers to love."

Savvy viewers start to put together what's going on.

It's all just an elaborate Rickrolling. The 10-year-old internet prank — tricking people into clicking on a video of the British singer Rick Astley's 1987 hit song "Never Gonna Give You Up" — had its heyday but hasn't been much of a thing for a while now.

The song in the "Westworld" video is followed by 22 minutes of a dog sitting in front of a piano as the show's theme plays on a loop.

That the creators chose such an overdone stunt — Rickrolling is to internet pranks as "Is your refrigerator running?" is to jokes — deftly layers on another coating of indignity to the viewer. This was a lot of effort for the showrunners to go through just to pull a fast one on fans.

The misdirection also offered a look at how "Westworld" might interact with the rampant speculation on Reddit, where the line between theory and spoiler disintegrated as users predicted all of the major twists in the first season.

In a December 2016 interview, Mr. Nolan said that he loved the site and that "the theorizing was right on target." (His publicist did not return an email requesting comment.)

"I was only frustrated when quote-unquote theories, which at a certain point clearly became spoilers, wound up in headlines," he said. "When those theories have been taken out of a site like Reddit and put into headlines, that's a bummer."

The video left the "Westworld" community on Reddit a very confusing place. Many of the users were playing along, pretending that the video offered actual spoilers. Some of the commenters who hadn't watched the video appeared to have no idea they had merely avoided a Rick Astley cover, while those who had seen it were delighted to be in on the joke.



TIME, A HERMÈS OBJECT.



Publicis EtNous



Carré H  
Time, square like a Hermès scarf.



## BUSINESS

## Remember those friends you deleted?



Brian X. Chen

## TECH FIX

When I downloaded a copy of my Facebook data last week, I didn't expect to see much. My profile is sparse, I rarely post anything on the site, and I seldom click on ads. (I'm what some call a Facebook "lurker.")

But when I opened my file, it was like opening Pandora's box. With a few clicks, I learned that about 500 advertisers — many that I had never heard of, like Bad Dad, a motorcycle parts store, and Space Jesus, an electronics band — had my contact information, which could include my email address, phone number and full name. Facebook also had my entire phone book, including the number to ring my apartment buzzer. The social network had even kept a permanent record of the roughly 100 people I had deleted from my friends list over the last 14 years, including my exes.

There was so much that Facebook knew about me — more than I wanted to know. But after looking at the totality of what the Silicon Valley company had obtained about yours truly, I decided to try to better understand how and why my data had been collected and stored. I also sought to find out how much of my data could be removed.

How Facebook collects and treats personal information was central this week, when Mark Zuckerberg, the company's chief executive, answered questions in the United States Congress about data privacy and his responsibilities to users. During his testimony, Mr. Zuckerberg repeatedly said Facebook has a tool for downloading your data that "allows people to see and take out all the information they've put into Facebook."

But that's an overstatement. Most basic information, like my birthday, could not be deleted. More important, the pieces of data that I found objectionable, like the record of people I had unfriended, could not be removed from Facebook, either.

"They don't delete anything, and that's a general policy," said Gabriel Weinberg, the founder of DuckDuckGo, which offers internet privacy tools. He added that data was kept around to eventually help brands serve targeted ads.

Beth Gautier, a Facebook spokeswoman, put it this way: "When you delete something, we remove it so it's not visible or accessible on Facebook." She added: "You can also delete your account whenever you want. It may take up to 90 days to delete all backups of data on our servers."

## MORE DATA THAN WE THINK

When you download a copy of your Facebook data, you will see a folder containing multiple subfolders and files. The most important one is the "index" file, which is essentially a raw data set of your Facebook account, where you can click through your profile, friends list, timeline and messages, among other features.

One surprising part of my index file was a section called Contact Info. This

contained the 764 names and phone numbers of everyone in my iPhone's address book. Upon closer inspection, it turned out that Facebook had stored my entire phone book because I had uploaded it when setting up Facebook's messaging app, Messenger.

This was unsettling. I had hoped Messenger would use my contacts list to find others who were also using the app so that I could connect with them easily — and hold on to the relevant contact information only for the people who were on Messenger. Yet Facebook kept the entire list, including the phone numbers for my car mechanic, my apartment door buzzer and a pizzeria.

This felt unnecessary, though Facebook holds on to your phone book partly to keep it synchronized with your contacts list on Messenger and to help find people who newly sign up for the messaging service. I opted to turn off synchronizing and deleted all my phone book entries.

My Facebook data also revealed how little the social network forgets. For instance, in addition to recording the exact date I signed up for Facebook in 2004.

Facebook also kept a history of each time I had opened Facebook over the last two years, including which device and web browser I had used. On some days, it even logged my locations, as

when I was at a hospital two years ago or when I visited Tokyo last year.

Facebook keeps a log of this data as a security measure to flag suspicious logins from unknown devices or locations, similar to the way banks send a fraud alert when your credit card number is used in a suspicious location. This practice seemed reasonable, so I didn't try to purge this information.

But what bothered me was the data that I had explicitly deleted but that lingered in plain sight. On my friends list, Facebook had a record of "Removed Friends," a dossier of the 112 people I had removed, along with the date I had clicked the "Unfriend" button. Why should Facebook remember the people I've cut off from my life?

Facebook's explanation was not satisfying. The company said it might use my list of deleted friends so that those people did not appear in my feed with the feature "On This Day," which resurfaces memories from years past to help people reminisce.

## EYES EVERYWHERE

What Facebook retained about me isn't remotely as creepy as the sheer number of advertisers that have my information in their databases. I found this out when I clicked on the Ads section

in my Facebook file, which loaded a history of the dozen ads I had clicked on while browsing the social network.

Lower down, there was a section titled "Advertisers with your contact info," followed by a list of roughly 500 brands, the overwhelming majority of which I had never interacted with. Some brands sounded obscure and sketchy — one was called "Microphone Check," which turned out to be a radio show. Other brands were more familiar, like Victoria's Secret Pink, Good Eggs or AARP.

Facebook said unfamiliar advertisers might appear on the list because they might have obtained my contact information from elsewhere, compiled it into a list of people they wanted to target and uploaded that list into Facebook. Brands can upload their customer lists into a tool called Custom Audiences, which helps them find those same people's Facebook profiles to serve them ads.

Brands can obtain your information in many different ways. Those include: • Buying information from a data provider like Acxiom, which has amassed one of the world's largest commercial databases on consumers. Brands can buy different types of customer data sets from a provider, like contact information for people who belong to a certain demographic, and

take that information to Facebook to serve targeted ads, said Michael Priem, chief executive of Modern Impact, an advertising firm in Minneapolis.

Last month, Facebook announced that it was limiting its practice of allowing advertisers to target ads using information from third-party data brokers like Acxiom. • Using tracking technologies like web cookies and invisible pixels that load in your web browser to collect information about your browsing activities. There are many different trackers on the web, and Facebook offers 10 different trackers to help brands harvest your information, according to Ghostery, which offers privacy tools that block ads and trackers. The advertisers can take some pieces of data that they have collected with trackers and upload them into the Custom Audiences tool to serve ads to you on Facebook.

Someone you shared information with could share it with another entity. Your credit card loyalty program, for example, could share your information with a hotel chain, and that hotel chain could serve you ads on Facebook.

The upshot? Even a Facebook lurker, like myself, who has barely clicked on any digital ads can have personal information exposed to an enormous number of advertisers. This was not entirely surprising, but seeing the list of unfamiliar brands with my contact information in my Facebook file was a dose of reality.

I tried to contact some of these advertisers, like Very Important Puppets, a toymaker, to ask them about what they did with my data. They did not respond.

## WHAT ABOUT GOOGLE?

Let's be clear: Facebook is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what information tech companies have collected on me.

Knowing this, I also downloaded copies of my Google data with a tool called Google Takeout. The data sets were exponentially larger than my Facebook data. For my personal email account alone, Google's archive of my data measured eight gigabytes, enough to hold about 2,000 hours of music. By comparison, my Facebook data was about 650 megabytes, the equivalent of about 160 hours of music.

Here was the biggest surprise in what Google collected on me: In a folder labeled Ads, Google kept a history of many news articles I had read, like a Newsweek story about Apple employees walking into glass walls and a New York Times story about the editor of our Modern Love column. I didn't click on ads for either of these stories, but the search giant logged them because the sites had loaded ads served by Google.

In another folder, labeled Android, Google had a record of apps I had opened on an Android phone since 2015, along with the date and time. This felt like an extraordinary level of detail.

Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

On a brighter note, I downloaded an archive of my LinkedIn data. The data set was less than half a megabyte and contained exactly what I had expected: spreadsheets of my LinkedIn contacts and information I had added to my profile.

Yet that offered little solace.

Be warned: Once you see the vast amount of data collected about you, you won't be able to unsee it.

## Congress needs will to rein in Facebook

FACEBOOK, FROM PAGE 1

speech. It's all of those things and more." If Congress wants to rein in Facebook's enormous power — and the questions lawmakers asked left little doubt that it does — then the first step is identifying what, specifically, they think is wrong with Facebook.

Is it that Facebook is too cavalier about sharing user data with outside organizations?

Is it that Facebook collects too much data about users in the first place?

Is it that Facebook is promoting addictive messaging products to children?

Is it that Facebook's news feed is polarizing society, pushing people to ideological fringes?

Is it that Facebook is too easy for political operatives to exploit or that it does not do enough to keep false news and hate speech off users' feeds?

Is it that Facebook is simply too big, or a monopoly that needs to be broken up?

All of these are concerns lawmakers brought up during the hearings, and they would all require different and narrowly tailored regulatory solutions.

For example, Congress's goal may be to keep outside companies from getting access to people's Facebook data — avoiding another scandal like the one involving Cambridge Analytica, the political consulting firm that improperly obtained data on up to 87 million Facebook users. Lawmakers could propose a bill that would prevent large social media platforms from opening themselves up to outside developers. (They should note, though, that Facebook has already limited the data available to outside companies, so this would not necessarily have the intended effect.)

## Lawmakers must understand which pieces need fixing and how to do that without creating unintended consequences.

Congress could address the issue of data collection by adopting European-style data protection policies, requiring stronger user controls for personal information or requiring social networks to delete certain types of user data automatically. If it wanted to, Congress could address the issue of hateful content by adopting strict hate speech laws like the ones that exist in Germany, which make social platforms liable if they fail to remove hate speech in a timely manner.

It could address the problem of transparency in political ads by passing a bill that would subject online political ads to similar disclosure standards as TV and radio political ads. (Mr. Zuckerberg has already indicated that he supports the measure, so this should be an easy one.)

Or, if it decides that Facebook is just too darn big, Congress could spearhead an effort to break it up.

All of these are theoretically possible, depending on which of Facebook's many issues lawmakers decide to address. Lawmakers do not need to come up with a bill to address all of Facebook's flaws in one fell swoop. It could pick off one issue at a time, consult with the experts and take a piecemeal approach.

But first, it needs to understand which pieces need fixing and how to carry out fixes without creating unintended consequences. And it needs to demonstrate that it has the political resolve to push these changes through, even as the tech industry furiously lobbies against them, as it undoubtedly will.

Perhaps the most dispiriting exchange all week was when Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, asked Mr. Zuckerberg about Facebook's market power and the notion that it is too dominant for any other social network to compete with.

"Is there an alternative to Facebook in the private sector?" Mr. Graham asked.

Mr. Zuckerberg dodged the question, saying that people use lots of apps to communicate.

"You don't feel like you have a monopoly?" Mr. Graham wondered.

"It certainly doesn't feel that way to me," Mr. Zuckerberg said.

By raising the issue of Facebook's lack of competition, Mr. Graham was circling around an important point. Facebook has, indeed, moved to acquire or crush multiple apps that posed a competitive threat. It runs a service, Onavo, which lets it keep tabs on which other apps its users are using and is a kind of early-warning system for possible rivals.

But when it came time to draw the conclusion his questions had been leading to — that Facebook's primary problem was its size, and that regulation should address its anticompetitive tendencies — Mr. Graham pulled his punches, even asking Mr. Zuckerberg for advice about regulating his own company. "Would you work with us in terms of what regulations you think are necessary in your industry?" Mr. Graham asked.

These hearings proved that a groundswell of support is building in Washington to regulate Facebook and other internet companies. But until Congress stops asking these companies how they want to be regulated and starts making its own decisions about what it wants to fix, its targets will continue to slip through its fingers.



THE NEW YORK TIMES

## U.S. seeks quick Nafta deal but is loath to give ground

NAFTA, FROM PAGE 9

culations, that wage could be approximately \$16 to \$17 an hour.

Other parts of the proposal are unchanged, however, or add layers of rules. In keeping with its earlier proposal, the United States is asking for 85 percent of the value of a car to be made in North America to qualify for Nafta's benefits, up from 62.5 percent under the current Nafta deal. But it has set up a complex tiered system for other auto parts, for example requiring 85 percent of engines and advanced batteries to be made in North America, as well as 70 percent of monitors, wiring sets and autonomous vehicles parts, and 50 percent of brake pads and spark plugs.

It also requires 70 percent of certain auto parts made of steel and aluminum to be made in North America — a further boon to the American steel and aluminum industry, which the Trump administration has sought to protect.

These rules may be subject to a periodic review, for example every five years. Carmakers would have three years to work on redesigning their supply chains before the rules took effect.

Mexico has countered with an offer to

raise the overall requirement for North American content in Nafta cars to 70 percent, up from 62.5 percent currently, people close to the talks said. It has also agreed to accept a proposal by Canada to add in the value of research and development when calculating how much of a car is produced in North America. But Mexico continues to reject the other provisions in the American proposal on automobiles, and insists that the industry be given seven years to transition to the new rules, rather than three.

Auto parts makers, which would likely see their sales rise as a result of the new rules, seemed more amenable to the proposal. But some auto manufacturer representatives said the new proposals were as "equally unworkable" as the original ones. They said the tiered system was excessively complicated and could drive up administrative costs as companies try to comply with the rules.

Many valuable car components — electronic systems, for example — are largely made in Asia, and rebuilding a manufacturing base for these parts in North America in just three years would be no simple matter.



An assembly line at a Volkswagen plant in Puebla, Mexico. A United States proposal in the Nafta talks would tie preferential tariffs to higher wages for autoworkers.

Since the United States levies only a 2.5 percent tariff on cars imported into the country, tougher Nafta rules might just push companies to automate their

production facilities or make cars elsewhere, critics say. At a certain point, companies may find it cheaper to manufacture cars in China or Southeast Asia,

## President Trump must secure a deal by May to have a revised accord approved by the current Republican-controlled Congress.

and import them into the United States instead.

The United States also appears to be largely standing firm on other contentious issues, including rules for government purchases, methods of settling trade disputes and a provision under which Nafta would automatically expire every five years, unless the countries voted to reapprove it.

The Trump administration has said those changes are necessary to revive American manufacturing and undo incentives that encourage companies to move their factories to low-cost countries like China and Mexico. Company representatives counter that the use of global supply chains has now become the norm in many industries, and without the ability to source products from around the world, American companies would simply not be able to compete.



# Opinion

## In Syria, a death knell for grandma's hopes

My 90-year-old Syrian grandmother lives for the day she can return to her deeply loved home. But it can't be given back, even when peace returns.

**Abdulhamid Qabbani**

My grandma, one of the millions of Syrians who have been internally displaced by war, just turned 90 amid the news of the chemical attack last week in the city of Douma, on the outskirts of Damascus. A mother of six children, she once lived in what has become a scene of utter destruction in the region known as Ghouta. Appalling images of the chemical attacks now are making headlines as President Trump threatens retribution, with the risk of raising the carnage to a new level.

But the chemical attack is not what concerns many Syrians the most. The civil war, well into its seventh year, has made death part of daily life. And while the violence is often carried out with conventional weapons, the attack last week was not the first time weapons of mass destruction have been used in Syria.

What matters most to Syrians is the sheer scale of killing and displacement, not what weapon has been used to cause it. And what worries my grandma is whether she can ever return to live in her ruined house.

Recently, such a return seemed possible, thanks to a lull in violence after the Syrian regime made military advances in eastern Ghouta. The government forces now control many cities in those once very green and peaceful eastern suburbs of Damascus.

But now eastern Ghouta's beautiful agricultural landscape has again become a theater of extreme violence and inhumanity, recently described as "hell on earth" by the United Nations. Back in August 2013, the area was subjected to a chemical attack that left some 1,400 dead.

Although my grandma is old, she follows the ebb and flow of developments on the battlefield that she still considers her neighborhood — a region where she spent more than 70 years. Dreading the probable impact of the terrible news, her children have not yet told her that her house has been destroyed and looted. So she continues to want to return as soon as possible, and her family continues to put her off.

The spacious two-floored, three-bedroom house in eastern Ghouta has always been precious to Grandma. It was a gift from her father upon his death. Back in the 1940s, for a Syrian woman to have a whole house in her own right was a mark of advanced empowerment. She treasured the gift, lived in it for decades, and has always taken pride in her ownership. Indeed, every time I visited Grandma on weekends before the civil war broke out, she would tell us stories about her house and how she spent much of her life-



MOHAMMED BADRA/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY

time's savings to renovate and maintain it.

In the Syrian culture, a house is worth more than its economic value. It is the source of emotional and physical well-being and security. Family ties are strong, and the idea of placing your mother in a home for the elderly is not socially acceptable; it would bring disgrace to the whole family.

Losing a house is particularly devastating for the elderly. Before Grandma was forced to leave, she would rarely spend a night outside her house. Now she has been displaced for some five years, staying at her children's homes in Damascus, and changing beds every couple of months. Being displaced is

difficult for her. But losing all hope of returning home would feel like losing a beloved child forever.

Because the seven-year-old uprising-turned-conflict is shattering my grandmother's dream of return, I too feel some guilt about her situation. In 2011, as a peaceful protester, I took part in the initial uprising, alongside many young people chanting peacefully for freedom and political rights. I never imagined that nonviolent demonstrations would lead to a devastating all-out war that would displace my beloved grandma and make me a refugee.

I have a mix of feelings when I see the picture of Grandma's collapsing house. It represents not only my childhood

memories, which now feel almost unreal in the midst of the relentless violence, but also my crushed struggle for freedom.

I cannot stop visualizing everything that used to be in the house, from its old steep stairs to the polished wood front door, through which my grandma's head would peep in welcome as we arrived to visit. The inside was nothing special, but the arabesque scrollwork and embroidered greenish furniture in the large salon looked like antiques in a deserted museum.

The destruction of my grandma's house is not the tragedy. The destruction of an old woman's sense of place and hope of return to where she wishes

to die is. Her house was not destroyed with chemical weapons. It was knocked down with conventional ones.

Along with the assassination of Grandma's dream of dying in peace, the hope of a nation for freedom and a better future has been under attack for more than half a decade now in Syria while the world looks the other way. It is likely that my grandma will die before her house is reconstructed. But the disgrace of the world leaders who failed her and many other Syrians will surely live on.

**ABDULHAMID QABBANI** is a freelance journalist and the founder of *Jouri Research and Consulting*.

**Homes destroyed by airstrikes in Douma, Syria, in February.**

## The Jewish state has a special duty to defend Syrians

Israel has proved that it is capable of taking action in Syria. Now it needs to do it for humanitarian reasons.

**Ronen Bergman**

**TEL AVIV** On Wednesday, Israel observed Yom Hashoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is one of the most important days on the country's calendar, observed with innumerable ceremonies and gatherings. At many of these, a motto will be recited: "To remember, not to forget."

Of course, in Israel no one forgets. One reason is that in this country, the Holocaust is not merely a matter of historical remembrance. It is part of our present. Many of Israel's founders believed the Jewish state was necessary because the Jewish people would always be under the threat of destruction, others could not be relied upon to protect the Jews, and the preservation of the Jewish people required a country of their own. Or, to put it with typical Israeli directness, "to rely only on ourselves."

In 2011, I interviewed Ehud Olmert, the former prime minister, in his Tel Aviv office, on a subject that was at the time highly classified. Four years earlier, when he was in office, the Mossad had learned that North Korea was building an atomic reactor in northern Syria to be used for making nuclear weapons. Mr. Olmert asked the United States to destroy the facility, but President George W. Bush declined. Israeli leaders took this as proof that the United States would not take serious risks to protect Israel, especially in the period after the invasion of Iraq.

"So what did you do?" I asked Mr. Olmert. He pointed at a photograph on the wall behind him. It showed three Israeli F-15 fighter planes flying over the railroad tracks and gate of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. In the picture, which the commander of the Israeli Air Force had given to Mr. Olmert, he had written, "The Israeli Air Force over Auschwitz; in the name of the Jewish people, the State of Israel; to remember and not to forget; to rely only

on ourselves."

"I decided to act in accordance with that rule," Mr. Olmert told me. On the night between Sept. 5 and 6, 2007, the Israeli Air Force bombed the reactor and destroyed it. Mr. Olmert gave the order despite warnings from the C.I.A., as well as some high-ranking Israelis, that such an attack could cause President Bashar al-Assad to start a war against Israel.

Last month, the Israeli military lifted the ban that had prevented Israeli media from reporting that Israel had bombed the Syria reactor; the military's communications office even released video footage and documents related to the attack. Why now, more than 10 years later? It was intended to send a clear message: Israel would not permit the construction of military and intelligence infrastructure in Syria by Iran and Hezbollah.

But is "To rely only on ourselves" the only lesson that Israel should take from the Holocaust?

During Hitler's slaughter of European Jews, the Allied powers did nothing to defend them. Those passive bystanders include the Western powers that today are among Israel's best friends. The clearest example of this inaction was the Allies' failure to bomb the mass-murder machine at Auschwitz-Birkenau, or at the least the railroad tracks that brought Jews in the hundreds of thousands to their deaths.

For the past five years, those same nations have been doing much the same thing, standing by and watching in the face of the atrocities and war crimes by the Assad regime. This time, the sovereign Jewish state of Israel is one of those countries standing by.

Israel is the strongest military power in the Middle East. The gap between its intelligence and operational capabilities and the way it could have employed these capabilities to help the Syrians was starkly illustrated this week: On Sunday, Mr. Assad appears to have once again used poison gas on his own citizens. He knew that the international community would discover this, but it was more urgent for him to defeat the



GAUJ TIBBON/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

**Israeli soldiers at a ceremony on Holocaust Remembrance Day this week in Jerusalem.**

rebels in the Damascus suburb of Douma before a cease-fire agreement. He also knew very well, based on his experience in recent years, that his war crimes would be likely to go without serious punishment.

One day after that gas attack, Israel did carry out a strike in Syria. But the operation had nothing to do with the atrocity in Douma; its timing was coincidental. Israel struck a Syrian air base, T4, at which various aircraft were reportedly operated by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. According to reports, seven Iranians were killed.

"Israel has several red lines, which it is not prepared to allow to be crossed, including the transfer of sophisticated weapons or chemical weapons to Hezbollah," Avigdor Lieberman, the minister of defense, told a session of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in December 2016. Then he added: "We have no interest in intervening in Syria's civil war."

Israel is not alone. Much of the responsibility for what is happening in Syria can be laid on the doorstep of the

United States, which has largely stood by as hundreds of thousands of Syrians have been massacred. President Barack Obama decided not to act against Mr. Assad, even when the Syrian president crossed the red lines that Mr. Obama himself had drawn. President Trump has continued down this path, apart from a token salvo of Tomahawk missiles a year ago, which certainly did not deter Mr. Assad. The United States now seems poised to strike once more, but will it do enough to change the Syrian president's calculus?

Years ago, Israel could easily have forced Mr. Assad's military, stretched to its utmost trying to suppress the rebellion, to halt at least some of its actions against civilians. The Israeli armed forces could have stopped the Syrian Army or at least coerced it into declaring a "safe zone" for refugees with a no-fly zone over it. The claims that this would have entailed a complex or even impossible military operation are rebuffed by the facts: Israel has carried out hundreds of attacks in Syria during this same period.

Syria, in most cases, did not even attempt to defend itself from these attacks. Mr. Assad's generals seem fully aware of their military's inferiority. They also knew that by responding with force, they would only bring on themselves more devastation. On Wednesday, a high-ranking Israeli source told me that if Iran were to attempt to retaliate for the attack on its base in Syria, "both the Assad regime and Assad himself would vanish from the face of the earth." Imagine if a threat like this were uttered about saving innocent lives.

Israel has had excellent reasons for not intervening: Operating overtly in a neighboring country would appear as an intolerable interference in Arab affairs to the Arab world, which already hates Israel. And of course, Israel has numerous other security challenges. Moreover, since the West neglected Syria for so long, the situation has grown far more complex: Iran, Hezbollah and Russia are in control. Any Israeli operation now would be far more complicated and would have to be carried out in cooperation with the United States.

The arguments against an Israeli action are based on weighty considerations. But were there not weighty considerations in the 1940s that stopped the Allies from coming to the aid of Europe's Jews? And if these explanations were not legitimate then — and we know now that they were not — what about today? What is happening in Syria is not the same as the gas chambers of Auschwitz. But does Israel not have an added obligation, over and above that of the other countries, to do something for nations facing genocide and war crimes, especially when they are right on its northern border, and it has proved several times that it is able to do so?

**RONEN BERGMAN**, a writer at large for *The New York Times Magazine* and a senior correspondent for military and intelligence affairs at *Yedioth Ahronoth*, is the author, most recently, of "Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations."



## OPINION

## The New York Times

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## A VIOLENT RESPONSE TO PROTESTS

Israel should know that journalists have a right to work, and people have a right to protest peacefully, without being shot.

Yasser Murtaja was a self-taught photojournalist who reported on his community and had the distinction of doing camerawork for a documentary by Ai Weiwei, the Chinese dissident and artist.

Normally, that wouldn't be a life-threatening career. But Mr. Murtaja, 30 years old and the father of a 15-month-old son, lived in Gaza, the enclave of nearly two million Palestinians ruled by ruthless Hamas militants that has been devastated by an 11-year blockade by Israel and Egypt and three wars between Israel and Hamas that have killed thousands of Palestinians and about 100 Israelis.

On Friday, Mr. Murtaja was shot and killed by Israeli security forces while covering protests that over the past two weeks have drawn tens of thousands of Palestinians to Gaza's border with Israel, demanding to return to lands their families lost in the 1948 war that accompanied Israel's founding.

At times, some of the younger protesters have moved close to the border's no-go zone, burning tires and throwing rocks at the fence. Israel has said some Gazans have tried to toss crude explosives, shoot weapons and breach the barrier.

But in general, the protests have been peaceful, with many demonstrators staying far back from the heavily fortified fence to picnic and hold a tent camp sit-in. There has been no apparent reason for Israel to use live ammunition.

The government claims that the protests are a cover for a more violent Hamas agenda, including encouraging Gazans to penetrate the fence and push into Israel. Israel has a right to defend its border, but in the face of unarmed civilians it could do so with nonlethal tactics common to law enforcement, such as the use of high-powered fire hoses.

Since the protests began, Israeli forces have killed at least 29 Palestinians and wounded more than 1,000. On the day Mr. Murtaja died, eight other Palestinians were killed and five other journalists were among a thousand injured. There have been no known Israeli casualties.

The fact that Mr. Murtaja and the wounded journalists wore protective vests with signs proclaiming "PRESS" on the front has prompted suspicion that Israel deliberately targeted the journalists, as Reporters Without Borders, an activist group, and Rushdi Al Sarraj, Mr. Murtaja's friend and sometime collaborator, have alleged. In an interview with The New Yorker, Mr. Al Sarraj recalled how the Israeli Army had earlier boasted that its soldiers were so precise and competent they "know where they put every bullet and where every bullet landed."

The Israeli military has said its forces did not intentionally shoot journalists. Lt. Colonel Jonathan Conriscus, an Israeli military spokesman, said soldiers employ lethal fire as a last resort. "No one gets shot by standing and looking. They are shot after commanders specifically approve it against a specific person or threat," he said. But such assertions were undercut by Avigdor Lieberman, the Israeli defense minister, who said on Tuesday that Mr. Murtaja was a Hamas captain who had used a drone to collect intelligence on Israeli forces. That volatile charge is at odds with independent news reporting and, if it is false, could put other journalists at grave risk. Mr. Lieberman provided no proof for the claim and further demonstrated his disdain for justice, rule of law and the role of a free press by arguing on Sunday that there are "no innocent people" in Hamas-run Gaza.

And on Tuesday, the State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said Mr. Murtaja had last month passed a government vetting process for his media company to receive a United States aid agency grant.

Human Rights Watch said it reviewed videos of the protests — in which a demonstrator was shot in the leg while praying and a man was shot while throwing a rock — showing that victims posed no threat to Israeli troops. Meanwhile, B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights group, urged Israeli soldiers to disobey open-fire orders because using live ammunition against unarmed people is unlawful.

An independent investigation into the killings is needed. But on March 31, after the first deaths, the United States, in support of Israel, blocked a proposed United Nations Security Council statement condemning the Israeli response, urging a transparent inquiry and affirming the right of Palestinians to demonstrate peacefully.

Such ideas should not be controversial. But ordinary Palestinians have few defenders, and much of the world has been shockingly mute about what's happening in Gaza. Journalists have a right to work, and people have a right to demonstrate peacefully — and to assume that responsible authorities will ensure that they can do so without being shot.

Israel, a democracy with its own vigorous press and engaged citizenry, should understand that better than most.

## The war on Somalia's reporters

## Hassan Ghedi Santur

**NAIROBI, KENYA** Twenty-six journalists have been murdered in Somalia in the past decade. Nobody has ever been tried or convicted in these murders. Somalia has sat atop the Committee to Protect Journalists' Global Impunity Index — a list of the worst countries for the unsolved murders of journalists — for the past three years.

The Somali media is a battleground where government officials try to control the daily narrative, powerful businessmen are out to protect their business and clan interests, and Shabab militants attempt to intimidate the country's mostly young and badly paid journalists through death threats.

One afternoon in the winter of 2012, Hassan Ali Ismaan, a 27-year-old security and politics reporter for Dalsan Radio, a popular privately owned Somali radio station, joined his friends for a weekly soccer game in the Wadajir district of Mogadishu. Before he entered the field in an Arsenal jersey, he left his phone with a friend watching the game, asking him to alert him if he got a call from work.

Mr. Ismaan had played for about 15 minutes when his friend walked over with the phone. He took the call. "I can see you," the caller said, with a menacing nonchalance. "I know what you're wearing." Mr. Ismaan scanned the field, hoping to identify the caller among the couple of dozen spectators. "How will you leave here alive?" the voice said. The call was typical of death threats

by the Shabab, the militant Islamist group battling the Somali federal government. A call or a text message from a Shabab operative often started with descriptions of the street the journalist was walking on, the clothes he or she wore — a tactic designed to announce surveillance and the capacity to inflict injury at a time and place of the militants' choosing.

Mr. Ismaan's heart galloped when he hung up. His legs shook as he made his way through the spectators. He ran and took numerous indirect routes to his home to lose whoever might have followed him. "I felt like a dead man," he recalled.

A few years later, in 2015, Mr. Ismaan got another call from the Shabab after he did a story on female basketball players.

The group considers women playing basketball as "un-Islamic" and warned him against promoting such activities.

Recently, Mr. Ismaan moved here to Nairobi to get some respite from the constant anxiety that accompanied his work as a reporter in Mogadishu. He estimated that he had received more than 20 death threats since he began working as a reporter in 2007. The call during the soccer game has stayed with him as the most frightening.

Most young reporters ignore Shabab's threats but every time a journalist is assassinated it shatters their morale. In January 2012, Mr. Ismaan's neighbor and friend Hassan Osman

Abdi, who was the director of Shabelle Media Network, was shot outside his home in Mogadishu. After the murder, which remains unsolved, Mr. Ismaan slept inside his radio station building for six months, drawing solace from the security guards at its gate.

More recently, in December, Mohamed Ibrahim Gabow, a 28-year-old news anchor for Kalsan TV, a popular network, was murdered in Mogadishu when his car blew up. Nobody claimed responsibility.

As Somalia has been without an effective central government for 27 years, the police force remains poorly funded, ill equipped and untrained to solve murders.

An officer with the Somali police's investigative department told me that it had no leads on Mr. Gabow's murder and had not been able to ascertain whether he was killed because of his journalism.

Mr. Ismaan and Mr. Gabow were friends. He remembers Mr. Gabow as generous, affable and respected by his colleagues. He was tempted to investigate his friend's murder but experience held him back. A wall of silence has blocked every reporter trying to investigate the murders of Somalia's journalists. Mr. Ismaan claimed that reporters are often warned by potential sources, even within the government, to stop searching for answers.

I recently spoke with Nuure Mohamed Ali, a Mogadishu-based reporter, who lost a leg in 2015 after a bomb planted in his car was detonated. Two colleagues riding with him died in the explosion. Mr. Ali did not want to speak about the perpetrators. He simply

wanted to move on.

A culture of silence and fear has developed around the murders of journalists. Reporters are afraid to meet potential sources, fearing they might be Shabab operatives or freelance killers. Many talented reporters have left the country or quit the profession; those who stay live with fear. Mohamed Ibrahim Moalimu, a veteran journalist based in Mogadishu who was wounded in January 2016 in a Shabab suicide attack, told me that every morning before getting into his car he inspects it for an explosive device.

The coercion employed by the Somali government to suppress unflattering reporting feels mild compared with Shabab death threats. Government officials routinely ban journalists or even arrest them. Definitive figures are hard to come by but the National Union of Somali Journalists has estimated that 47 journalists were arrested in 2016, 32 in 2017, and around 12 in 2018 so far.

Somalia has 67 radio stations, 30 newspapers, 21 television networks, and numerous news portals, according to the journalists' union's 2017 annual report. Most reporters in Somalia earn a few hundred dollars a month and are in no position to hire lawyers to defend themselves against official allegations.

And yet reporters like Mr. Ismaan insist on reporting from Somalia. "I see it as an important function in today's Somalia," he said. "I want to be someone with a voice in my country, someone who matters to his people."

**HASSAN GHEDI SANTUR** is the author of "Maps of Exile," a nonfiction account of African migration to Europe.



People carry the body of the journalist Abdisatar Dahir, who was killed in a double suicide attack in Mogadishu, Somalia, in 2012.

## Can Facebook develop a conscience?

## Noam Cohen

That the questioning of Mark Zuckerberg on Tuesday by two full Senate committees was considered a triumph for Mr. Zuckerberg — he made \$3 billion personally as Facebook stock shot up during his testimony — shouldn't come as a surprise. This was an unfair fight between a man who knew intimately the project being debated and a lot of people who didn't.

The occasion for his Senate hearing, and his appearance in the House on Wednesday, was a data breach that allowed a British political consulting firm working for the Trump campaign to gain access to 87 million Facebook profiles, but as the questioning unfolded Mr. Zuckerberg behaved as if he were the only competent one in the room.

When Senator Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut, asked, "Would you agree that users should be able to access all of their information?" Mr. Zuckerberg seemed confused: "Senator, we have already a 'download your information' tool that allows people to see and to take out all of the information that Facebook — that they've put into Facebook or that Facebook knows about them. So, yes, I agree with that. We already have that."

Similarly, when Senator John Kennedy, Republican of Louisiana, asked, "Are you going to go back to work on giving me a greater right to erase my data?" Mr. Zuckerberg again appeared perplexed, saying, "Senator, you can already delete all the data that's there."

This wasn't quite the contemptuous Jimmy Fallon character — Nick Burns, Your Company's Computer Guy — who briefly tries to explain the problem before shouting, "Move!" and fixing it himself. But then again Mr. Zuckerberg

had the benefit of intensive politeness training.

Mr. Zuckerberg has been winning these unfair fights going on 15 years now. The idea that he's the Computer Guy and we are the helpless office workers in his way exemplifies the attitude of Facebook and Silicon Valley more broadly.

Famously, Facebook itself is the residue of an early unfair fight. Back in 2003, Mr. Zuckerberg was hired by three compatriots from Harvard — Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss and their friend Divya Narendra — to write code for their social network, ConnectU. Mr. Zuckerberg soon dropped the task only to reappear a couple of months later, on Feb. 4, 2004, with a social network site called Thefacebook.com.

The allegation that Mr. Zuckerberg stole the idea was fought in court and ended in a settlement that netted the Winklevosses and Mr. Narendra cash and company stock worth tens of millions of dollars. Mr. Zuckerberg plowed ahead under a new paradigm, later defined by Matt Welsh, Mr. Zuckerberg's computer science professor at Harvard, as "Nerds win."

"Ideas are cheap and don't mean squat if you don't know how to execute on them," Mr. Welsh explained in 2010 on his blog in response to the nasty portrait of Mr. Zuckerberg in the movie "The Social Network": "To have an impact you need both the vision and the technical chops, as well as the tenacity to make something real. Mark was able to do all of those things, and I think he deserves every bit of success that comes his way."

In the past, Mr. Zuckerberg's talents could only be a tool for richer and better-connected peers like the Winklevosses, who would provide the money and define the purpose of the project. By the mid-2000s, however, Mr. Zuckerberg could turn the tables.

"The fact that we could sort of rent machines for, you know, like \$100 a month and use that to scale up to a point where we had 300,000 users is pretty cool and it's a pretty unique thing that's going on in technology right now," Mr. Zuckerberg told Harvard computer science students when he came back to campus in 2005 as a 21-year-old entrepreneur.

At the time of the talk, Mr. Zuckerberg estimated that Google had 250 million page views a day, with thousands of machines and 5,000 employees, while Facebook had significantly more page views (400 million), hundreds of machines and just barely 50 employees.

By then, Larry Page and Sergey Brin had already given up control of Google as the price for venture capital to keep the project running, agreeing to an outside chief executive, as investors had insisted. To this day, Mr. Zuckerberg retains majority control over Facebook and remains its chief executive — his decisions about regulation, privacy and transparency can mean happiness or misery for the more than two billion citizens of Facebook nation — majestic powers that are enshrined when you check the right box on the terms of service agreement.

Peter Thiel, the first outside investor in Facebook and a longtime adviser to Mr. Zuckerberg, sees a founder-led tech start-up as something like an independent cell that can help drive social change. "A start-up," he writes in his book, "Zero to One," "is the largest endeavor over which you can have definite mastery. You can have agency not just over your own life, but over a

small and important part of the world."

In these extraordinary times, we are learning how society changes when it is in the hands of power-drunk engineers. Products and services are delivered much more reliably and efficiently. We are able to communicate quickly, directly, widely. But there are serious problems, too, and they are far more serious than even critics realized at first.

To start, these Silicon Valley titans are in denial about history. They pride themselves on not bending to what has come before. Is there racism and sexism in the United States? Didn't happen on my watch! Computers don't see sex or color. When pressed by the few senators of color about Facebook's complicity in running real estate ads aimed exclusively at white people, which would violate the Fair Housing Act, Mr. Zuckerberg defined this as a particularly compelling challenge for artificial intelligence software.

Ads can no longer be explicitly targeted to racial groups, he said, though, of course, the rub is that there are plenty of surrogates for race that advertisers can presumably still use. This led to the absurd observation from Mr. Zuckerberg, in response to a question from Senator Mazie Hirono, Democrat of Hawaii, that "most of the enforcement today is still that our community flags issues for us when that comes up." How the community can identify when a real estate ad is appearing only to white people remains a mystery.

Despite the length of Mr. Zuckerberg's Senate appearance, there was no serious reckoning with what happened in the 2016 election. Instead, there was an insistent focus on the future, which for Mr. Zuckerberg was synonymous with one phrase, "A.I." In five to 10 years, he promised, artificial intelligence will clean up the mess that is COHEN, PAGE 15





## U.S. will pay if Trump fires Mueller



Nicholas Kristof

President Trump resembles a Geiger counter: When he emits increasing howls, he is signaling that we're approaching some radioactive or explosive truth.

Trump is said to be near a "melt-down" in his fury at what he describes as "an attack on our country" — by which he means the ongoing criminal investigation of him.

It's a phrase that he has not used about Russia's interference with our elections, and my guess is that at some point Trump will fire Robert Mueller, directly or indirectly, or curb his investigation.

Republicans and Democrats alike are pleading with Trump, begging, for the good of the country: Don't go there. This is larger than Trump. It is a struggle for the idea of equality before the law.

In a narrow sense, firing Mueller might be good for Democrats in November. A Quinnipiac poll this month found that Americans by a 69-percent-to-13-percent majority oppose the firing of Mueller. Even Republicans say by more than a two-to-one ratio that Trump shouldn't fire Mueller.

It may be that Republicans in Congress would get over their indignation, form a protective circle and try to move on, for that's what has happened every time Trump has committed some new outrage. So I'm not so sure that "it would be suicide" to fire Mueller, as Senator Charles Grassley, the Iowa Republican, suggested. But even if it wouldn't quite be suicide, it would be

immensely damaging to the entire country.

Trump's supporters are saying that he could fire Rod Rosenstein, to whom Mueller reports, and appoint an acting replacement who could quietly rein in Mueller. Such a replacement could even go one step further and actually try to "bring an end" to the entire investigation, as Trump's former lawyer John Dowd urged last month.

But it's not so simple. "Everything about this is legally uncertain," Jack Goldsmith, who was an assistant attorney general in George W. Bush's administration and is now a professor at Harvard Law School, told me.

There are legal disagreements about whether Trump could directly fire Mueller and whether there would have to be a showing of misconduct, and it might well be difficult to find a credible figure to obey instructions and curb the special counsel.

In any case, that would not automatically end the separate investigation that led to the raid on Michael Cohen's files, and it might even fuel state investigations and prosecutions in New York.

If Trump were to recklessly end an investigation into whether he is obstructing justice, that would seem prima facie evidence of obstruction of justice.

Trump should have learned something from firing James Comey; that misstep didn't stop the investigation but assured that Comey's book will be a best seller when it comes out next week, and handed Comey the ABC interview in which he apparently compares Trump to a mob boss.

Sadly, that's an apt comparison. Trump's ethos, ever since he was first sued by the Justice Department for racial discrimination in 1973, has been about cutting corners. He got away

with it when he was a businessman buying \$100,000 worth of pianos and stiffing the seller.

Now his pattern of behavior may finally be catching up with him; and those around him may rue the day he was elected president.

Trump himself is probably protected from indictment under Justice Department guidelines, and people like Paul Manafort may be counting on a pardon, but the political price of pardons will be increasingly costly — and they won't provide protection from state prosecutions.

Trump says he's the victim of a "witch hunt," but it's actually a "criminal hunt" — one presided over by Republicans, most of whom he has appointed. He claims persecution, but it's just embarrassing for a billionaire who is the most powerful person in the world to exhibit a victim complex.

Any attempt to block the investigation would discredit not only Trump but also our country.

Foreign policy moves such as a strike on Syria or confrontations with Iran or North Korea would be clouded by the assumption that Trump was tossing us a new and shiny object to chase.

There's a Latin phrase that goes to the heart of this investigation: "fiat justitia, ruat caelum," meaning "justice be done, though the heavens fall" — signifying that the law must be followed wherever it leads. Our legal system may in practice sometimes be as ugly as any sausage factory, but it is inspired by a principle as noble and lofty and simple as any: equality before the law.

This isn't just about Trump, and it's not just about sex or hush money or even just about collusion with Russia or obstruction of justice. This is about the kind of nation we live in, and whether we aim to be a nation of citizens equal before the law. This is about America.

There were many reasons to have low expectations for the summit meeting. Mr. Trump's absence was not among them until this week. It is hard to foresee another similar opportunity in the near future for the Western Hemisphere's leaders to make even modest progress toward stemming further erosion in inter-American relations and, in the process, beginning to forge a concerted approach to halt Venezuela's meltdown.

PETER HAKIM is the president emeritus and a senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington-based think tank on Western Hemisphere affairs. MICHAEL SHIFTER is the organization's president.

Latin America is not ready to risk an open breach and potentially lose the United States' huge market and access to its trade, investment and technology.

Mr. Trump's absence has reduced expectations that the United States and Latin America can find a way to effectively address the one issue where some signs of common ground can be discerned: the disaster engulfing Venezuela. This crisis of unprecedented proportions has, albeit belatedly, become the concern of almost every nation in the Americas. It poses the most crucial test of the hemisphere's capacity for joint action, but so far it has produced only limited agreement. Mr. Trump's off-handed suggestion last

## Why signatures matter

Steven Petrow

When I heard this week that most credit card transactions soon won't require a signature, I was reminded of an experiment I once conducted. Curious to see if I would recognize their handwriting, I asked four friends to send me a postcard, each with the same greeting: "Having a wonderful time. Wish you were here."

My guinea pigs included a real estate agent, an architect, a fellow journalist and a porn star. My score? A big old zero: I couldn't identify a single one.

Handwriting, once one of the most instantly identifiable elements of an individual, seems to have been lost to the ages, trampled into dust under the relentless advance of keyboards, touch screens and voice recognition software. Now the signature — the crown jewel of penmanship — is headed for the same ash heap. With the stroke of a virtual pen, American Express, Discover, Mastercard and Visa pronounced that even our laziest scrawling John Hancock are no longer needed.

Am I surprised? Not one iota. After all, Americans now send millions of holiday e-cards, and birthday greetings arrive mostly via Facebook. Emails have largely replaced personal letters. Even that marathon of document signing, the house closing, has moved on: When I bought a home last year, I never once put pen to paper. I used DocuSign, which creates a valid legal "signature." DocuSign's website trumpets its benefits: "Sign documents anywhere from any device"; "No overnighting, faxing or waiting"; and, of course: "More secure than paper." (Not so much on that last one — in May 2017, DocuSign admitted that a database of customer email addresses had been breached in a phishing campaign.)

Even in an age of dizzying change, this one feels like a real loss. It's been a long time since I actually signed my name to a check, which I used to do with a sense of pomp and circumstance, always careful to make the "t" in "Steven" parallel to the one in "Petrow," always placing an emphatic period after the "w" in my last name, my old-school form of encryption. Each signature was an original creation. Although I'm pleased by how quickly I can pay my bills now, every time I open the bank

before I could read I knew those curves and curlicues equaled my grandma. The dozens of cards and notes from her are all signed exactly the same way, "Love, Grandma." The "L" and the "G" were original to her hand. I would have known her signature anywhere, and when I see it today I'm reminded of so much more: Her hair. Her perfume. How we watched "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" together on Saturdays. Her nightly Scotch and soda (which she always let me sip).

app on my phone I feel my identity eroding, replaced by routing and account numbers.

Some years ago I decided to organize a lifetime's worth of papers, which included handwritten notes, letters and postcards from my parents, my first girlfriend and first boyfriend, as well as some famous folks, including Senator Joe Biden, Mayor John V. Lindsay of New York and the tennis champ Billie Jean King. Each of them had its creator's unique signature.

I particularly treasure the letters from my maternal grandmother. At the upper left of each envelope she would write out her name, Marjorie L. Straus, in classic cursive. Even

to become my identity, with no signature necessary. Bit by byte, our identities get erased, and along with them our humanity. But I'll treasure my papers, and my signature.

STEVEN PETROW is the author of "Steven Petrow's Complete Gay and Lesbian Manners."

Your name, written in your hand, is part of your identity.

PHOTODISC, VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Anxiety at a summit

HAKIM, FROM PAGE 1  
its "partner of choice," while simply ignoring that the region's economic and diplomatic ties are already globally diversified and China, not the United States, is South America's largest trading partner. Pursuing this path will be offensive even to such leaders as Argentina's Mauricio Macri and Chile's Sebastian Piñera, successful entrepreneurs and now presidents.

Still, despite the shared confusion and distrust about United States policies and intentions, nearly all Latin American governments have chosen a pragmatic approach to dealing with Washington, seeking to accommodate Trump's idiosyncrasies without caving in to his often exaggerated demands. They are not ready to risk an open breach and potentially lose the United States' huge, profitable market and access to its trade, investment and technology. But Mr. Trump's failure to show up in Lima will leave the region less secure about the future of United States-Latin American relations. Yes, it is good news that Vice President Mike Pence will be there, but he is not the same as having Mr. Trump. The Latin American presidents want the opportunity to engage the president of the United States, as their predecessors have had at every summit meeting of the past quarter-century.

Mr. Trump's absence has reduced expectations that the United States and Latin America can find a way to effectively address the one issue where some signs of common ground can be discerned: the disaster engulfing Venezuela. This crisis of unprecedented proportions has, albeit belatedly, become the concern of almost every nation in the Americas. It poses the most crucial test of the hemisphere's capacity for joint action, but so far it has produced only limited agreement. Mr. Trump's off-handed suggestion last

August of a "military option" was immediately rejected across the region.

The Lima gathering gives the hemisphere's heads of state a rare opportunity to discuss face-to-face what it will take to develop a sustained regional effort, which no government could mount by itself, to press hard on the Venezuelan regime to alter its destructive economic and social policies and allow for a meaningful political opening. Urgent action is also required by the region's nations to respond to the needs of an accelerating migration from Venezuela. In just the past two years, a million Venezuelans have fled their country. This is clearly no easy task, given the divisions among nations, the lack of United States-Latin American cooperation and Venezuela's fractured opposition.

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PETER HAKIM is the president emeritus and a senior fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington-based think tank on Western Hemisphere affairs. MICHAEL SHIFTER is the organization's president.

Latin America is not ready to risk an open breach and potentially lose the United States' huge market and access to its trade, investment and technology.

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## A conscience at Facebook?

COHEN, FROM PAGE 14  
Facebook in 2018.

The problems with Facebook emerge from its lack of a human touch, but Mr. Zuckerberg doubles down on software. On Wednesday, Representative David McKinley, a West Virginia Republican, displayed recent Facebook ads offering opioids for sale without a prescription and addressed Mr. Zuckerberg directly. "Facebook is actually enabling an illegal activity, and in so doing you are hurting people," he said. "Would you agree with that statement?" Mr. Zuckerberg's response was to concede things were bad but to hold out the promise of the future. "We need to build more A.I. tools that can proactively find that content," he said.

As long as the discussion was about software — how it works, how it can be improved, how users interact with it — Mr. Zuckerberg holds the upper hand. When the discussion is about values, he is as confused as the rest of us, and takes refuge in the belief that society is nothing more than a series of market-based online interactions, as captured, absorbed and understood by engineers.

Government regulation, in this scheme, is a product of a corrupt, inefficient political system; self-regulation, on the other hand, is a product of people voting with their actions and brilliant engineers devising solutions to meet their needs. A smug interpretation that Mr. Zuckerberg outwitted dopey legislators only plays into the Silicon Valley view that being called before Congress to answer questions is a bug of our democracy, instead of a vital feature.

NOAM COHEN is the author of "The Know-It-Alls: The Rise of Silicon Valley as a Political Powerhouse and Social Wrecking Ball."

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# Sports

## U.S. Open will put players on the clock



A serve clock was used — mostly with success — during qualifying events at the United States Open last year.

### Those who procrastinate, like Nadal, face penalties if they are slow to serve

BY DAVID WALDSTEIN

A warning to Rafael Nadal and other notorious tennis procrastinators: The dawdling days of time-wasting between points and games are coming to an end, at least at the United States Open.

The U.S. Open will use a 25-second serve clock at this year's event, which will be the first time such a system will be deployed in the main draw at a major tennis tournament.

Players will now have 25 seconds from the end of a point to serve for the next one. If they don't, they will face the consequences: The first violation will incur a warning, followed by the loss of a point and then the loss of a game.

The U.S. Open will also enforce a seven-minute warm-up period before each match to ensure they start on time. Players will have one minute from the time they walk on court to meet at the net for the coin flip. Then they will have five minutes to warm up and another minute before the first serve. Violators could be fined \$20,000.

Tennis is not the only sport seeking to

speed up play. Major League Baseball has implemented a clock to limit the time between half-innings and has restricted the number of mound visits allowed.

The N.F.L. has tinkered with the number of commercial breaks and standardized the length of halftime.

"Pace of play is a major issue in sports today," said Chris Widmaier, a spokesman for the United States Tennis Association, which owns the U.S. Open. "We recognize that and we want to be ahead of it."

The U.S. Open experimented with the serve clock during last year's non-main draw events, like the qualifying and juniors competitions. According to Widmaier, there were no major issues, other than minor grumbles, mostly from losing players.

Technically there was already a time limit in place: players at Grand Slam events were given only 20 seconds between points (25 seconds at other tour events). But that clock was seen only by the chair umpire and the rule was rarely, if ever, enforced, especially against top players.

Now an on-court clock will be visible to players and spectators alike, similar to the shot clock in basketball and the play clock in football. An extra five seconds will be granted to allow players to

adjust to the new format, but it will be strictly enforced. The chair umpire will run the 25-second clock and will be given leeway to delay the start of it in certain situations: after a particularly long point late in a grueling match, in hot and steamy conditions, or if there is a fan disturbance, for example.

Last year, the U.S. Open also experimented with coaching from the stands in the non-main draw events, but that innovation, which is allowed in certain smaller tournaments, is not expected to be implemented for the main draw. The Grand Slam Board, which consists of representatives of all four major tournaments, must approve all rule changes to any of the four events, and Wimbledon is resistant to coaching from the stands.

Nadal, with his constant fidgeting and ball bouncing, is considered to be among the most egregious time-wasters in the professional game, but he is not alone. Novak Djokovic has also been accused of being overly deliberate during matches. During the ATP Finals in London last November, Nadal made it clear he was not a fan of the new measures.

"I believe it is not something that is good for the future of the tour," he told reporters, and added: "For me personally, I am not worried at all. I don't want to play for 10 more years. I can adapt easily to that."

## High-profile soccer tournament to add women's event

BY ANDREW DAS

The International Champions Cup, the five-year-old soccer showcase that has become the most high-profile summer tournament in the world, is adding something new this year: a women's competition.

Manchester City, Paris St-Germain, the N.W.S.L.'s North Carolina Courage and a fourth club will make up the first Women's I.C.C. field. The tournament will be contested in two doubleheaders in South Florida this summer: back-to-back semifinal matches on July 27, and then a third-place game and the final on July 29 at Hard Rock Stadium, the Miami Dolphins' home stadium, in Miami Gardens.

The fourth team has not been confirmed, but Chelsea, Bayern Munich and Barcelona are among those on the shortlist to take part.

The small size of the tournament is a concerted effort by Relevant Sports, which owns the I.C.C., to focus on making the first year a success, even as it plans to double its size as soon as next year.

Many of the clubs that regularly compete in the I.C.C. now have professional women's teams, and Relevant's executive chairman, Charlie Stillitano, said they had been agitating for ways to get those teams exposure outside their home markets.

When Relevant told its club partners that the women's event was finally hap-

pening, nearly a dozen teams asked to take part.

Stillitano and Relevant's managing partner, Jon Sheiman, said part of the company's motivation was to invest some of the profits it had begun to make after years of successful summer tours back into the game, and particularly in the women's game. Sheiman said Relevant had taken pains not to appear to big-foot the American players, leagues and owners who have exerted considerable effort in backing professional women's soccer.

So while they said they could have filled a four-team field with European squads quickly, Sheiman said it would have been "irresponsible" not to have a team involved from the National Women's Soccer League, the top league in the United States.

The Courage were last year's N.W.S.L. runner-up, and they will have the advantage of being in midseason form. But they could be in for stern tests from the Europeans: P.S.G. lost in last season's UEFA Women's Champions League final, and Manchester City has advanced to the semifinals of this year's competition.

The games are part of an effort by Relevant Sports, which created the I.C.C. in 2013, to expand its soccer business but also to fill the void of top-flight intercontinental women's competitions, especially those for clubs — an area that even FIFA has identified as ripe for significant growth.

"There's a big battle going on right now for this territory, for this content," Stillitano said. "We think the women's game would benefit from something like this. And we really hope this is something that helps."

Stillitano said the billionaire Stephen M. Ross, the financial might behind Relevant Sports, made a multiyear commitment to build the Women's I.C.C. into what has the potential to be — with the right club, and despite being a pre-season event for the Europeans — a defacto club world championship for women.

Most top European clubs — including P.S.G., Manchester City, Arsenal, Chelsea, Bayern Munich and Barcelona — now field women's teams capable of

challenging more established programs like France's Olympique Lyon and Germany's Wolfsburg. Juventus started a women's professional team last year, and in March, Manchester United announced plans to create its first one.

Many of those clubs are longtime I.C.C. partners.

The entire men's I.C.C. field, as well as the matchups and cities, will be announced on Tuesday. A half-dozen top clubs, including Manchester United, Manchester City, Tottenham and Bayern, have confirmed they will compete. Real Madrid and Barcelona are expected to return, though not to face each other, as is Juventus, which will also serve as the opponent in Major League Soccer's All-Star Game on Aug. 1.

### NON SEQUITUR



### PEANUTS



### DOONESBURY CLASSIC 1990



### GARFIELD



### CALVIN AND HOBBES



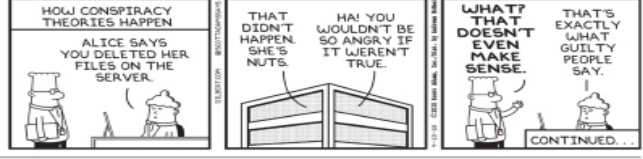
### SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers 3, 4, 5, 9, 1, 8, 7, 2, 6, 4, 3, 5, 8, 9, 6, 2, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 7, 3, 5, 9, 8, 6, 3, 7, 1, 2, 4.

### WIZARD OF ID



### DILBERT



### KENKEN

KenKen puzzle grid with numbers 7+, 8+, 1-, 3, 4+, 72x, 1-, 2+, 5-, 3-, 2+, 12x, 60x.

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.

### CROSSWORD | Edited by Will Shortz

- Across: 1 One taking a blue streak; 7 Get used to it; 13 Segregated; 15 Images on a timeline of human evolution, maybe; 16 Keeps in reserve; 18 Actors Alden and Anthony; 19 "Help yourself, there's plenty left!"; 20 High points?; 21 Layout with little concern for privacy; 22 Poker challenge; 23 Place for soldiers to eat; 24 Pisco, Calif.; 25 Agile African animals; 27 "In what sense?"; 31 Wasn't productive; 32 Wine-tasting offer; 34 Northern; 35 Many a YouTube video upload plenty left!; 42 Not abundant; 43 Spiny fish named after a bird; 44 Betsy; 45 Kind of development; 46 OPEC nation since 2007; 47 Render undrinkable, or stoned; 48 Rounds mixed martial arts standout of the 2010s; 49 Seedy establishment; 50 Rough Riders' rides; 51 Precepts; 1 Made-to-order; 2 Begun to remove, as a diaper; 3 Defeats decisively, in slang; 4 Some urban noise pollution; 5 Not obligated; 6 Some cobbling work on; 7 With 12-Down, blue cheese and black coffee, typically; 8 Intro to a big announcement; 9 Serious, as an offense; 10 Loose, in a way, as planks or siding; 11 Nasal spray targets work on; 12 See 7-Down; 13 Dodge S.U.V.s; 17 Frits with -gruts; 26 Like many coasts with inlets; 27 Scold at length; 28 Emergency room case; 29 Acted awfully; 30 Good times for shopping spree; 32 "Heaven forbid!"; 33 [Boo-hoo]; 34 Rigid and spica; 36 Deserve something through hard work; 37 Piece of armor worn over the shin; 38 Drip source; 39 Secure; 40 Give the eye; 41 1995 novel "Game";

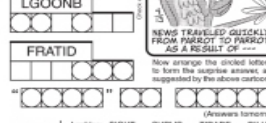
### JUMBLE



### Answers to Previous Puzzles

Answers to previous puzzles: 3 2 4 1, 1 3 2 4, 4 1 3 2, 1 6 4 5 3 2, 2 5 1 3 4 6, 3 2 5 4 6 1, 5 4 2 6 1 3, 4 3 2 1 2 5, 6 1 3 2 5 4.

### THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



### Answers to Previous Puzzles

Answers to previous puzzles: 3 2 4 1, 1 3 2 4, 4 1 3 2, 1 6 4 5 3 2, 2 5 1 3 4 6, 3 2 5 4 6 1, 5 4 2 6 1 3, 4 3 2 1 2 5, 6 1 3 2 5 4.



# Culture



AN RONG XU FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The guitarist Rafiq Bhatia onstage with Son Lux, the indie-rock band he joined in 2014. There are no conventional guitar solos on his album, but as the title, “Breaking English,” suggests, his aim is to dismantle dominant languages.

## Writing his own language of sound

Rafiq Bhatia’s new album springs from eclectic mix of inspirations and genres

BY ANDREW R. CHOW

The inspirations for Rafiq Bhatia’s new album, “Breaking English,” include but are not limited to: Jimi Hendrix concert videos, blaring prayer calls from Turkish mosques, East African archaeological sites, the death of Trayvon Martin and Flying Lotus sound collages.

They might sound scattered on paper, but they coalesce in the hands of Mr. Bhatia, a guitarist who refuses to be pinned to one genre, culture or instrument. This 30-year-old musician fluidly moves between jazz and rock groups, Indian and American musical influences, and acoustic and electronic sounds. His transient approach, combined with his obsession of assiduously

studying the past in order to break cleanly from it, makes him one of the most intriguing figures in music today.

“Breaking English” is not quite jazz and not quite electronica. The record is filled with booming electronic drums, bittersweet Carnatic violin melodies, hushed gospel choirs and swarms of feedback. It’s the sound of a confident artist showing off his digital ambition and technical wizardry, but the process of developing this sound was often fraught.

“I went through a lot of periods of very intense self-doubt about whether somebody like me could deal with this way of making music,” Mr. Bhatia said in an interview at a Vietnamese cafe in Bushwick, Brooklyn.

Growing up in a Muslim family in Raleigh, N.C., made him accustomed to being perceived as an outsider. “There was a very large percentage of the population down there that were not comfortable with our presence,” he said.

And when he recently started wading into the world of electronic music and sound design after spending years in jazz communities, he said he felt ostracized: “A lot of these spaces are dominated by white men or are very heavily segregated.”

**A confident artist is displaying ambition and technical wizardry.**

For inspiration, he leaned into his identity and immersed himself in his family’s labyrinthine, peripatetic history. His relatives trace back to India but spent several generations in East Africa; his maternal grandfather owned a restaurant in Tanzania, where he played violin for his patrons.

That legacy manifests on “Breaking English” in the Carnatic violin playing of Anjna Swaminathan, whose lithe melodic gestures fit snugly with Mr. Bha-

tia’s hypnotic, Radiohead-like guitar patterns. And two songs named “Olduvai” refer to the Tanzanian gorge that Mr. Bhatia visited with his family about a decade ago, where some of the earliest human fossils were discovered.

While Mr. Bhatia embraced his cultural past, he rejected his musical one. An intimidatingly strong guitar player from an early age, he studied first at New York University and then at Oberlin, where he was taken under the wing of the estimable drummer Billy Hart. In subsequent collaborations with Vijay Iyer, Marcus Gilmore and David Virelles, Mr. Bhatia proved he could hang with anyone in the jazz world. “He would keep it on reserve and then suddenly unleash something really beautiful and terrifying and intense,” Mr. Iyer, a MacArthur fellow, recalled in a phone interview.

But after recording “Yes It Will,” his 2012 debut that was more closely aligned with modern jazz sensibilities,

Mr. Bhatia became disillusioned with the confines of the guitar and the staid conventions of acoustic jazz recording sessions. “I felt I needed to make a radical break with my instrument and retool my whole vocabulary,” he said. So he left his main instrument out of the creative process until the end, instead composing on Ableton Live, plug-ins and “the wall that I banged my head against for a solid few years until the music finally started to make sense,” he said with a laugh.

As he labored on his own compositions, Mr. Bhatia jumped across another genre divide when he joined the indie-rock songwriter Ryan Lott in his band Son Lux in 2014. The pair found a kindred drive for disorientation, with Mr. Lott astounded by some of Mr. Bhatia’s explorations upon first listen: “What kind of brain thinks that this is O.K. — and has the creative bravery to make it happen?” he recalled wondering in an interview backstage at a recent concert.

The group has since put out two grandiose albums with the lineup of Mr. Lott, Mr. Bhatia and the drummer Ian Chang, including “Brighter Wounds,” which was released in February. At the Brooklyn show, Mr. Bhatia unleashed his whole toolbox before a solo on “Stolen” filled with spindly runs reminiscent of one his jazz heroes, Bill Frisell.

There are no conventional guitar solos on “Breaking English” — perhaps a strange choice for someone so adept on the instrument. But as the album title suggests, its aim is to dismantle dominant languages and tendencies — to capture “what it would be like to fly over an undiscovered planet,” Mr. Bhatia said.

Now the only question is: What will he sound like next?

“You don’t want an artist to put out the sequel — you want them to come around with something that no one expected,” Mr. Iyer said. “I think he’s got all that in him.”

## Musicality over keyboard brilliance

LONDON

Piano competition moves to international stages and changes its emphasis

BY MICHAEL WHITE

The Leeds International Piano Competition got underway this month — but not in Leeds, England, where this famous fixture of the international keyboard circuit has been based since it began in 1963.

“The Leeds,” as the competition is known, has taken up its bed and walked. The venues for the first round were in Berlin, Singapore and New York.

The competition — whose prizewinners include Radu Lupu, Mitsuko Uchida, Andras Schiff and Murray Perahia — is going global in an effort to confront the growing power of its rivals on the international circuit: heavy-hitting operations like the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, the Van Cliburn in Fort Worth, or the Honens in Calgary, Alberta. But there’s another reason.

Music competitions are widely thought to be in need of change, to modify their death-or-glory qualities and find a new kind of humanity. (The composer Bela Bartok once said that such events were for horses, not musicians.)

The Leeds is changing with a vengeance. Its creator, the formidable piano teacher Fanny Waterman, retired last year at age 95, and control has passed to new blood: Paul Lewis, a British pianist, and Adam Gatehouse, a former power broker at the BBC, are now joint artistic directors.

Between them, they have reimagined what a piano competition can be. It is not a surprising move for two people



At left, Paul Lewis, left, and Adam Gatehouse, artistic directors of the Leeds competition; and Fanny Waterman and Murray Perahia, far right, backstage in 1972.

who accepted the job having the same misgivings as Bartok.

Mr. Gatehouse previously ran the BBC’s New Generation Artists, a platform for talent that’s emphatically non-competitive, and said he was approaching his new task with “a healthy skepticism.” Mr. Lewis has also kept clear of contests, apart from what he remembers as the “miserable” experience of taking second prize in the 1994 London International Piano Competition.

“You can’t really like the idea of them,” Mr. Lewis said, “because they don’t foster an environment where you can properly be heard as a musician. When you walk onstage as a competitor, you should be thinking about music, but you’re actually thinking about being judged.”

He added that he did not like the way “competitions tend to exist for themselves, full of self-congratulation when a

few prizewinners go out into the world and succeed. The goal should be to help performers whether they win prizes or not.”

But both Mr. Lewis and Mr. Gatehouse said they accepted that, like or loathe them, competitions are popular with the public and help launch careers.

“They’re part of the fabric — they’re not going to go away,” Mr. Lewis said. “So I thought, O.K., if I were 24 and entering the Leeds, what would I want it to be? How could I bring it closer to the reality of what it is to be a musician in the 21st century?”

The answer was a series of changes that transformed a blood-sports entertainment to a celebration of the keyboard, with, perhaps, a different sort of winner: somebody whose musicality runs deeper than the fire and flash of virtuoso brilliance.

After this month’s rounds in Berlin,



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEEDS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

**“How could I bring it closer to the reality of what it is to be a musician in the 21st century?”**

Singapore and New York, the competition will return to Leeds in September. This is a much less punishing experience: In the past, 80 pianists flew into Leeds from across the world and played through the rounds and finals relentlessly, under pressure, for as long as three weeks.

“No one’s at their best in those circumstances — least of all the jury,” Mr. Gatehouse said. “By the time you reach contestant number 43 at 9 p.m. on day five you’re completely knock-eyed and can’t make meaningful comparisons.”

“So splitting off the first rounds and locating them strategically in Europe,

Asia and America — closer to where most of the contestants come from — seemed like a good idea, as well as giving the competition a more global presence.”

Those first rounds will reduce the number of candidates who end up in Leeds to 24, for a competition that lasts 10 days. The lucky 24 will have plenty of time for preparation. And they’ll find that some of the time-honored cruelties of competitions have been dropped.

“It used to be,” Mr. Gatehouse said, “that as soon as someone was eliminated they had to vacate their room and get the next flight home, their self-confidence in tatters. But now everyone will stay on to the end, and we’ll gainfully employ them — in pop-up recitals, educational projects at community centers, schools, anywhere we can get a piano. And they’ll all participate in master classes with the jurors.”

“They’ll still go home disappointed,

but it won’t be with that devastating sense of failure and rejection.”

Jurors will also mentor some participants, with continuing career advice part of what Mr. Lewis calls the competition’s “duty of care.” And prize packages for first, second or third place extends beyond the usual cash awards, engagements and recordings to include long-term management from a leading artists’ agency.

If all this reads like going soft on a snowflake generation that needs to be toughened up for life on the concert circuit, there are some respects in which the Leeds makes more demands than before. The rules now require performers to offer more repertoire, with more variety. They have to prove themselves in chamber music, collaborating with other instrumentalists. For the finals they must offer two concertos, with one from before the Romantic era — which means they cannot rely on churning out the standard virtuoso repertoire of Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky and Grieg that often wins competitions. Most interesting of all, performers have to put together a recital program with a written explanation of the thinking behind it.

“It’s not that we don’t value virtuosity,” Mr. Gatehouse said, “but we want to make the point that being musical is what will count.”

As the pianist Lars Vogt, a past winner of the Leeds and one of this year’s jurors, put it: “We’ll be looking for someone with a view of the world, not just fast fingers. Who can tell a story in their playing and make meaningful connection with an audience.”

If these promises are met, the Leeds will certainly be different this year. It will nurture and explore, dig deeper into what it takes to be a pianist. And perhaps it will be won by someone whose abilities extend beyond a knack for winning competitions.



## CULTURE

## Epic stature for Odyssey's witch

Novelist's fresh appraisal of Circe addresses male anxiety over strong women

BY ALEXANDRA ALTER

On a cold, sunny afternoon in March, the novelist Madeline Miller wandered through the Greek and Roman galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, swooning over ancient amphoras and ethereal statues of gods and goddesses.

She was eager to see a particular artifact — a 2,500-year-old wine vessel painted with a scene from Homer's *Odyssey*, as Odysseus confronts the goddess and sorceress Circe after she transforms his men into pigs.

Ms. Miller was riveted and horrified by that scene when she first read the *Odyssey*, and it became a pivotal moment in her new novel, "Circe," a bold and subversive retelling of the goddess's story that manages to be both epic and intimate in its scope, recasting the most infamous female figure from the *Odyssey* as a hero in her own right.

But on her way to see the vase, she kept getting distracted, dazzled by the mythical figures that have populated her imagination since she was a little girl, when her mother read passages to her from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* at bedtime. More age-appropriate fare never grabbed her attention in the same way. "I wanted gods and monsters," she said.

Visiting the museum felt like a homecoming of sorts. Growing up on the Upper East Side, she spent hours roaming the Met, marveling at the heroes, warriors and deities. Exploring those halls decades later, she was just as awestruck.

"This is one of my favorites," she said, bounding toward a marble statue of a wounded Amazon warrior, noting that the figure would have once been brightly painted. "You can see the drops of blood on the side of her breast."

She spotted a terra-cotta plaque of Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, cautiously approaching his wife Penelope after he returns to Ithaca. "I love the emotion that's conveyed in just her posture," she said.

Tucked away in a dimly lit gallery was the Circe vase, which showed Odysseus pursuing Circe with his sword drawn as his pigheaded men trail helplessly behind him.

"Circe as a character is the embodiment of male anxiety about female power," Ms. Miller said, as she studied the vase, snapping photos with her phone. "Of course she has to be vanquished."

That scene infuriated Ms. Miller when she read the *Odyssey* on her own, at 13. It bothered her that one of the most powerful female figures in the epic was left kneeling and covering before Odysseus, and then takes him to bed as a conciliatory gesture. "For the hero to succeed, the woman has to be put in her place, and that was always so disappointing," she said.

Years later, when she was majoring in classics at Brown University and read the *Odyssey* in the original Homeric Greek for the first time, Ms. Miller began to rethink Circe's story, which unfolds from Odysseus's perspective, as he describes his time on her island to the Phaeacians. She saw that Circe, far from being purely a villain or a vanquished witch, had a benevolent side and played



AN RONG XU FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



Top, Madeline Miller in the Greek and Roman galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Above, a 2,500-year-old clay wine vessel showing Odysseus confronting Circe.

a crucial role guiding Odysseus back to Ithaca.

Ms. Miller's fascination with Circe became an obsession after she published her 2011 debut novel, "The Song of Achilles," a retelling of the *Iliad* that centers on a romance between Achilles and his friend Patroclus.

She had planned to stay away from epics for a while, but kept thinking about the witch, alone on her island. Why did she transform men into animals? What happened to her after Odysseus and his crew sailed away, or in the centuries before they arrived? She decided Circe deserved her own epic.

"Epic has been so traditionally male," she said. "All these stories are composed by men, largely starring men, and I really wanted a female perspective."

Recycling classical myths is a well-worn literary trope; everyone from Shakespeare to Margaret Atwood and Rick Riordan have riffed on and remixed Greek and Roman stories. Ms. Miller, 39, who lives outside Philadelphia, is particularly well equipped to tackle Homer. She began studying Latin when she was 12, started on Greek a couple of years later, and seems to have near encyclopedic knowledge of ancient Western gods and goddesses.

"Circe" — a feminist reboot starring a goddess who has often been overlooked, or miscast as a vindictive seductress — has drawn praise both from classicists scholars and novelists like Margaret George and Ann Patchett.

Emily Wilson, a classicist who recently published a new translation of the *Odyssey*, said she was skeptical at first of yet another "retelling of a classical

myth," but was won over by Ms. Miller's take. "What she's doing is partly about gender, but it's also addressing a bigger question about power, and the abuse of power," she said.

In Ms. Miller's version, Circe's encounter with Odysseus is only a slice of her story, which unfolds over thousands of years and begins in the palace of her father, the sun god Helios. Her family members, who treat her with cruelty or indifference, become infamous in their own right: Her sister Pasiphae marries King Minos and gives birth to the Minotaur, a bullheaded, man-eating monster; while her brother Aeetes grows up

### The novel recasts Circe as a hero in her own right.

to rule Colchis, the land of the Golden Fleece, and fathers Medea, who later murders her children.

Circe's fortune changes when she discovers her power to transform. After she turns a nymph, Scylla, into a six-headed sea monster, Helios banishes Circe to a remote island where she spends centuries in exile, with wolves and lions as her companions.

Ms. Miller was intrigued by Homer's description of Circe as "speaking like a human," an odd detail that is never fully explained in the *Odyssey*. In her novel, Circe's deceptively soft voice produces grave consequences. When sailors wash up on her island, she welcomes them with wine and food, and they mistake her for a mortal.

After a violent encounter with one

sailor, she begins turning them into pigs.

To flesh out Circe's story, Ms. Miller looked beyond the *Odyssey* and consulted a handful of ancient texts. She found scattered references to Circe across the ancient world, and drew from the plot of the *Telegony*, an epic preserved only in a short summary, which tells the story of Telegonus, Odysseus and Circe's son.

She plucked other details from the *Argonautica*, an epic poem about the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts, which describes how Circe performs a purification ritual for Jason and Medea.

She wove some of the mythology into her narrative, and ignored other depictions that struck her as silly or sexist, deliberately omitting a scene from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which Circe punishes a king who spurns her advances by turning him into a woodpecker.

"That's one of the funny things about mythological realism, or whatever it is that I write," she said. "You have to write about six-headed monsters, but from a realistic perspective."

It's perhaps the same reason Ms. Miller loves the Greek and Roman antiquities at the Met, works of art that feel both timeless and transcendent, yet life-like. As she made her way through the treasure-filled galleries, she kept "nerding out," as she sheepishly called it, over the relics. She paused to admire a marble figure of Aphrodite crouching in the bath and a headless statue of Hermes.

A look of excitement crossed her face as she rushed toward one of her favorite artifacts. "If you will indulge me, there's a chariot," she said, practically skipping off.

## A large and star-studded life

## BOOK REVIEW

**Berenice Abbott: A Life in Photography**  
By Julia Van Haften. Illustrated. 634 pp.  
W. W. Norton & Company. \$45.

BY DWIGHT GARNER

The photographer Berenice Abbott (1898-1991), the daughter of a cement maker, grew up poor in the Midwest and maintained an accent that one observer called "harsh Ohio."

One of nature's misfits, Abbott escaped to Ohio State University in 1917 and bobbed her hair. This was, she would comment, "my first ever act of rebellion." After one year she dropped out and fled to Greenwich Village. She rarely set foot in Ohio again.

Abbott would become, in 1920s Paris, one of the world's important portrait photographers, making sensitive and indelible images of people like Jean Cocteau, James Joyce, Janet Flanner and Djuna Barnes.

She returned to New York and in just one stage of her long career, became a revolutionary chronicler of the modern metropolis. Her pulsing photograph "Nightview, New York," taken from an upper-floor window of the Empire State Building in 1932, remains among the most widely recognized images we have of the city.

Working in the Bowery, Abbott made photographs like "Blossom Restaurant," in which a handwritten menu sprawls like graffiti across a restaurant window in 1935. (An entree of pig's knuckles is 25 cents.) The poet Charles Simic has written that he could survive a long solitary confinement if he could study this photograph at leisure.

When a male supervisor told Abbott that "nice girls" don't go to the Bowery, she replied: "Buddy, I'm not a nice girl. I'm a photographer. . . I go anywhere."

Abbott led a large, unconventional and sometimes wild life, and it's astonishing — a better word might be maddening — that Julia Van Haften's "Berenice Abbott: A Life in Photography" is the first full-dress biography we have of her.

Van Haften, who was the founding curator of the New York Public Library's photography collection, wrestles Abbott's big life onto the page. This is a vital work of American cultural history, and it wedges in so many personalities and vistas that it's hard to know where to begin.

From the start, Abbott seemed more vivid than most people. She had big blue-green eyes — "enormous Kewpie eyes," in the words of the impresario Lincoln Kirstein. The journalist Kay Larson called them "startling glacial turquoise."

With her bobbed hair, no-nonsense mien and tendency to wear trousers — this at a time when doing so got a woman hassled on the street — Abbott was an eye-fel. Throughout her life, photographers and painters competed to capture her image; Isamu Noguchi made a sculpture of her in 1929.

In Greenwich Village, when she was all of 20, Abbott fell in with a crowd that included the playwright Eugene O'Neill (she had small parts in several productions of his plays), the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, the writer Malcolm Cowley and the photographer Man Ray.

She did not have a trust fund, like some in her milieu. She worked as a waitress, a secretary and a reader for a clipping service. She wanted to study



MIRIAM AND IRA D. WALLACH DIVISION OF ART, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS, PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

journalism but Columbia's program was too crowded for her taste, and then it closed during the First World War.

Abbott was a chain-smoker, a big drinker at times, and she liked to dance. She and Man Ray were kicked off one dance floor for "obscenity." Van Haften writes, which is one definition of pretty good dancing. When Man Ray needed a divorce, and the only ground New York State would accept was adultery, Abbott agreed to be named as the other woman.

Abbott began to slip an extra "e" into her birth name, which was Bernice. (She was upset when some publications, including *The New York Times*, omitted the extra letter.)

She began to have relationships with women and had several great early love affairs.

Abbott moved to Paris in 1921, when

she was 22. She might as well be "poor there as poor here," she thought. She became a portrait photographer after working as Man Ray's studio assistant. Her friends in Paris included André Gide, the bookstore owner Sylvia Beach and Hadley Richardson, Ernest Hemingway's first wife.

Her fame was spread by Janet Flanner, who sometimes wrote about Abbott's work in her "Letter From Paris" in *The New Yorker*. Joyce immortalized his portrait session with Abbott in "Finnegans Wake," noting how "the Tulloch-Turnbull girl with her cold-blood kodak shotted the as yet unremunerated national apostate, who was cowardly gun and camera shy."

In Paris, Abbott also befriended the then-elderly photographic pioneer Eugène Atget, and after his death she purchased his archive, which would become something of an albatross.



BERENICE LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY, VAN VECHTEN TRUST  
Berenice Abbott in 1937. At left, her photograph of the Blossom Restaurant in the Bowery section of New York City.

Back in New York, Abbott began making her famous city images and worked for the WPA's Federal Art Project during the Depression. She took freelance work, including shooting titans of industry for *Fortune* magazine, which she generally loathed.

She entered into a three-decade relationship with the Kansas-born journalist and critic Elizabeth McCausland. Van Haften smuggles in piquant details about their lives. About their apartment on Commerce Street in the Village, for example, she writes: "With no shower or tub, they managed sponge baths in a small sink, with towels on the floor, for their entire 30-year tenancy."

During the photographic boom of the 1970s, Abbott would be rediscovered and recognized for the genius she was. The money began to come in. But there were lean times in between. This book

is a near-anthology of rejection, from grant committees, publishers and galleries.

Abbott could be tough to deal with and frequently got into spats about things like ownership of negatives.

For a period she took well-regarded scientific photographs before moving to Maine, buying a Jeep and essentially retiring. She still liked dancing with women. She wrote to a friend: "There has been some mighty friggin dancing going on. I'm not sure what friggin means but the word around here is legion."

The last quarter of this book is primarily made up of the honors Abbott received and is a slog.

Van Haften can't help but type up every detail ("Berenice's 90th birthday celebration included an afternoon excursion on the historic Moosehead Lake steamboat *Katahdin*"), so much so that you lose a bit of your good will toward the earlier portions of the book.

This is a less than perfect biography in other ways. The author is better on the trees than the forest, and as a writer she is sometimes flat-footed. The narrative has a tendency to skip around in time.

But Van Haften has done her research, the real work, and the pages turn themselves.

"Everybody writes, but they know they are not 'writers,'" Abbott once said. "Everybody photographs, but they don't realize they are not photographers."

This book sends you back to Abbott's images. Looking at them, you might recall Lewis Mumford's line about one of Abbott's early solo shows. Writing in *The New Yorker*, he said that he wanted "miles and miles of such pictures."



# TRAVEL

## Finding Bangkok's best while you can

**BANGKOK, FROM PAGE 1**  
kets." This would happen by year's end. Eventually. Maybe. Sometime.

I wasn't going to take a chance. If Bangkok's ad hoc restaurants were threatened — not only by clean-side-walk-loving governments but, just as seriously, by gentrification and changing tastes — I had to go before it was too late. In July, I flew to Bangkok for a week of eating nothing but street food.

Pretty much immediately, I learned that street food was a term with many definitions.

"For me, street food is only a cart," said Duangporn Songvisava, known as Bo, who with her husband, Dylan Jones, runs the restaurants *bo.lan*, which received a Michelin star in December, and *Err*, which serves rustic drinking food with a focus on quality ingredients. When she was young, Ms. Songvisava, now 37, remembered, as many as 20 carts would line up outside her school to sell snacks on sticks to students. "They have, like, the moo ping — grilled pork on a stick, barbecue — the sausage, the fishball. It just fills you up before you have dinner." Some were pushcarts, others bicycle-based, but all were mobile and ephemeral.

That, she said, was the tail end of the golden age of Bangkok street food. "In the old days when someone wants to open a cart or a stall, they know how to cook," she said. "The idea was, you're a good cook — maybe you should make some food for other people, for a living."

Now, Ms. Songvisava said, profit margins rule. "They just buy everything from the factory, use industrial processed food," she said. "A lot of seasoning and MSG involved to produce the food because people doesn't complain."

Ms. Songvisava was telling me this over beers at Talad Saphan Phut, a night market that she considered a sad remedy for Bangkok's street food woes. It was here, at a lonely, out-of-the-way parking lot, that the city had relocated vendors from the scheduled-for-destruction Flower Market, on the theory that loyal customers would follow. We were joined by an intrepid eating crew, which included Mr. Jones; Chawadee Nualkhair, the blogger, known as Chow, behind *Bangkok Glutton*; and the writer Vincent Vichit-Vadakan who had put me up for my stay and now edits the Michelin Guide's Bangkok site.

"This is like a good five to 10 kilometers from where the original was," said Ms. Nualkhair. "So the people who used to eat these guys' food wouldn't come here on a regular basis with this special trip." Only a few vendors in all of Bangkok, she estimated, cooked well enough that people would follow them to new locations.

We decided to drown our concerns in the most apropos way: with street food. Along Thanon Chan, in a surprisingly quiet little neighborhood, were sois, or side streets, full of food vendors, who had been relocated off the main street. Our gang descended upon them, ordering bowls of noodles — *yen ta fo*, pink rice noodles in broth with wontons and fishballs, and *bamee moodaeng*, ribbony egg noodles with roast pork — and watery rice porridge studded with bits of duck or nuggets of coagulated blood,



Local people and tourists at the Train Market in Ratchada in Bangkok. The city has said street food vendors would be moved away from "vital walkways," although details are hazy.

and sweet braised pig's foot, and bags of all kinds of fried things. As we crowded around folding metal tables and accentuated our treasures with chilies in vinegar or ground dried chilies, and cracked open craft beers, it all felt deliciously normal — the kind of Bangkok street-food life I'd always imagined.

That picture grew more complex over the next few days. In the mornings, I'd leave Vincent's apartment in search of coffee — and more often than not would return with a baggie of sticky rice and skewers of sweet, fatty grilled pork from the moo ping cart stationed outside his front door. (Vincent lives near a university, so there's a steady flow of hungry, frugal students. Some things never change.)

By lunchtime, I would hook up with a friend for exploratory eating. With Dwight Turner, an American who's blogged for years at *BKKFatty.com*, I went to the farther reaches of Sukhumvit Road, a central artery through Bangkok. Several SkyTrain stops past the glistening condos and mega-malls, the street-food crackdown didn't seem to matter, and Mr. Turner and I had to squeeze past countless vendors — of curries, sausages, fruit, flowers, electronics — occupying sidewalk space.

For Mr. Turner, street food was not necessarily defined by mobility. "The necessity," he said, "is that it's convenient, at a price that people are willing to pay." His definition — which will no doubt enrage certain corners of the internet — opened up what I could consider street food to include Bangkok's shophouse restaurants: boxy, frill-free dining rooms where the cooking is done up front, in a kitchen that's often little more than an elaborate, sedentary cart. Such was the case at Sai Kaew, the duck noodle shop Mr. Turner brought me to.

"In the beginning, I worked full-time in an office like most Thais," said Sai Kaew's owner, Ruengchai Chartmongkoljaroen. Thirty years ago, however, he quit his job to push a cart. He set up 10 tables on sidewalk space he'd rented in front of a building, walked his cart in circles to attract attention, and of course worked on his recipes, developing the condiment that became his calling card: light, crunchy, slippery boiled duck intestines, or *sai kaew*. (Excellent with a slather of his vibrant green hot sauce, and a worthy foil for the sweetly rich duck.) The price for a bowl in 1987: 10 baht, or about 40 cents at the time.

"Day 1, we opened from 12 p.m. to 2 a.m.," he said. "We sold half a duck." Business improved, but even so, he pushed the cart for 16 years before parking it at this shophouse, where on a good day he and his two daughters, who've learned the business from childhood, will go through "50 big ducks." Though his duck noodles are now well known, the price remains right: Lunch for two was 160 baht, or less than \$5.

This trajectory was one I heard time and again as I ate everything from delicate pig's brain to incendiary papaya salad to rice noodles stir-fried on a charcoal-fired wok. There might be many reasons to open a cart — a desire for freedom, a love of off-cuts — but eventually, almost everyone wants the security of bricks and mortar.

Even Pritpal Singh Sirikumar, whose stand selling crisp, yummy samosas was founded by his father some 50 years ago, dreamed of moving from his open-air nook — about the size of a couch — at the corner of a Chinatown soi. He said it would be to have his own shophouse. "Then we can put in tables and chairs. We can serve more customers. I will serve *lassi*."

Mr. Sirikumar's sentiments were echoed by people like Pongsuang Kunprasop, known as Note, a friend I hadn't seen in a decade but who refused to eat

street food with me. "Been sharing sidewalk with rats and cockroach at night for all my life," he wrote in an email.

Over the course of a week, I did not see much vermin, nor did I fall ill. (I did carry charcoal pills, a gift from Ms. Songvisava and Mr. Jones, said to counteract food poisoning.) But I also came to appreciate the appeal of air-conditioning and to understand that the romance attached to the cart, by Thais as well as Westerners, does not always mesh with reality.

It's hard work to push a cart, and unless you get lucky — like Raan Jay Fai, a crab-omelet stall that won a Michelin star in December (and that is now so busy the owner has said she would like to return the star) — a shophouse restaurant, a permanent stall in a covered market, or even a job cooking "street food" in the food court of a fancy mall promises stability. And for Thais, entering the middle class is often about strolling down a clear sidewalk to work, dining in air-conditioned comfort and going home to a modern condo. Who's to say they're wrong in those desires?

However endangered street food is, pursuing it remains an eye-opening way to discover a city like Bangkok. One morning, Rattama Pongponrat, known as Pom, an ebullient culinary consultant and a former curator at Museum Siam, led me on a daylong binge, from a breakfast of toast with coconut jam to a sidewalk stand selling noodles with atypically thick slices of oofal. There was fried chicken piled atop metal tables. There was glorious mango ice cream from a dinky corner shop.

And there was Ms. Pongponrat, overjoyed at it all. When the sun was high, we strode through the shaded alleyways of Chinatown, past tropical fruits pickled in chilies, batter-fried squid roe with a spicy-sweet sauce — until, finally, we burst out onto a bridge where Ms. Pongponrat had hoped to find one particular vendor. Instead, the bridge had been entirely cleared.

"Oh, my God, it's all gone!" Ms. Pongponrat shouted. "I never knew it was a bridge. I've never seen this before in my life." She began swearing, then looked up at a well-tended four-story building, yellow with green shutters, the crisp style at once Chinese and neo-Classical. "What a beautiful building," she said in wonder. Then we plunged back into the fray to find another snack.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID RAMA TERRAZAS MORALES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



Clockwise from top: A big meal including a seafood platter and pork ribs costs about \$30 in Ratchada; miang kham, a snack including dry shrimps, peanuts and onion, wrapped in a leaf; noodles with pork; yellow noodles with pork oofal.

The New York Times

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