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South Korea and Japan, friendly foes

Narushige Michishita

OPINION

TOKYO On Friday morning, as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan was setting off to attend the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Olympics, as well as a side meeting with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, he declared that cooperation among their two countries and the United States was “unshakable” in the face of threats from North Korea.

Yet just last week some commentators were forecasting that the encounter could only be “tense,” citing, as ever, residual tensions stemming from Japan’s colonization of the Korean Peninsula in 1910-45. As is routinely reported, Japan’s wartime treatment of so-called comfort women — women enlisted to sexually service Japanese troops — appears to endanger its ties with South Korea because, some say, it has not adequately apologized for its record.

The two countries may disagree bitterly over history, but not over security.

The relationship between Tokyo and Seoul does seem to be as uncomfortable as it is important. In fact, though, it is far more important than it is uncomfortable — as the two governments well know.

Despite the nationalistic rhetoric that the countries’ leaders sometimes adopt with their respective domestic constituencies, ties between Japan and South Korea are fundamentally driven by pragmatic and hard-nosed considerations, especially about security. Too often this simple fact goes unacknowledged, even though it should be a source of some reassurance, especially at a time when North Korea seems increasingly belligerent and China more and more assertive.

For one thing, Japan helped South Korea develop its defense industry. When the United States got bogged down in the Vietnam War in the late 1960s, Washington reduced its defense commitment to South Korea and asked the Japanese government to fill the gap. At first Seoul requested equipment for anti-guerrilla operations. After Tokyo declined, citing a no-arms-sales policy, President Park Chung-hee changed tack, deciding to use financial and technical help from Japan to build up South Korea’s heavy industry — in order, he said, to establish a military industrial base that would serve national defense.

Under the 1965 treaty that had normalized relations between the two countries, the Japanese government would deliver a \$500 million economic assistance package to South Korea. The Park MICHISHITA, PAGE 11

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



GILLES SARRÉ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Squaring off Boxing in Chengdu, China, at a “fight club.” The club’s manager said he found the inspiration to open the business — which also offers kickboxing and mixed martial arts — after repeated viewings of the 1999 movie in which Brad Pitt and Edward Norton star as partners who start an underground fighting club. PAGE 3

President stands aside during days of turmoil

NEWS ANALYSIS
WASHINGTON

Trump unusually quiet as stocks plunge, budget passes and aide is ousted

BY PETER BAKER

When he took office a year ago, President Trump vowed that the “hour of action” had arrived. But as momentous events whipsawed Washington and Wall Street in recent days, Mr. Trump seemed oddly offstage, more of a spectator than the star.

He stayed largely out of sight as the stock market plummeted in its most volatile week in years. He was largely uninvolved as Congress crafted a two-year budget agreement without him, ending a brief, middle-of-the-night shutdown Friday morning after just a few hours, rather than allowing the full shutdown he wanted to force an immigration deal. And he angrily chastised aides for keeping him out of the loop on spousal abuse allegations against a top aide.

There are times when it serves a president’s interests to step back and let events play out around him, but it goes against the grain for Mr. Trump, who has always styled himself as the master of his universe. The passive presidency of recent days presumably will not last, but even when he tries to impose his will on the capital and the world, Mr. Trump has found that there are limits to his ability to shape events.

“The president prides himself on being a great deal maker and understanding the art of the deal,” Senator Chris Coons, Democrat of Delaware, said last week during negotiations on immigration. “Sometimes he makes the best contribution when he makes his position known and then steps back and lets us work out the details and decide what he can and can’t accept.”

Mr. Trump is not a detail person even in his more active days, but his natural instinct is to involve himself in the broad strokes. His often impulsive Twitter blasts can upend negotiations and shift the focus of events, sometimes at odds with the official position of his own White House. And so his relatively low profile in recent days has been striking.

Even some of his top advisers sounded surprisingly passive last week on different issues. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson said that Russia was already trying to interfere in the midterm congressional elections this year, but there was not much the United States could do to stop it. “If it’s their intention to interfere, they are going to find ways to do that,” he told Fox News. “We can take steps we can take, but this is something that, once they decide they are going to do it, it’s very difficult to pre-empt it.”

Vice President Mike Pence, who was in South Korea for the opening of TRUMP, PAGE 6

Model for would-be autocrats

BUDAPEST

Hungarian leader pushes a democracy into decline as Europe takes no action

BY PATRICK KINGSLEY

The senior leaders of Fidesz gathered on the banks of the Danube, in a building known as the Hungarian White House, stunned by the scale of their good fortune. Their right-wing party had won unexpectedly sweeping political power in national elections. The question was how to use it.

Several men urged caution. But Viktor Orban, the prime minister-elect, disagreed. The voting result, Mr. Orban continued, had given him the right to carry out a radical overhaul of the country’s Constitution.

Mr. Orban won the argument. The private meetings, recounted by two people who were in the room and by a third who was briefed on the discussions at the time, occurred in early May 2010. Nearly eight years later, Mr. Orban has remade Hungary’s political system into what one critic calls “a new thing under the sun.” Once praised by watch-

dog groups as a leading democracy of post-Soviet Eastern Europe, Hungary is now considered a democracy in sharp, worrisome decline.

Through legislative fiat and force of will, Mr. Orban has transformed the country into a political greenhouse for an odd kind of soft autocracy, combining cron capitalism and far-right rhetoric with a single-party political culture. He has done this even as Hungary remains a member of the European Union and receives billions of dollars in funding from the bloc. European Union officials did little as Mr. Orban transformed Hungary into what he calls an “illiberal democracy.”

Now Mr. Orban is directly challenging the countries that have long dominated the European bloc, predicting that 2018 will be “a year of great battles.” At home, he is pushing new legislation, this time to place financial penalties on civil society groups that help migrants. His domestic political standing is largely unchallenged, partly because of changes he has made to the electoral system; he is almost certain to win another term in April elections.

In the European Union’s political hierarchy, Mr. Orban has often been cast as an unruly outsider — a loud, populist voice peripheral to the mainstream, and peripheral to real power. But he is now



SZILARD KOSZTICSÁK/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY

Prime Minister Viktor Orban, center, in Budapest last year. The nation has been transformed into a greenhouse for an odd kind of soft autocracy.

possibly the bloc’s greatest political challenge. He is arguing that Europe’s postwar liberal consensus “is now at an end” — and his vision is being emulated in neighboring Poland, while his influence is felt elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe.

“Viktor Orban has demonstrated that

in Europe things are possible,” the leader of Poland’s governing Law and Justice party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, said in 2016. “You have given an example, and we are learning from your example.”

Mr. Orban is emblematic of a strong- HUNGARY, PAGE 4

Challenging the cult of youth

VIENNA

Exhibition explores shifts in attitudes toward aging as populations grow older

BY JASON FARAGO

The day after I arrived in this grand city, the ostentatious capital of an empire that vanished 100 years ago, a taxi emblazoned with an ad for an Austrian brand of mineral water drove past me. Its slogan, rendered in now customary hashtag form, was #jungbleiben — or #stay young — and in TV commercials for the campaign, the actresses Keira Knightley and Sienna Miller swig straight from the bottles, and Agyness Deyn shouts in passable German, “If you want to stay young, you’d better get started early.” Spend more, consume more, drink up — but never, ever get old.

Well, whether you are strapping or

sedentary, and no matter how much you hydrate, old age is coming for you — and youth, I’m learning as a worn-out thirtysomething, is wasted on the young. Embracing the fate that awaits all of us, and casting it as something more virtuous than an affliction to be mitigated with spring water, is the project of “Aging Pride,” an extensive gambol through the art of our later years at the Belvedere Museum and one of the largest exhibitions of the season in Vienna.

Frank self-portraits by the printmaker Käthe Kollwitz, the photographer John Coplans and the painter Maria Lassnig are joined by biting videos and photographs that explore the social side of aging, by contemporary figures such as Martin Parr, Hans Op de Beek, and Fiona Tan. The show is capacious and good-natured, though in a rapidly aging country like Austria, “Aging Pride” has a particular demographic bite. When the general population is getting older (and art audiences more so), we had better expect a few more gray hairs in our white cubes.



HERLINDE KOELBL

The photographer Herlinde Koelbl’s 2001 portrait of the artist Louise Bourgeois.

With nearly 200 works, ranging across a century and intermingling icons of art history with figures little known outside Austria, the show can charitably be called a grab bag. More than one of its galleries resembles a storeroom more than a carefully hung exhibition. (“Aging Pride” has been mounted not in the famous Upper Belvedere, the plush Hapsburg palace where tourists take lip-smacking selfies in front of Gustav Klimt’s “The Kiss,” but in the Lower Belvedere, where the royals actually lived.) With so many works in relatively little space, the curator Sabine Fellner has been obliged to group the art by clashing themes that cancel each other out more than they illuminate: desire and loneliness, retirement and reinvention, death and memory.

The virtues of “Aging Pride,” then, lie in the works themselves. Nudes of old people, men and women alike, play a crucial role in this exhibition — as markers of the body in evolution, and as test cases for the social meanings of AGING, PAGE 2

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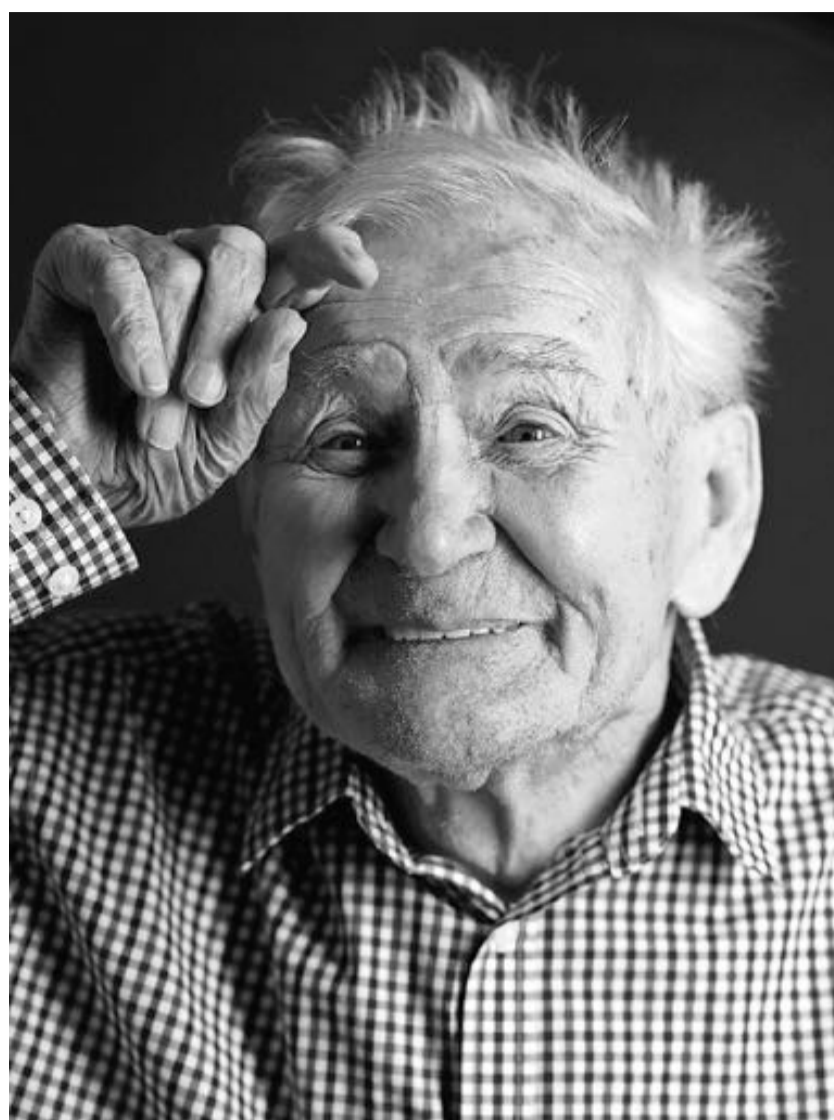
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PAGE TWO



PHOTOGRAPHS BY REGINA HÜGLI

The Austrian photographer Regina Hügli photographed people with Alzheimer's in 2016 that are included in the "Aging Pride" exhibition at the Belvedere Museum in Vienna. From left: "Katharina," "Herbert" and "Barbara."

Challenging the cult of youth

AGING, FROM PAGE 1

desire and disgust. Ms. Lassnig, a hero of Viennese painting who died in 2014 at 94, appears here in the 1975 self-portrait "Butterfly," her breasts drooping, her arms gaunt, her mouth pursed.

A more recent nude self-portrait on show is "Centered" (2002), by the American figurative painter Joan Semmel — whose unabashed paintings of herself unclad influenced a generation of feminist successors. Ms. Semmel, who turned 70 the year she painted the work, sits with her right leg bent and her arm wrapped around her knee. She holds a camera in front of her face: a marker of authorship, but also a mask.

Compared with the paintings, the photographs of nude older people in the exhibition display less benevolence. A late suite of images by Mr. Coplans, a British artist (and co-founder of the magazine *Artforum*) who photographed his body with merciless objectivity, divides his nude, reclining body across four starkly cropped prints. His distended belly, flabby thighs and skin speckled by decades of exposure to the sun appear in a cool, even light, as if he were al-

ready on a mortuary slab.

But there are also more tender photographs, and not all the nudes are self-portraits: Juergen Teller photographs a then-64-year-old Helen Mirren in the bath, her nipples faintly visible beneath the soapy water, her face steely and seductively absolute. The image is a confident sally against double standards of sex appeal: If Denzel Washington can still draw looks in his early 60s, why can't she?

Paintings of nude old people are relatively rare in art history, not only because of a cult of youth and beauty. More concretely, humans now live decades longer than they did just a couple of centuries ago. (When the Belvedere was built in the early 18th century, the life expectancy for European males was under 30.) In the catalog for "Aging Pride," Ms. Fellner notes that the ranks of the elderly are set to expand 37.5 percent in Austria over the next 12 years alone. Low birthrates from Spain to Slovakia, combined with increasing life spans, will see Europe's work force shrink nearly 12 percent by 2060: a phenomenon with not only worrisome economic consequences but political ones.



MARGOT PILZ/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY, FONDATION OSKAR KOKOSCHKA/ARS, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, JOHANNES STOLL/BELVEDERE
The "Aging Pride" exhibition features nearly 200 works ranging across a century and intermingling icons of art history with figures little known outside Austria.

What sort of lives will these old Europeans lead? Loneliness is a risk — though changing work patterns and isolating technologies have seen a surge in loneliness among the young —

and long-term relationships pose hazards of their own. Mr. Op de Beeck's grave video "Coffee" (1999) shows an older couple in an overlit cafe, she staring into the distance, he slumping

in his chair, bored, absent.

Increasing life spans and improving medical technologies have also introduced a growing danger in old age: that of dementia, of the body outlasting the brain. In a revealing series of black-and-white portraits by the Austrian photographer Regina Hügli, people with Alzheimer's disease show expressions of delight, confusion, bemusement and utter vacancy.

But old age can also be a third act of life, permitting new identities and greater social independence. It need not entail a loss of sexual desire — Western literature bulges with dirty old men, and women of a certain age, too, have the right to desire.

One of the delights of "Aging Pride" is a short video by the Austrian artist Carola Dertnig, who interviewed her grandmother, then 86, about a dream she had the night before: she had fantasized that she was in a forest, locked in the arms of "a hunk." She is embarrassed to have such desires at her age, but only a little.

"Such a nice fellow I picked up in my dream," the grandmother says wistfully, before the telltale strains of Barry White's "Love's Theme" play.

"Youth's a stuff will not endure,"

sings the downhearted fool in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night." To grow old, though, is not only a chronological fact but also an inevitability of fading powers and sagging integument. To grow old is a social phenomenon, one we have the power to make better or worse if we want to; and Europeans, facing a stark demographic future, should probably get to work.

No art in "Aging Pride" speaks more eloquently to our collective power to reimagine old age than a clip from the German choreographer Pina Bausch's "Kontakthof" — her 1978 masterpiece of lonely-hearts on the dance floor, which she created for her company of dancers in Wuppertal, Germany, but later restaged with volunteers over 65.

The older dancers, wearing the same tight suits and slinky silk dresses that Bausch's regular troupe had worn, go through the ritual preening they learned over decades; they get lucky or get humiliated, and come back for more.

Their bodies are notably stiffer than the average professional dancer's, but they are here, they are boogieing, and they are ready for love.

Memorable voice in popular roles

REG E. CATHEY
1958-2018

BY MATT STEVENS

Reg E. Cathey, whose distinctive baritone and memorable roles on hugely popular television shows like "House of Cards" and "The Wire" won him legions of fans and an Emmy Award, has died at his home in New York. He was 59.

His death Friday was announced by David Simon, the creator of "The Wire," on Twitter that night. The cause was lung cancer, his talent agent, Sarah Fargo, wrote in an email on Saturday.

Though he earned credits in dozens of television shows and movies, it was Mr. Cathey's portrayal of Freddy Hayes — an empathetic, salt-of-the-earth barbecue pit owner whose restaurant provides a respite for Francis Underwood, the scheming politician in "House of Cards" — that earned him three Emmy nominations and one win for outstanding guest actor in a drama series.

Mr. Cathey assumed a somewhat similar role on "The Wire," playing a beloved newspaper editor turned political operative whose honesty and integrity are often sought out by the man he works for, Tommy Carcetti (Aidan Gillen).

"That voice," Mr. Simon said in a phone interview on Saturday. "I think we all know that if God comes at you as a white guy, he's going to sound like Johnny Cash. If God comes to you as a black guy, that's Reg Cathey you're hearing."

He recalled attending a dinner several years ago with Mr. Cathey and other cast members of "The Wire" at which Mr. Cathey told a hilarious story while impersonating the other actors.

"And every voice was perfect," Mr. Simon said. "By the end of 25 minutes, nobody could breathe."

The actor Wendell Pierce, who played a detective on "The Wire," said Mr. Cathey was not only a great raconteur but also a man who "made you have a viewpoint" and enjoyed a good debate.

"He always challenged you and provoked your thoughts," Mr. Pierce said. "He was one of those people when you're speaking with him you felt like you were at the center of the world."

Reginald Eurias Cathey was born on Aug. 18, 1958, in Huntsville, Ala., to a father who was an Army officer and a mother who worked in the Defense Department. Mr. Cathey grew up in Germany and traveled frequently before moving back to Alabama when he was a teenager. He studied at the University of Michigan — where, reports say, he befriended Madonna and the future comedy star David Alan Grier — and later at the Yale School of Drama.

Over an acting career that spanned more than 35 years, Mr. Cathey also had a recurring role in the long-running television series "Oz" and made appearances in other widely viewed shows like "Law & Order," "30 Rock" and "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

His many film credits included a role as Dr. Franklin Storm in the 2015 reboot of "Fantastic Four" and a part as a homeless man in "American Psycho." In 2000, Mr. Cathey made his Broadway debut in "The Green Bird"; he had several other theater credits.

He is survived by his girlfriend, Linda Powell, a sister, Donza Cathey Friende; his stepmother, Maureen Davis Cathey; and two stepbrothers, Jerry Davis and Maurice Davis.

"Though some might not know Mr. Cathey by name, his recent roles and commanding voice made him instantly recognizable in the latter part of his career."

"When I was on 'Oz' years ago, I did an interview and the guy said, 'You're one of the few actors who can make their living as an actor without being famous,'" he told The Detroit Free Press in 2015. "We both laughed. And it's true. There's a small club of us, actors and actresses, because it's really difficult just to make a living as an actor without being famous. It used to be easier when I first started, but now it's really, really difficult."

Poet of sorrow and struggle

CLARIBEL ALEGRÍA
1924-2018

BY NEIL GENZLINGER

Claribel Alegría, a poet who wrote of the harsh realities of Central American life and the search for identity and hope — work informed by her own uprooting, first from Nicaragua and then from El Salvador — died on Jan. 25 in Managua, the Nicaraguan capital. She was 93.

Reporting on her funeral in Managua two days after her death, the newspaper El Nuevo Diario wrote that her ashes would be divided between the two countries. Her parents had taken her to El Salvador from Nicaragua when she was a baby, but she returned there to live years later.

"El Salvador is the fatherland because it's where I grew up," she told an interviewer in 1999. "But my motherland, Nicaragua, has welcomed me with open arms."

During her lifetime she saw both countries torn by struggles for liberation. That tumult was reflected in the dozens of books she wrote, not only poetry but also novels and histories, some written with her husband, Darwin J. Flakoll. Hers was sometimes a blunt vision, as in "Documentary," a poem about El Salvador that includes these lines:

Besides the coffee
They plant angels
In my country.
A chorus of children
And women
With the small white coffin
Move politely aside
As the harvest passes by.

"I wrote that poem a long time ago, and some people said it was a political poem," she told Bill Moyers for his book "The Language of Life: A Festival of Poets" (1995). "I laughed. To me it was a love poem for my country, and I wanted everybody to come and see what I was seeing. I wanted them to see why it was such a desperate situation."

Clara Isabel Alegría Vides was born

on May 12, 1924, in Esteli, Nicaragua. The country was on its way to civil war, and United States Marines were there. Her father, Daniel, a doctor, was among those who viewed the Marines as an occupying force, and while she was still a baby he moved the family to El Salvador, the native land of her mother, Ana María Vides, a member of a prominent coffee-growing family.

Ms. Alegría said she began writing poems when she was 6. As a child she also had thoughts of being a great dramatic actress — but not for long.



INTI OCON/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES
Claribel Alegría saw Nicaragua and El Salvador torn by struggles for liberation.

"Then I realized that I had a crooked face, that my left side was very different from my right side," she told Mr. Moyers, who had asked about imagery involving mirrors in her writing. "With my left side I could be glamorous, but with my right side, no — there I was always very much down to earth. From then on, mirrors haunted me."

At 18 she went to the United States to study at George Washington University, and while there she met the Spanish poet Juan Ramón Jiménez, who would later win the Nobel Prize in Literature. He became a mentor and, she recalled, advised her that her forays into free verse were premature.

"First you have to go through all the traditional forms," she said he told her. "You can free yourself after that. Then you will know what you are doing."

He selected the works for her first book of poetry, "Anillo de Silencio" ("Ring of Silence"), published in 1948. She also received a bachelor's degree in philosophy and letters at George Washington that year.

She married Mr. Flakoll, an American journalist and diplomat, in 1947, and they lived in Mexico, Chile, the United States, Uruguay and on the island of Majorca in Spain.

Ms. Alegría considered El Salvador her homeland, and she had been returning regularly to visit, but that changed in 1980.

She was scheduled to give a poetry reading at the Sorbonne in Paris but learned the day before that El Salvador's archbishop, Oscar Arnulfo Romero, a prominent voice against social injustice and government repression, had been assassinated. Instead of reading poems the next day, she talked about the murder and the campaign of violence by the military government, which was backed by the United States.

"Soon after that, my cousin, Vides Casanova, then minister of defense, sent word that I should never come back to El Salvador," Ms. Alegría told *Bomb* magazine in 2000. "Otherwise, he would not be responsible for what happened to me."

She was not able to return for 12 years, during which El Salvador was in civil war. Her poem "Unfinished Rite" is about not being able to return for her mother's funeral in 1982.

In the 1980s she and her husband, who died in 1995, returned to Nicaragua to live.

Their books together included the histories "Tunnel to Canto Grande," about the escape of political prisoners in Peru in 1990, and "Death of Somoza," about the Sandinista commandos who assassinated the exiled Nicaraguan politician Anastasio Somoza in 1980.

Ms. Alegría's many books of poetry include "Flowers From the Volcano" (1982) and the bilingual collection "Saudade/Sorrow" (1999). She also wrote children's books.



RICHARD TERMINÉ

Reg E. Cathey in "Love's Labour's Lost" on the New York stage. Perhaps the actor's most famous role was as a barbecue pit owner in the TV series "House of Cards."

World

Murder trial stirs emotions in Canada

BATTLEFORD, SASKATCHEWAN

BY IAN AUSTEN

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's push for reconciliation of Canada's troubled history with its indigenous people particularly resonates here in the town of Battleford, in the central part of Saskatchewan Province.

A pass system, similar to South Africa's under apartheid, once required indigenous people to get a government official's written permission to step off their reserves. A public hanging in 1885 of six Cree and two Assiniboine men on murder charges that have since been questioned remains the largest mass execution in Canada's history.

And now there is the verdict in the Gerald Stanley trial.

Mr. Stanley, a farmer, had been charged with second-degree murder in the death of Colten Boushie, a 22-year-old Cree man from the nearby Red Pheasant Cree Nation.

In August 2016, Mr. Boushie and four other indigenous people drove onto Mr. Stanley's property. Mr. Stanley, 56, testified at trial that he believed their goal was robbery, which he and his son tried to prevent. In what the farmer called an accident, Mr. Boushie was killed by a bullet to the back of his head that came from a semiautomatic handgun Mr. Stanley fired during a confrontation with the group.

On Friday, after a week of testimony and a day and half of deliberations, a jury found Mr. Stanley not guilty, setting off cries of anguish from Mr. Boushie's relatives and supporters.

For the past 17 months, the case had been hotly debated in Battleford, stirring deep feelings here about the treatment — both past and present — of the province's indigenous population.

Mr. Stanley's supporters have used the episode to call for American-style "stand your ground" self-protection laws. Meanwhile, online vitriol has spilled over into a torrent of overtly racist comments that led to a call from the province's premier for everyone to "rise above intolerance." Ben Kautz, a member of the municipal council in Browning, Saskatchewan, wrote, under his



Members of Colten Boushie's family of the Red Pheasant Cree Nation, from left, Verna Denny, Alvin Baptiste and Jade Tootoosis.

name, in a Facebook page for farmers, "now defunct, that Mr. Stanley's 'only mistake was leaving three witnesses.' He has since left the council.

At the same time, many non-Indigenous people in Saskatchewan view Mr. Boushie's death as an injustice, including a group that stood in front of the courthouse on Thursday in bone-chilling cold holding signs and banners calling for justice.

Mr. Boushie's family and their supporters were angry about the police inquiry, which they called flawed and inadequate, contending that it initially focused more on the actions of the five young indigenous people than on the killing of Mr. Boushie. They also said the case exposed a lack of progress in Mr. Trudeau's reconciliation effort.

"If we are making progress why would it have exploded so much when he got shot?" Jade Tootoosis, Mr. Boushie's cousin, asked. "I pity them because I don't understand why they feel so much hate for someone they don't know."

Eleanore Sunchild grew up in the Thunderchild Cree First Nation north of Battleford. She runs a legal practice that specializes in resolving claims by former pupils of mandatory boarding, or residential, schools the federal government established in the 19th century.

In 2015 a national Truth and Reconciliation Commission found the program to be "cultural genocide" against indigenous people. Saskatchewan had more of the notorious schools than any other province, which both the commission

and Ms. Sunchild blame for destroying indigenous families for generations.

Ms. Sunchild, 45, said her home province was the national laggard on reconciliation. "Saskatchewan is just beginning, I don't even know if we have really started on reconciliation," she said.

The area is also an outlier on crime.

Car theft is common, and farmers in the sparsely settled region complain about slow wait times for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to arrive. A Facebook group, Farmers With Firearms, appeared after Mr. Boushie's death to call for allowing citizens to arm themselves, and also to support Mr. Stanley. Last year, an association of rural municipalities in Saskatchewan asked the federal government to expand self-defense laws. Both groups say their



Gerald Stanley, center, arriving in court last week at Battleford, Saskatchewan. A jury on Friday found him not guilty in the 2016 shooting death of Colten Boushie.

efforts are directed against criminals, not indigenous people.

Alvin Baptiste, Mr. Boushie's uncle, gave a tour of Red Pheasant last week. He said that some of the reserve's young people, along with white youths in the area, passed too much of their time with drinking, drugs and petty crime. For that he blamed the lack of job opportunities since the decline in oil prices, the lingering effects of the residential schools on families and the general dysfunction of the reserve.

A relatively new and well-maintained school is an exception in the area. Money and energy ran out to keep open a hockey arena seemingly too large for the 500 or so people who live in the reserve.

Mr. Baptiste said that basketball programs had stopped at the community center and that the building was used only for wakes and ceremonial occasions. Next to it are the abandoned gas pumps and building of what had been Red Pheasant's only store.

"There's nothing much to do on this reserve, there's nothing for them," he said, referring to young people.

Evidence at the trial showed that the group in the car, driving on a flat tire, had tried to steal a car at another farm

before going to the Stanleys. In court, Mr. Stanley's lawyer acknowledged that a toxicology report showed that Mr. Boushie was "so impaired it's hard to believe that he could function at all."

Chris Murphy, a lawyer retained by the Boushie family, said that a junior constable was initially put in charge of the investigation, forensic experts were not brought in and the car in which Mr. Boushie died was left uncovered, its doors open, for two rainy days, washing away evidence.

The police declined to comment.

Mr. Stanley testified at trial that he grabbed his semiautomatic pistol to fire two warning shots. He said he was trying to turn off the engine of the car the men were driving while holding the pistol when the fatal bullet fired in what he testified was a complete surprise.

For Ms. Tootoosis, the social media hatred prompted by the killing of her cousin may also prove to be his legacy.

"Ultimately Coco's death needs to have a purpose," she said using the family's nickname for Mr. Boushie. "It's brought to light such a divide, and the question now isn't what is the government do about it, what are the courts going to do about it? It's, 'What am I going to do about it?'"

Chinese boxers' 'fight club'

CHENGDU JOURNAL
CHENGDU, CHINA

Manager says he found inspiration in repeated viewings of 1999 film

BY CHRIS BUCKLEY
AND ADAM WU

On the sixth floor of a down-on-its-luck shopping mall in Chengdu, a southwestern Chinese city, a brawny, hyperkinetic master of ceremonies going by the name Train strutted around a new fight ring, pumping up the crowd for a Friday night of punching, jabbing and kicking.

After a monthslong shutdown, the fight club was back in business.

The funk music faded, lights brightened and two amateur boxers squared off. Yan Nan, a lithe 33-year-old office worker at a state-owned machinery company, was up against Li Weiguo, a neatly muscular sports teacher, 4 inches shorter and seven years younger.

"I hope the kids in his class don't mess up," the master of ceremonies, whose real name is Wang Zijiang, joked about Mr. Li to the hundreds of fans crowded around the ring.

The fight club in Chengdu, a city with about eight million residents and a reputation for spicy food and laid-back living, is a testament to the ability of entrepreneurial young Chinese to try something new, even when numerous obstacles, licenses and official jitters stand in the way.

Shi Jian, the club manager, and Mr. Wang said they had been inspired to open their venture in late 2015 after repeated viewings of "Fight Club," the 1999 cult film in which Brad Pitt and Edward Norton star as two unlikely partners who start an underground barefist fighting club.

"Before all this, I didn't have anything to do with fighting," said Mr. Shi, with a folk-singer-like bowl cut and heavy glasses. "I like to have fun and also do something meaningful, and then I saw that movie."

Mr. Shi, 35, a man of few words, and Mr. Wang, 29, a man of few silences, also seem like unlikely allies.

But they and another investor found a shared cause in entertainment that they thought would appeal to Chinese in their 20s who were bored with karaoke nights and bars. Their club features weekly boxing, kick boxing and mixed martial arts bouts and goes by the English name "Monster Private War Club." It seeks an edgy audience, with graffiti-sprayed walls and a dimly lit recreation room.

"What Chinese people lack most is a spirit of fun, that's what Chinese people need most of all," said Mr. Wang, a former soldier who spoke in a torrent of Sichuanese-accented Mandarin Chinese and rap-inspired English, salted with plentiful profanities in both. "They really need to let themselves go."

"Here it's a bit more commercial," he said of their new space inside a karaoke nightclub, "but we're trying to find some of the vibe of the underground."

It would be difficult to imagine such raucous entertainment surviving in button-down Beijing. But boxing, mixed martial arts and other high-energy fighting forms have been enjoying a minor boom in China in recent years. Gyms and audiences have multiplied across the country. Precise numbers are hard to come by, but one fan group estimates that the number of clubs had reached 8,300 in 2016, up from 2,700 in 2008.

Even so, commercial fight venues that draw a broader audience are rare. And Chengdu, with its zesty night life and hipster scene, seemed as good a place as any to try opening one. Yet even here the club has struggled to balance

between being cool enough to draw customers and respectable enough to keep the inspectors at bay.

In a former venue, the fight club had to fend off complaints from the police, who deemed the weekly bouts undesirable, if not illegal. The authorities cut off their power and water late last year, Mr. Shi and Mr. Wang said. Tensions had also grown when a national controversy erupted last April after Xu Xiaodong, a mixed martial arts fighter, challenged masters of China's gentler traditional martial arts to fight and flattened one of them in about 10 seconds.

The episode brought bad publicity for new martial arts in China.

The Chengdu club shut down in November because of the friction with the authorities, and reopened late last month after the partners persuaded city sports officials to support them. They found a new venue in the half-empty mall, which some residents say is cursed by ghosts from an ancient cemetery that was dug up nearby.

Even with that official support and begrudging approval from the police, the club has to be careful to stay respectable. There is absolutely no gambling, no drugs, no brawling between patrons, nothing that could bring officials' wrath, Mr. Shi said.

"If we were into gambling, do you think we'd be as poor as we are now?" Mr. Wang chipped in. "In a year I could afford to buy a Rolls-Royce."

Each Friday night involves four boxing, kick boxing or mixed martial arts fights between men, and sometimes women.

"I think it's a great setting with plenty of atmosphere," said Liao Yanyun, 22, a professional boxer who fought a match at the club recently, when she and her opponent fought to a draw. "You attract a big crowd to this kind of fight, and that will help boxing to develop," she said, though she added, "There are a lot fewer female fighters than men, and it's hard for women to find matches and opponents."

This year the partners plan to expand by bringing in professional fighters from across China, and maybe stars from Thailand. For now, the club's fighters are hardscrabble professionals from local clubs or pure amateurs.

Before Mr. Yan's fight, he and a dozen or so friends warmed up with a dinner of peppery tofu, and Mr. Yan appeared cheerfully indifferent about his chances in the club. "I haven't thought about tonight. It's just for the kicks," he said.

The famous first rule in the movie "Fight Club" was "do not talk about Fight Club," and Mr. Yan had his own twist: Do not tell his parents. He inherited his love of boxing from his grandfather, but said his mother and father would be alarmed if they found out he was climbing into a ring.

"They think at my age you should be more stable," he said.



GRACE AND CHARACTER

CHAUMET
PARIS

L'art de la joaillerie depuis 1780



A boxing match at the club, in Chengdu. It features weekly boxing, kickboxing and mixed martial arts bouts and goes by the English name "Monster Private War Club."

WORLD

Pope inches toward deal on China bishops

ROME

A possible reconciliation with Beijing raises fears for clerics and parishioners

BY JASON HOROWITZ
AND ELISABETTA POVOLEDO

Pope Francis and his diplomats have been quietly pouring energy into negotiations with the Chinese government that could help end a decades-long dispute over control of the Catholic Church in the country.

But as signs of a possible breakthrough have emerged — how bishops get ordained has long been a sticking point — some Catholics are worried. They fear that the Vatican, in its eagerness for a deal, could betray clerics and parishioners who have illicitly practiced their faith for decades and risked arrest and persecution by worshiping in the so-called underground church. They are also alarmed that a deal could end the independence for which the underground church has long stood.

The dissension escalated Friday as the retired archbishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Joseph Zen, intensified his criticism of the talks, saying that a reconciliation could result in 12 million Chinese Catholics being effectively put in a Communist-controlled “cage.” He has accused church bureaucrats of “selling out” Chinese Catholics, and warned, “A church enslaved by the government is no real Catholic Church.”

Cardinal Zen did not attack the pope directly, but called Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the pope’s second-in-command, “a man of little faith.” Another prelate has mocked one of the pope’s close collaborators as living “in Wonderland” for his depiction of China as a country uniquely in sync with the church’s values.

The public sniping has erupted even though firm details of talks between the Vatican and the Chinese government have not been disclosed — or what Francis might be willing to sacrifice for an agreement that could be a first step toward restoring diplomatic relations and allowing him to become the first pope to visit China.

“There’s progress,” one senior Vatican official confirmed, insisting on anonymity, when asked to describe the negotiations. Francis has sent the church’s top China experts to attend secret working groups in Beijing. State news media coverage in China has been noticeably positive about the talks. Top Vatican officials have spoken carefully about “realistic” solutions and “reconciliation.”

The Vatican and China broke off diplomatic relations in 1951, two years after the Communist takeover. In 1957, China established the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association to oversee Catholic churches, but the Vatican, despite some recognition of the authority of its priests to administer sacraments, does not fully recognize it. It has secretly named bishops to lead the “underground” church.

Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI both made overtures toward the Chinese government to settle the dispute.



Zhang Hong, above, a Chinese bishop, at a Mass during last year’s Easter celebrations at the government-sanctioned West Beijing Catholic Church. Below, Cardinal Joseph Zen, retired archbishop of Hong Kong, has accused church bureaucrats of “selling out” the so-called underground church in China.

Despite the controversy, the Vatican does not seem to be distracted from a potential deal that would be “a breakthrough that we have been waiting for many years,” said Jerom Heyndrickx, the acting director of the Belgium-based Ferdinand Verbiest Institute, who sat on a commission that advised Benedict on relations with China. “Finally there would be an agreement over the appointment of bishops in China.”

Cardinal Zen confirmed that the Vatican had already asked one underground bishop to step aside and make way for a state-authorized bishop who is also a member of China’s rubber-stamp Parliament, the National People’s Congress. Francis has also received a request to pardon seven state-authorized Chinese bishops whom the Vatican considered illegitimate, according to the senior Vatican official.

People familiar with the negotiations say one possibility being discussed would give the pope final say in picking a bishop from three candidates chosen by the Chinese. It is unclear whether the pope would have an absolute veto.

Another sticking point is whether more than 30 bishops from the underground church will be legitimized by Chinese authorities as part of the deal, an issue that, in a letter last year, Cardinal John Tong of Hong Kong called “the

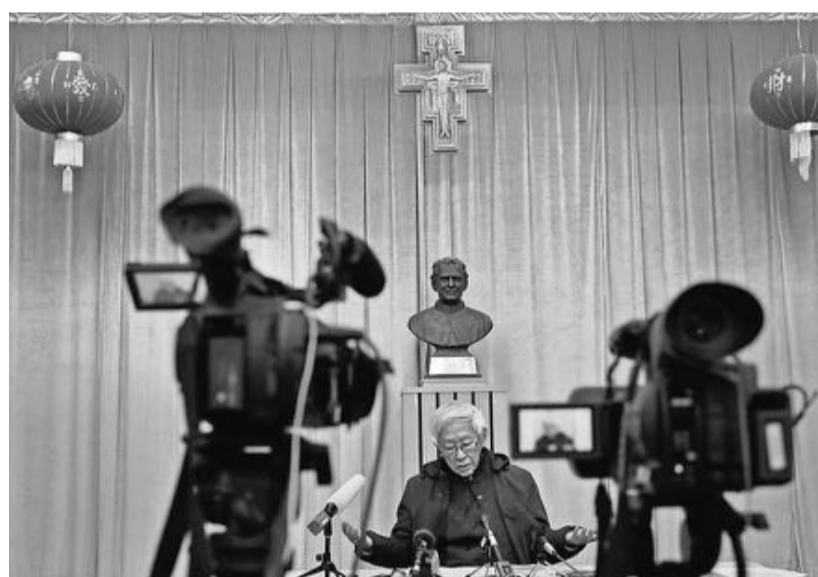
most difficult problem.”

The urgency of the issue is partly because the rights of almost all social groups are becoming more constrained in China under President Xi Jinping. Last week, Beijing extended enhanced surveillance to religious groups, with new laws taking effect that could make it harder for unregistered religious groups — such as the underground Catholic churches — to meet and hold services.

Catholicism is losing ground in China. There are 10 million to 12 million Catholics in China, roughly the same percentage of the population as in the late 1940s when the Communists took power. By contrast, Protestantism has expanded rapidly and is widely regarded as the country’s fastest-growing religion.

Yet opposition to a deal is powerful among factions inside both the church and the Chinese government. In an interview, the Rev. Bernardo Cervellera, a member of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions and editor of AsiaNews, argued that the Chinese government was trying to “eliminate the underground church.” He said that under the new laws, members of the underground church could be subject to new fines, imprisonment and the expropriation of buildings.

From Hong Kong, Cardinal Zen is a



VINCENT YU/ASSOCIATED PRESS

longtime opponent of the Chinese government. He has spent much of the past two weeks criticizing the Vatican, while reporting that he hand-delivered a letter to Pope Francis from an 88-year-old underground bishop whom the pope’s envoy had asked to step aside.

Cardinal Zen suggested that the Vatican’s Chinese delegation was getting out

in front of the pontiff. But Cardinal Parolin, the Vatican’s secretary of state, who is overseeing the negotiations with China, confirmed in a much-discussed interview with an Italian newspaper that the pope was indeed on the same page as his diplomats, and that it was improper to suggest otherwise.

The Vatican has been staging cultural

Hungarian leader provides model for would-be autocrats

HUNGARY, FROM PAGE 1

man age. He has courted President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and praised President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. In 2016, he became the first Western leader to endorse the Republican presidential nominee, Donald J. Trump. Although Mr. Orban lacks the global profile of those leaders, what he is doing in Europe is seen as part of a broader decline of democracy in the world.

“What makes this place so important and interesting is that something new is taking place,” said Michael Ignatieff, the president and rector of Central European University, an American college in Budapest that Mr. Orban has tried to close.

“Orban has pioneered a new model of single-party rule that has spread through Eastern Europe, which is unlikely to spread west because civil society, independent institutions and the rule of law is too strong in Western Europe,” said Mr. Ignatieff, who is also a human rights scholar and a former leader of the Liberal Party in Canada. He added, however, that it “could break the E.U. apart if this conflict between liberal democracy in the West and single-party states in the East can’t be resolved.”

Zoltan Kovacs, the Hungarian government spokesman, and the only current official who agreed to speak on the record for this article, defended Mr. Orban’s actions as a determined effort “to get rid of the remnants of communism that are still with us, not only in terms of institutions but in terms of mentality.”

Mr. Orban is undeniably popular with many Hungarians, and recent polls show that roughly 50 percent of voters support Fidesz. A weak, divided opposition helps him, as does a pliant news media. In a small nation troubled by historical anxieties, he also has positioned himself as a buffer against what he portrays as modern-day threats: such as European Union bureaucrats; or George Soros, the liberal Hungarian-American philanthropist; or, above all, migrants who seek to settle in the country.

“Migration fits into a wider agenda about the protection of the Hungarian



SERGEY PONOMAREV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Refugees crossing into Hungary. Prime Minister Viktor Orban wants to penalize groups that help migrants and has rapidly altered the nation’s institutions. Right, the Parliament.

people,” said Andras Biro-Nagy, a politics lecturer at Corvinus University of Budapest. “He’s protecting us from everything.”

To understand how Mr. Orban has reshaped Hungary, start with the private meetings in 2010. Fidesz had just won national elections by a margin that qualified the party for more than two-thirds of the seats in Parliament, even though it had won only a slim majority of votes. Party leaders had a mandate. But to what extent could they legitimately wield it?

Weeks later, Mr. Orban and his lieutenants began a legislative assault on the Hungarian Constitution, curbing civil society and, to less fanfare, diverting billions of euros in European Union and federal money toward loyal allies.

First, he moved simultaneously to curb the Hungarian news media and the judiciary. Next came the erosion of the country’s checks and balances, which has helped Mr. Orban share the spoils of power with close friends and important businessmen.

And then came the electoral process. The restructuring of Hungary’s election

system, including a redrawing of the electoral map, has helped him remain in power, even as his party has won fewer votes.

“The election law does not correspond to democratic features,” said Imre Voros, a founding member of the Hungarian constitutional court, “and Hungary is therefore not a democratic country.”

INSTITUTIONS UNDER ASSAULT

Sworn into office on May 29, 2010, Mr. Orban re-engineered Hungary’s institutional framework so swiftly that even Fidesz lawmakers were stunned. During the next five years, Fidesz used its two-thirds majority in Parliament to pass more than 1,000 laws, many of them enacted after a few hours of debate — and often presented by low-ranking lawmakers who had neither written nor read them.

Gergely Barandy, a Socialist lawmaker, recalled being asked by a Fidesz counterpart in October 2011 about a proposal to bar criminal suspects from speaking to a lawyer for the first 48 hours of their detention.



AKOS STILLER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

exchanges with Chinese museums. One of the pope’s close collaborators, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, who recently returned from Beijing, went so far in an interview with the Vatican Insider this week as to say the Chinese “are best implementing the social doctrine of the Church.”

That has raised hackles from critics of human rights abuses.

“We can understand that in the heat of desire for relations between China and the Vatican, one can be dotting and exalt Chinese culture,” Father Cervellera wrote in an editorial headlined “Sánchez Sorondo in Wonderland.” But, he added, “adulating China is an ideological affirmation that makes a laughingstock of the Church.”

In a subsequent email exchange, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo said that he was being criticized “because evidently I did not take into account the problem of freedom of conscience.”

“They are right about this,” he said. The pope’s defenders have pushed back.

“The pope is not naïve at all. He is walking the same path of Benedict XVI, trying to find a way to dialogue with the authorities,” said the Rev. Antonio Spadaro, a Jesuit priest and papal adviser. “The question is to be realistic. What kind of agreement can we reach? It’s a matter of trust. We want the Chinese government to know we are not interested in politics, we are interested in faith.”

Mr. Heyndrickx said such a deal was hardly unprecedented. In the 16th century, he said, the pope gave the French king the right to appoint major clerics. And Pope Pius VII signed a similar agreement with Napoleon. More recently, the Vatican has been willing to accept limitations to operate under Communist governments such as Vietnam’s.

After winning China’s civil war in 1949, the Communist Party asserted control over all organized religions, but Catholicism came in for special scrutiny. Beijing expelled the Vatican envoy in 1951, and the Vatican, in turn, has never recognized the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Over time, an underground church emerged.

But in 2007, Benedict took an important step toward reconciliation by recognizing the celebration of sacraments inside the state’s official churches. He also chose Cardinal Parolin, then an archbishop, to lead negotiations with Beijing, though talks stalled. When Francis became pope in 2013, he named Archbishop Parolin as his secretary of state and later elevated him to cardinal. In 2014, China allowed the pope to fly over its airspace on a trip to South Korea and the pope dispatched Rome-based officials, led by Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, to restart talks.

Yet on a recent flight back to Rome from a trip to Bangladesh, Pope Francis reiterated his desire to go to China. “Talks with China are at high levels,” he said, adding, “I believe it will be good for everyone to carry out a trip to China. I would like to do one.”

Ian Johnson contributed reporting from Beijing.

few judges to publicly criticize the system.

“It’s not a totalitarian system,” Judge Szepeshazi said. “But it’s very autocratic.”

‘DANCE OF THE PEACOCK’

Mr. Orban has been able to accrue so much power in Budapest partly because he met little effective opposition from Brussels, the seat of the European Union, which was founded on the principles of rule of law and liberal democracy.

Mr. Orban’s constitutional overhaul quickly drew the eye of the European Commission, the bloc’s executive arm. The European justice commissioner at the time, Viviane Reding, did win some concessions from Mr. Orban on certain issues, but most of the commission’s rulings had little practical effect on the overall picture.

The main problem was that the founders of the European Union never considered the possibility that a member state would backslide and did not create procedures to deal conclusively with such an event, Ms. Reding said.

“We never thought that someone would go the other way,” Ms. Reding said. “It was unthinkable.”

The so-called nuclear option — the suspension of Hungary’s voting rights — was considered too drastic for the situation. Mr. Orban has subsequently claimed to have tricked European officials into believing that he had made substantive changes, even though they were largely cosmetic, a tactic he has publicly described as the “dance of the peacock.”

Europe’s main alliance of center-right parties, the European People’s Party, which relied on Fidesz’s votes in the European Parliament, did not offer much resistance, either.

Faced with minimal resistance in Brussels, Mr. Orban’s next test is in the Hungarian general election in April. He is expected to win easily.

Benjamin Novak and Anita Komuves contributed reporting from Budapest, and Palko Karasz from London.



Syrian Democratic Forces fighters standing guard in Raqqa in October after retaking the Syrian city from the Islamic State group.

Fleeing for new battles

WASHINGTON

Some ISIS fighters go underground, others to Al Qaeda or home to Europe

BY ERIC SCHMITT

Thousands of Islamic State foreign fighters and family members have escaped the American-led military campaign in eastern Syria, according to new classified American and other Western military and intelligence assessments, a flow that threatens to tarnish American declarations that the militant group has been largely defeated. As many of the fighters flee unfeared to the south and west through Syrian Army lines, some have gone into hiding near Damascus, the Syrian capital, and in the country's northwest, awaiting orders sent by insurgent leaders on encrypted communication channels. Other battle-hardened militants, some with training in chemical weapons, are defecting to Al Qaeda's branch in Syria. Others are paying smugglers tens of thousands of dollars to spirit them across the border to Turkey, with an eventual goal of returning home to European countries. The sobering assessments come despite a concerted effort to encircle and "annihilate" — as the United States defense secretary, Jim Mattis, put it — Islamic State fighters in Raqqa, Syria, the group's self-proclaimed capital, which fell in autumn, and pursue other insurgents who fled south into the Euphrates River Valley toward the border with Iraq.

"ISIS fighters are fleeing Syria and Iraq," the United States homeland security secretary, Kirstjen Nielsen, said in recent remarks in Washington. "Jihadists are going underground, dispersing to other safe havens, including on the internet, and returning to their home countries." Gen. Paul J. Selva, the vice chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters last month that the remaining Islamic State leadership, even while on the run, still had "fairly robust" communications with its shadowy network of fighters now on the lam. While President Trump highlighted the liberation of almost all of the Islamic State's territory in Iraq and Syria in his State of the Union address on Jan. 30, American military and intelligence officials say the group is still able to inspire and enable followers to carry out attacks. Mr. Trump seemed to acknowledge this in his speech, noting, "There is much more work to be done." Analysts say they are also seeing signs that Islamic State fighters are adopting guerrilla tactics to govern their enclaves. The group is transfiguring into an underground organization that places more weight on asymmetric tactics, like suicide bombings against soft targets in government-secured areas like Baghdad," said Oreste Fio, a senior analyst at Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center at IHS Markit in London. Mr. Fio cited an attack by two suicide bombers in Baghdad last month that killed three dozen people and injured 90

more. The attack took place in a busy Baghdad square where day laborers gathered to look for work. Estimates of how many fighters may have escaped into the deserts of Syria or Iraq and beyond are difficult to pin down, but American and other Western intelligence and counterterrorism analysts with access to classified assessments put the number in the low thousands. Many are traveling with spouses and children who are likely to have been radicalized during more than three years of Islamic State control of the region and could pose security risks as well, analysts say. In December, Col. Ryan Dillon, the chief spokesman for the American-led military campaign in Iraq and Syria, said in a briefing with Pentagon reporters: "Syrian regime commanders in eastern Syria suggest that ISIS fighters 'may have slipped through porous Syrian and Russian defenses to arrive in areas near Damascus.'" Asked late last month by the New York Times about indications that as many as 1,000 fighters and family members had fled the Euphrates River area just in recent days, Colonel Dillon's command replied in a statement: "We know that the Syrian regime has given ISIS the leeway to travel through their area of operations, but we cannot confirm any alleged incidents or operations that are taking place outside our area of operations." The United States military is concerned that a Turkish offensive against the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces in Afrin, in northern Syria,

"ISIS continues to demonstrate the ability to mass large numbers in its attempt to retain a stronghold in Syria."

has worsened the problem. The S.D.F. has been working with the American in former Islamic State-held areas to interdict fleeing jihadis, but those efforts have been greatly reduced as the Kurds have shifted resources to reinforce Afrin. Mustafa Malik, a spokesman for the Syrian Democratic Forces' headquarters, blamed the Turkish assault on Afrin for what he said was the Islamic State's resurgence. "Since this invasion of Afrin by Turkey, ISIS is getting stronger in the south," he said. "The Turks want to give another chance to ISIS to grow again. Before the Turkish invasion, we were very close to finishing ISIS." Some 40,000 fighters from more than 120 countries poured into the battles in Syria and Iraq over the past four years, American and other Western officials say. While thousands died in battle, officials say many thousands more probably survived to slip away to conflicts in Libya, Yemen or the Philippines, or have gone into hiding in countries like Turkey. Of more than 5,000 Europeans who joined those ranks, as many as 1,500 have returned, including many women and children, and most of the rest are dead or still fighting, according to Gilles de Kerchove, the European Union's top counterterrorism official. "The thought that these foreign fighters

who have participated in this fight now for over two years will quietly leave Syria and return to their jobs as shopkeepers in Paris, in Brussels, in Copenhagen, is ludicrous," said General Selva, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs. "That's a very compelling problem." Still, the number of Islamic State fighters returning home to Europe and North Africa has been much smaller than anticipated, counterterrorism officials say. That is in part because the Trump administration intensified its focus on preventing fighters from seeping out of Raqqa and Mosul, their former strongholds in Iraq, and more militants fought to the death than expected. Hundreds also surrendered in Raqqa. Hundreds of others have been captured and are being held by American-backed Kurdish militias in northern Syria, raising fears among United States military officials of potentially creating a breeding ground for extremists — repeating a key security mistake of the Iraq war. But the new assessments, bolstered by reports from analysts and smugglers in the region, suggest that Islamic State fighters are fleeing to more hospitable parts of Syria, Iraq, or to third countries where they can lay low. Beyond the recent suicide bombings in Baghdad, a major American airstrike last month demonstrates the Islamic State's continued resiliency and threat, military officials said. Armed Reaper drones and United States Navy F/A-18 fighters from the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt carried out a strike on Jan. 20 in Al Shafah, Syria, in the Euphrates River Valley that killed about 150 fighters, the American military said. The size and concentration of fighters took American officials by surprise. "The ISIS headquarters contained a heavy concentration of ISIS fighters who appear to have been missing for movement," Maj. Gen. James B. Jarrard, the commanding general for Special Operations forces in Iraq and Syria, said in a statement. "ISIS continues to demonstrate the ability to mass large numbers in its attempt to retain a stronghold in Syria," the American-led command in Iraq said in the same statement. Abnadr Saadawi, the head of the Euphrates Center Against Violence and Terrorism in Istanbul, said that the Islamic State was still present in many villages east of the Euphrates River — the 2015 demarcation line between Russian-backed Syrian troops to the west and American-backed Syrian militias to the east. Government and independent analysts in Syria and Washington, including the Institute for the Study of War, said there was a thriving trade in smuggling Islamic State fighters across the border into Turkey, where intelligence officials believe they are linking with clandestine cells. According to the independent, British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, senior Islamic State operatives from Raqqa and Deir al-Zour, Syria, in the Euphrates River Valley, have paid bribes of \$20,000 to \$30,000 for safe passage into Turkey. "I smuggled about 50 ISIS fighters into Turkey," said Abu Omar, a smuggler between Syria and Turkey, adding that they wore a mix of Syrian and foreign fighters, often disguised in women's clothes to help evade Turkish border patrols. Abu Omar added that the number of fleeing Islamic State fighters and senior leaders, including many foreigners, increased over the summer when the American-backed offensive against Raqqa began. "I was really shocked when I saw them," he said in a WhatsApp message. "They were wearing cool clothes, classic jeans with many necklaces, trying to disguise as much as they can. They hid their passports in their boots. They were completely shaved, you never guess they are ISIS. They didn't speak any Arabic, few words."

Huwaida Sand contributed reporting from Beirut, Lebanon; Rod Nordland from Kobani, Syria; and Karam Shoumail from Berlin.



A Pakistan court's activist role

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

Some see vigorous justice; others a push to cast the governing party as corrupt

BY SALMAN MASOOD

On his way to becoming Pakistan's top judge, Mian Saqib Nisar built a reputation as a highly regarded jurist known for his expertise in constitutional law and his disapproval of judicial overreach. Recently, though, Chief Justice Nisar of the Supreme Court has become something of an activist: He conducted a personal inspection of a Lahore hospital during a health-related case, told the father of a young murder victim to call him directly if problems arose with the police investigation and strongly criticized the government for its inability to stop human trafficking in Punjab Province. Each case, along with a number of others recently taken up by the court, has cast the governing party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, as corrupt or ineffectual. Whether that is the product of a politically motivated effort to tarnish the party, as the court's critics say, or the vigorous exercise of justice in a long-sclerotic system has become a matter of considerable debate.

But the spurt of activity has undoubtedly come at a time of escalating — and direct — confrontation between the country's top judicial body and its leading political party, a clash that traces to the court's contentious ouster of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a corruption case last year. Mr. Sharif and his allies have repeatedly accused the court of working hand in glove with the country's powerful military to have him removed, a claim both the military and the justices deny, and of exercising continued bias in cases involving the governing party and its officials. "This is not justice but a joke," Mr. Sharif said in Lahore during one of several recent, fiery speeches that have been critical of the court. Justice Nisar, 64, who became chief at the end of 2016, defended the court's choice of cases. "We are being accused of accepting some cases, of being a part of an anti-democracy campaign, but the judges must not come under any pressure," Justice Nisar said in a speech. The judi-

ciary, he said, should not let "anyone suffer from injustice." The Supreme Court and lower courts have responded to speech critical of the judiciary by pursuing a number of contempt citations. A governing party senator, Nehal Hashmi, was found guilty of contempt-of-court charges this month and sentenced to a month in jail. He had been accused of threatening violence against a panel set up by the Supreme Court to further investigate corruption allegations against Mr. Sharif. "Those who are seeking our accountability, listen with open ears: We will not spare you," Mr. Hashmi told a party gathering, comments for which he later apologized. Two government ministers have also been summoned to appear before the Supreme Court in contempt cases, and lower courts have issued contempt summonses to Mr. Sharif and his daughter and political heir, Maryam Nawaz, because of speeches critical of the judiciary.



Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar. Many of the cases depict party officials as inept.

Some analysts say the political motives in the clash began primarily to Mr. Sharif and his allies. "From the moment Sharif was disqualified in July 2017, he has consistently baited the judiciary, knowing that the only route to renewal for him is in successfully tainting the judiciary," said Mosharruf Zaheer, a political analyst and newspaper columnist. "And the only way for the judiciary to be tainted is by demonstrating seem like it has an agenda outside of dispensing justice." Mr. Sharif and his allies have sought to tie the court's agenda to the military's, a link that has historical resonance. Mr. Sharif had long been at odds with the military, asserting that elected officials should take the lead in formulating foreign and security policy. His push for

treason proceedings against a former dictator, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who had toppled Mr. Sharif's previous government in 1999, also raked the military. Other analysts fault the court. "The judicial activism is destroying the image of the judiciary and politicizing it more," said Matuallah Jan, a journalist and talk-show host who covers the Supreme Court. "It is unfortunate that both army and the judiciary are openly competing with the political government for popularity," Mr. Jan added. "Both competitors are trying to derive their authority from the public rather than the Constitution and law."

The judiciary in Pakistan has a history of being compliant to the military, giving it constitutional cover for undemocratic acts. But in 2007, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, a maverick, strong-willed chief justice, locked horns with Mr. Musharraf, igniting the grass-roots Lawyers' Movement that helped lead to his resignation. Mr. Chaudhry left a mixed legacy, though, unable to make lasting reforms and accused of self-aggrandizement. Subsequent chiefs have also failed to make a dent in the problems: The Supreme Court itself has a backlog of more than 38,000 cases, a symptom of a strained national system in which cases can drag on for decades. Critics say that while Justice Nisar has been quick to take up cases related to the governing party and malfeasance by civilian authorities, he has sidestepped more delicate issues like the intelligence agencies' practices of enforced disappearances, intimidation and harassment of the military's critics. Last month, Justice Nisar decided to re-examine the case of Husain Haqqani, an outspoken critic of the military who failed to return from abroad for a judicial inquiry into charges of improperly seeking American assistance to head off a possible coup. Mr. Haqqani, citing security threats, has refused to return from the United States, which has no extradition treaty with Pakistan. The chief justice has, however, shown no sign of pushing for the return of Mr. Musharraf, who fled the country in the middle of his trial on treason charges. (In 2016, Mr. Musharraf acknowledged that a former army chief, Gen. Raheel Sharif, helped to influence the courts so that he could leave the country.) For now, it seems that the clashes between the judiciary and Mr. Sharif's party may only intensify.



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WORLD

President unusually passive as chaos widens

TRUMP, FROM PAGE 1
 Olympics, likewise sounded relatively detached from the spending debate involving his former colleagues in Congress back home. Asked whether he had called any lawmakers, he said he had only talked with the White House unit that lobbies Congress. "I've been in touch with the legislative office and the president and I have talked frequently," he told reporters, "but we're on standby as the vote approaches."

Other presidents have discovered that there can be benefits from staying on standby. When President Bill Clinton assigned Hillary Clinton to lead an effort to pass universal health care, she and a task force crafted a highly detailed plan that died on Capitol Hill. The lesson that Mr. Clinton and his successors took from that is that sometimes it is better to set a broad goal but let Congress figure out how it wants to proceed. President George W. Bush did that with his No Child Left Behind education program and President Barack Obama did that with health care and some spending fights.

But Mr. Trump has proved a divisive force, so that even his broad direction is now sometimes ignored. Just last week he declared that he wanted Congress to let the government shut down rather than pass spending measures if there were no agreement on immigration. But Senate leaders of both parties disregarded him altogether and drafted their own deal without immigration.

"The other players in Washington, whether it's Congress or the Senate leadership, really have come to the conclusion: Let's ignore him, because we have things to do," said Maria Echaveste, a former deputy White House chief of staff under Mr. Clinton. "The budget deal is a perfect example of that. He's not constructive so they're ignoring him."

Speaking after reaching the budget deal with his Republican counterpart, Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic minority leader, said he had learned to proceed without bothering with the president. "Often times we can get a lot more done working with one another and let the White House just sit on the sidelines, because you don't know what their positions are," he said.

The president's hands-off approach on the budget deal worked for him to the extent that it included the boost in military spending that he has been demanding, but it also included a large increase in domestic spending as well.

As a result, the federal deficit will balloon to nearly \$1.2 trillion by 2019, despite Mr. Trump's campaign promise to get the nation's fiscal house in order. At one point during the campaign, Mr. Trump even promised to eliminate not just the annual deficit but the entire national debt accumulated over decades and now totaling more than \$20 trillion. Instead, at this rate, he will pile up trillions of dollars of additional borrowing.

Conservatives complained that he should have played a more active role in the negotiations to avoid that. "I think it would have made a big difference if



President Trump in the Oval Office. For a president there is the danger of looking too removed. After he lauded stock market gains for a year, critics said he could not avoid blame when markets fell sharply.

Trump had pushed hard for lower spending numbers, particularly if he had pushed a consistent message," said Chris Edwards, the director of tax policy studies at the Cato Institute. He noted that Democrats backed down during the last government shutdown. "That would have given Trump power," he said.

The White House was, again, not engaging on Friday. It held no news briefing and a spokesman did not respond to a request for comment on the president's approach. But on Twitter, Mr. Trump blamed Democrats for the spending increases in the budget deal. Even though Republicans control both chambers, they need Democratic votes

to end filibusters in the Senate.

"Without more Republicans in Congress, we were forced to increase spending on things we do not like or want in order to finally, after many years of depletion, take care of our Military," Mr. Trump wrote. "Sadly, we needed some Dem votes for passage. Must elect more Republicans in 2018 Election!"

Still, some Republicans said Mr. Trump may be most successful by setting the larger goals and then backing off. "Different presidents have different interest levels in being in the weeds on policy details," said J. Scott Jennings, who was a special assistant to Mr. Bush and is now a fellow at the Harvard Institute of Politics. "This one, it seems to

work best when he lays out broad priorities — more defense spending, cut taxes — and then allows the tacticians to engage and make it so."

After a fractious first year between Mr. Trump and Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican majority leader, Mr. Jennings said the president seemed to have finally found traction in the relationship, trusting the leader to manage legislative strategy. "Once they found their groove, things started working," he said. "Trump's job approval has gone up, the numbers on the economy have improved and the generative ballot has begun to shrink."

Still, there is the danger of looking as if he is too removed. He did not sound

particularly aggressive about domestic violence after his staff secretary, Rob Porter, was accused of physically abusing two former wives and resigned. Instead, his only public comment was to praise Mr. Porter and express sadness for him. In private, advisers said Mr. Trump was angry both that he had not been informed earlier about the allegations and that he had not been consulted on the initial White House response.

He likewise remained generally quiet about the tumble of the stock market, which has now reached an official correction, or a drop of 10 percent from its peak, after he lauded its increases for a year. Critics said he could not have it both ways, claiming credit when share

prices rise while avoiding blame when they fall.

Democrats and some Republicans said Congress is dysfunctional enough without Mr. Trump's getting involved. "The last thing this chaotic institution needs is for him to wreak more havoc by getting involved," said Jim Manley, a former top Democratic aide in the Senate.

The one exception, he added, would be immigration, where Mr. Trump should play more of a role. "The issue is so toxic," he said, "that they're never going to get anything done unless he leans in and gives some cover to the Republicans."

Thomas Kaplan contributed reporting.

Trump veers off script, and Republicans squirm

NEWS ANALYSIS
WASHINGTON

BY JONATHAN MARTIN AND ALEXANDER BURNS

President Trump's approval ratings have been nudging upward and his party's political standing is improving, but the president's unceasing habit of making inflammatory and insensitive remarks is galvanizing opposition against him — especially from women — that could smother Republican momentum going into the midterm campaign.

Saturday was a case in point. In a Twitter post, Mr. Trump appeared to raise doubts about the entire #MeToo movement, a day after he had offered sympathy for a former aide accused of spousal abuse.

"Peoples lives are being shattered and destroyed by a mere allegation," the president wrote on Twitter, adding: "There is no recovery for someone falsely accused - life and career are gone. Is there no such thing any longer as Due Process?"

On Friday, the president had jumped into the controversy over the former aide, Rob Porter, who is accused by two former wives of physical and emotional abuse, defending him and offering no denunciation even for the idea of assaulting women. Mr. Trump, who himself has been accused of sexual misconduct, focused instead on Mr. Porter, saying that he was enduring a "tough time."

The president's seeming indifference to claims of abuse infuriated Republicans, who were already confronting a surge of activism from Democratic women driven to protest, raise money and run for office because of their fervent opposition to Mr. Trump.

"This is coming, this is real," Stephen K. Bannon, Mr. Trump's former chief strategist, said recently about the female-fueled wave of liberal energy. Mr. Trump's remarks illustrated a broader problem: Republican congressional leaders and strategists have pleaded with lawmakers and candidates to stay focused on economic growth and December's tax cuts, a message they hope will be their salvation before the elections in November. But that may be little more than fantasy in a campaign

that will turn more on the president's conduct than any policy issue.

His comments on Friday, the first he had offered since images emerged of one of Mr. Porter's former wives bearing a black eye, were the culmination of a week's worth of politically ill-advised steps that suggest that the president and his lieutenants cannot stop themselves from blunting positive political momentum. By the weekend, Mr. Trump's State of the Union address, strong employment and wage figures as well as the onset of tax cuts seemed washed away by the latest White House controversy.

The frustration in the Republican political class is bursting forward.

"For members or anybody else who cares about keeping control of Congress, if you find yourself talking about anything but the middle-class tax cut, shut up and stop talking," fumed Cory Bliss, who runs the primary House Republican "super PAC," the Congressional Leadership Fund. "Any time spent on TV talking about anything but how we're helping the middle class is a waste of time and does nothing to help us win in 2018."

Republicans have grown accustomed to the president's lack of discipline and inability to reliably carry a message. But operatives overseeing the midterm effort and some lawmakers facing difficult re-elections are growing more alarmed that Mr. Trump's fixation on the Russia inquiry, personal slights and personality clashes inside and outside his White House are only encouraging his congressional and conservative news media allies to swerve off message.

The party has finally gotten some good signs. The president's approval ratings have been inching up in recent polling, fewer voters are indicating a preference for a Democratic Congress and some polls show Mr. Trump starting to get more credit for the booming economy than former President Barack Obama.

But even as voters begin to see more take-home pay, companies add jobs and employees receive bonuses, their votes are not necessarily going to drift to the Republicans in November. Many Americans are still uncertain that they will benefit from the tax measure, Mr. Bliss



Rob Porter, left, a former aide to President Trump, and Stephen Miller, an adviser. Mr. Trump's defense of Mr. Porter over spousal abuse accusations has frustrated his party.

conceded. He cited a wave of private polling and focus groups that his organization has conducted this year revealing much of the electorate to be skeptical that they would receive a tax cut from the bill, which was signed into law in December.

That is in part because of what mainstream Republicans describe as a destructive cycle of incentives: Mr. Trump reacts to Fox News segments about the Russia investigation or another controversy, encouraging more such coverage and prompting House conservatives from largely safe seats to make their own incendiary comments, which win them television invitations and attention from the president. Such notoriety might help those lawmakers in their deep-red districts, but they do nothing for the party's overall political standing.

"These guys are performing for the president when they go on TV," said Jason Roe, a longtime Republican strategist who is consulting on a series of at-risk House districts in California.

Representative Matt Gaetz of Florida, a first-term Republican who is one of Mr. Trump's most visible champions outside the White House, all but said as much.

"If you find yourself talking about anything but the middle-class tax cut, shut up and stop talking."

Mr. Gaetz, who used the State of the Union speech to snag a selfie with Mr. Trump in the House chamber, has said the president is "about as popular in my district as oxygen." He acknowledged that the tax bill was far more politically urgent than arguments about Russia and conceded that his on-air denunciations of Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel investigating Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential campaign, served no electoral purpose. But for good measure, he said, he has been urging colleagues to warn voters in 2018 that Democrats could impeach Mr. Trump.

He also boasted that he had found a particular audience for his cable news forays: Mr. Trump, he said, "calls me frequently and shares his thoughts on my television appearances."

Far less visible are Republican lawmakers such as Representative Mimi

Walters of California, who is facing a difficult campaign in an Orange County district where lobbying rhetorical bombs at the Federal Bureau of Investigation will do little with her centrist constituents, but drawing attention to Disney's bonuses could bear fruit.

"We talk about this all the time — we have got to get the message out on taxes," Ms. Walters said.

Campaign veterans and Capitol Hill aides say part of the challenge, particularly in the House, is that many Republican lawmakers had until last year been in office only with a Democratic president and therefore are well practiced at oppositional politics but know little about trumpeting a positive message.

Party officials have for weeks sought to drive home to lawmakers and Mr. Trump how crucial it is that they sell the tax law, bluntly warning that it will take an ambitious campaign to transform the measure into an unambiguous political winner. Strategists have written memos for public consumption and published op-eds emphasizing the need to go on offense. Senior lawmakers have used private meetings to implore the president and their colleagues to focus on taxes.

At a gathering last month at Camp David, House Republican leaders invoked the example of Mr. Obama to Mr. Trump, who is often eager to act differently than his predecessor. Lawmakers told the president that Democrats suffered deep losses in 2010 in part because Mr. Obama did not make a sufficient case for his economic stimulus measure, Republicans in attendance said.

This month at a congressional Republican retreat in West Virginia, Representative Steve Stivers of Ohio, the head of the House campaign arm, opened and closed his presentation to lawmakers with "three takeaways," according to a Republican in attendance: "Be ready, sell tax reform and run a campaign."

Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers of Washington, another member of the leadership, has even created a kit for lawmakers about how to stage district events to "tell the story of the tax cuts and jobs."

David Winston, a veteran Republican pollster, made a presentation at the retreat arguing that many voters remained highly flexible in their views of

the tax law, giving Republicans a chance — but so far, only a chance — to close the sale. But in an interview, Mr. Winston, who advises Speaker Paul D. Ryan, warned that the party could not trust public opinion on the law to continue improving on its own.

"There's a need to make people aware of what's in the legislation," Mr. Winston said. "There is a large portion of the electorate that is aware of it, but there's probably a larger portion of the electorate that's not."

Mr. Ryan has been uneasy about the attention devoted to the release of the House Intelligence Committee's memo about the F.B.I. Instead, the speaker has mapped out a series of visits to businesses affected by the tax law to showcase his preferred 2018 message by example.

In a revealing sign of the party's anxiety about Mr. Trump, the Republican National Committee has taken to trumpeting the "Trump tax cuts" and has urged campaigns and other Republican committees to credit Mr. Trump explicitly and often with enacting the new law, but has faced skepticism from Republicans wary of introducing Mr. Trump's name into competitive elections.

Mr. Trump himself underscored the risk involved in tying him, as a personality, to the Republican economic agenda during a visit to Ohio last week. His speech was intended to showcase the health of the economy, but he veered into an extended digression about his recent address to Congress and accused Democrats of "treason" for refusing to clap at points. The economic message was lost.

The conundrum, several strategists and lawmakers conceded, is that Mr. Trump's legal and culture wars are more politically galvanizing to the party's conservative base than Rynesque sermons on the free enterprise system. "The G.O.P. base just doesn't eat that up the way it does trending memo hash tags and firing-Mueller conspiracies," Nick Everhart, a Republican strategist based in Ohio, said of the party's economic message. "Thus, it's no surprise members of Congress in super-red districts, immune to the perilous political environment we're headed toward, put themselves and feeding the base first."

Business

The end of the era of austerity

TheUpshot

BY NEIL IRWIN

In the past several weeks, what amounts to a sea change in United States economic policy has taken place. The era of fiscal austerity is over, and the era of big deficits is back. The trillion-dollar question is how it will affect the economy.

In the short run, expect some of the strongest economic growth the country has experienced in years, and some subtle but real benefits from a higher supply of Treasury bonds in a world that is thirsty for them.

In the medium run, there is now more risk of surging inflation and higher interest rates — fears that were behind a steep stock market sell-off in the last two weeks.

In the long run, the United States risks two grave problems. It may find itself with less flexibility to combat the next recession or unexpected crisis. And higher interest payments could prove a burden on the Treasury and on economic growth. This is particularly true given that the ballooning debt comes at a time when the economy is already strong and the costs of paying retirement benefits for baby boomers are starting to mount.

It's hard to overstate how abrupt the shift has been.

When the Congressional Budget Office last forecast the nation's fiscal future, in June, it projected a \$689 billion budget deficit in the fiscal year that begins this coming fall. Analysts now think it will turn out to be about \$1.2 trillion.

One major reason is the tax law that passed on Dec. 20, which is estimated to reduce federal revenue by about \$1.5 trillion over the next decade, or \$1 trillion when pro-growth economic effects modeled by the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation are factored in. A budget deal passed early Friday morning includes \$300 billion in new spending over the next two years for all sorts of government programs and \$90 billion in disaster relief, without corresponding cuts elsewhere in the budget.

It is a stark reversal from 2010 to 2016,



For years, congressional Republicans, including House Speaker Paul D. Ryan, above in 2012 when he was vice presidential nominee, espoused the virtues of spending cuts.

when congressional Republicans insisted upon spending cuts and the Obama administration insisted on raising taxes (or, more precisely, allowing some of the Bush administration's tax cuts to expire). Those steps, combined with an improving economy, cut the budget deficit from around 9 percent of G.D.P. in 2010 to 3 percent in 2016.

THE NEAR TERM: STRONG GROWTH IN 2018 In almost any economic model you choose, the new era of fiscal profligacy will create a near-term economic boost. For example, Evercore ISI, the research arm of the investment bank Evercore, estimates that the combination of tax cuts and spending increases will contribute an extra 0.7 to 0.8 percentage points to

the growth rate in 2018, compared with the nation's previous policy path.

Economists generally think that these policies will have a lower "multiplier" than these policies would have if they took place during a recession, when there is more spare capacity in the economy. But that doesn't mean the multiplier becomes zero.

"Some people assume that because this was a bad process and the tax bill is really regressive that it won't have a short-term growth impact, but I think that's wrong," said Adam Posen, president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics. "We shouldn't confuse whatever distaste one has for the composition of the package for totally

overwhelming the multiplier effects."

Put a different way, it would be very hard for the government to pump an extra half-trillion dollars into the economy in a single year without getting some extra economic activity out of it.

Another potential near-term positive for the global financial system could be the effect of billions of dollars in bonds issued by the Treasury. For years the world has experienced what some analysts call a "safe asset shortage," too few government bonds and other investments viewed as reliable relative to demand.

This has arguably been a factor in depressed interest rates and sluggish growth across much of the advanced world. More Treasury bonds floating around might reduce those pressures.

THE MEDIUM TERM: DEPENDS ON ECONOMIC SLACK, AND THE FED Over the next two or three years, things get more murky. What happens will depend on how the economy responds to the additional fiscal stimulus, and how the Fed responds to that.

The big question is whether the economy has the room to keep growing without higher inflation emerging. The unemployment rate is already low at 4.1 percent, so there aren't exactly hordes of jobless people available to be put back to work. That means there is a chance that all this extra money flooding into the economy doesn't go toward more economic output but just bids up wages and ultimately consumer prices.

If that happens, the Federal Reserve would almost certainly raise interest rates more than it now plans, essentially engineering an economic slowdown to try to keep inflation from accelerating. In that scenario, the apparent benefits of tax cuts and spending increases would be short-lived.

But there's no certainty that will happen. It may be that the United States has more growth potential than standard models suggest. Perhaps corporate income tax cuts and looser regulation on business will unleash more capital investment and higher productivity, as conservatives argue. Maybe some of the millions of prime-age adults who have dropped out of the labor force in recent

DEFICITS, PAGE 8

Fighting Trump's tariffs

WASHINGTON

Countries are challenging U.S. levies on solar panels and washing machines

BY ANA SWANSON

Tariffs imposed by the United States late last month are prompting a wave of litigation from other nations, including Canada and China, escalating concerns that the Trump administration's aggressive trade stance could worsen international relations and lead to retaliatory actions on American goods sent abroad.

Last week, three Canadian solar companies filed a lawsuit in a New York court over tariffs on solar cells and panels that the United States imposed in late January, claiming these penalties violate American law and the terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The same day, the European Union became the fourth member of the World Trade Organization to request discussions with the United States for compensation for the solar tariffs, following similar requests by China, Taiwan and South Korea.

Chinese officials also confirmed this month that they had initiated a separate investigation into whether American exports of sorghum were receiving government subsidies or being sold at unfairly low prices abroad — a measure widely interpreted as a response to the Trump administration's ratcheting up of trade barriers.

With the Trump administration considering further trade actions on Chi-

nese products and foreign metals this year, some trade analysts are concerned that other American products, from soybeans to Kentucky bourbon, could become a target for retaliation.

Darci Vetter, a former chief agricultural negotiator for the United States trade representative, called China's sorghum case just the latest example of American agriculture landing in the cross hairs as trade tensions rise.

"Unfortunately, the agriculture sector knows from experience that when tit-for-tat trade actions begin, agricultural products are the first to be hit," Ms. Vetter said. "Given the size and importance of China's market for a variety of U.S. ag products, we are concerned it won't be the last."

"When tit-for-tat trade actions begin, agricultural products are the first to be hit."

The Trump administration announced on Jan. 22 that it would impose tariffs of up to 50 percent on imported washing machines and 30 percent on imported solar cells and modules, responding to a pair of trade cases arguing that low-cost foreign products were degrading American manufacturing capacity.

Those tariffs were not as high as what the companies bringing the complaints had requested, or some of the recommendations made by the officials of the United States International Trade Commission. Still, many economists, consumer groups and businesses warned that the tariffs would lead to higher

prices and could even end up costing more jobs than they would save.

These groups are still waiting to see whether the Trump administration fulfills its most ambitious plans for remaking trade policy. In the coming months, the administration is expected to introduce a hefty penalty on China for encroaching on American intellectual property, which could include tariffs on consumer electronics or restrictions on Chinese investment in the United States.

The fate of two separate trade actions, on imports of steel and aluminum, appears less certain.

Last June, President Trump said that the steel industry would be seeing action "very soon." But the idea of these tariffs was met with a swift backlash from industries that use the metals to produce other goods, like carmakers, as well as some Defense Department officials.

Since the United States Commerce Department submitted its reports on the investigations to the president last month, the cases have not been mentioned in official statements, including the White House's summary of its current trade actions released after the president's State of the Union address on Jan. 30.

The resignation last week of Rob Porter, the White House staff secretary, who was responsible for organizing weekly meetings of White House trade advisers and bridging deep divides in views on trade among the staff, throws the fate of these measures into further question.

Depending on what happens at the World Trade Organization, the United States could see further retaliation against the solar tariff, said Allan T. Marks, a lawyer at Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy.

The World Trade Organization will now consider whether countries like China had sufficient opportunity to consult with the United States before the tariffs were imposed, and if the United States followed its rules for creating such temporary safeguards for its industries.

Mr. Marks declined to speculate on the potential results, but said that the most recent precedent could be troubling for the United States. The last time that the United States imposed these kinds of tariffs, on steel imports under President George W. Bush in 2002, the World Trade Organization ruled that they were illegal, clearing the way for countries to lawfully retaliate against the United States. Under the threat of retaliation, the Bush administration withdrew the steel tariffs in 2003.

"You could see retaliation from exporting countries like China that are hurt by the safeguard action," Mr. Marks said. "And we'll probably get there. That's what happened for steel."



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A JA Solar plant in China. Beijing is one of the members of the World Trade Organization to seek talks with the United States on compensation for tariffs on solar products.

BUSINESS

A.I. picking up some biases from the real world

BY STEVE LOHR

Facial recognition technology is improving by leaps and bounds. Some commercial software can now tell the gender of a person in a photograph.

When the person in the photo is a white man, the software is right 99 percent of the time.

But the darker the skin, the more errors arise — up to nearly 35 percent for images of darker-skinned women, according to a new study that breaks fresh ground by measuring how the technology works on people of different races and gender.

These disparate results, calculated by Joy Buolamwini, a researcher at the Media Lab of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, show how some of the biases in the real world can seep into artificial intelligence, the computer systems that inform facial recognition.

In artificial intelligence, data rules. A.I. software is only as smart as the data used to train it. If there are many more white men than black women in the system, it will be worse at identifying the black women.

One widely used facial recognition data set was estimated to be more than 75 percent male and more than 80 percent white, according to another research study.

The new study also raises broader questions of fairness and accountability in artificial intelligence at a time when investment in and adoption of the technology is racing ahead.

Today, facial recognition software is being deployed by companies in various ways, including to help target product pitches based on social media profile pictures. But companies are also experimenting with face identification and other A.I. technology as an ingredient in automated decisions with higher stakes like hiring and lending.

Researchers at the Georgetown Law School in Washington estimated that 117 million American adults are in face recognition networks used by law enforcement — and that African Americans were most likely to be singled out, because they were disproportionately represented in mug-shot databases.

"This is the right time to be addressing how these A.I. systems work and where they fail — to make them socially accountable," said Suresh Venkatasubramanian, a professor of computer science at the University of Utah.

Until now, there was anecdotal evidence of computer vision miscues, and occasionally in ways that suggested discrimination.

In 2015, for example, Google had to apologize after its image-recognition photo app initially labeled African-Americans as "gorillas."

Sorelle Friedler, a computer scientist at Haverford College in Pennsylvania and a reviewing editor on Ms. Buolamwini's research paper, said experts had long suspected that facial recognition software performed differently on different populations.

"But this is the first work I'm aware of that shows that empirically," Ms. Friedler said.

Ms. Buolamwini, a young African-American computer scientist, experienced the bias of facial recognition firsthand. When she was an undergraduate at the Georgia Institute of Technology, programs would work well on her white friends, she said, but not recognize her face at all. She figured it was a flaw that would surely be fixed before long.

But a few years later, after joining the M.I.T. Media Lab, she ran into the missing-face problem again. Only when she put on a white mask did the software recognize hers as a face.

By then, face recognition software was increasingly moving out of the lab and into the mainstream.

"O.K., this is serious," she recalled deciding then. "Time to do something."

So she turned her attention to fighting the bias built into digital technology. Now 28 and a doctoral student, after studying as a Rhodes scholar and a Fulbright fellow, she is an advocate in the new field of "algorithmic accountability," which seeks to make automated decisions more transparent, explainable and fair.

Her short TED Talk on coded bias has been viewed more than 940,000 times, and she founded the Algorithmic Justice League, a project to raise awareness of the issue.

In her newly published paper, which will be presented at a conference this month, Ms. Buolamwini studied the performance of three leading face recognition systems — by Microsoft, IBM and Megvii of China — by classifying how well they could guess the gender of people with different skin tones. These companies were selected because they offered gender classification features in their facial analysis software — and their code was publicly available for testing.

She found them all wanting. To test the commercial systems, Ms. Buolamwini built a data set of 1,270 faces, using faces of lawmakers from countries with a high percentage of women in office. The sources included three African nations with predominantly dark-skinned populations, and three Nordic countries with mainly light-skinned residents.



TONY LIUONG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Joy Buolamwini, a researcher, found that facial recognition software makes more errors with darker-skinned people.

Then, each company's software was

scored according to a six-point labeling system used by dermatologists to classify skin types. The medical classifications were determined to be more objective and precise than race.

tested on the curated data, crafted for gender balance and a range of skin tones. The results varied somewhat. Microsoft's error rate for darker-skinned women was 21 percent, while IBM's and Megvii's rates were nearly 35

Hackers have a head start at the Games

Some computer systems tied to the Olympics have already been compromised

BY NICOLE PERLROTH

The United States Department of Homeland Security has warned Americans attending the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang that cybercriminals are likely to be taking aim at the Games.

Officials in South Korea are facing a double threat. At the Olympic Committee's Security Command Center in an unmarked facility in Pyeongchang, security experts from around the world are monitoring threats from North Korean hackers who have been probing the computer networks that manage South Korean finance, media and critical infrastructure systems for years.

And while some people believe that diplomatic efforts may have eased the North Korean threat to the Games, others are bracing for the impact of a hacking campaign by Russian groups retaliating for a ban on Russian athletes. Security companies said these groups had successfully targeted the computer systems of Olympic-related organizations months ago.

Just how those incidents could lead to broader attacks is not clear. But cybersecurity researchers said the Games — more digitized than ever — are ripe targets for hackers searching for embarrassing information on everyone from athletes to organizers, or simply looking to cause trouble by manipulating scoring or lighting systems.

More than 300 Olympics-related computer systems have already been hit, with many of them compromised, the security company McAfee said last month, in what its investigators described as a preliminary hacking campaign. On Friday, the second stage of that attack appeared to be underway, as assailants siphoned data from victims' machines back to their own computer systems, McAfee's researchers said.

Who was doing it and why they were doing it could take several months to figure out. Ryan Sherstobitoff, a senior analyst at McAfee, said the hacks had appeared to be well organized and backed by substantial resources, with "the hallmarks of a nation state." What that nation state planned to do with the stolen data and its foothold in victims' machines, Mr. Sherstobitoff said, was still anyone's guess.

A spokesman for the International Olympic Committee declined to comment on how the organization was addressing the heightened threats.

Security researchers often discuss risks with a level of informed paranoia. Some of their warnings are based on what is possible but has not actually occurred in the real world.



HILARY SWIFT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A curling match in Pyeongchang, South Korea, before the Olympics opening ceremony. More than 300 computer systems have been attacked already by hackers.

On other occasions, their warnings are based on what has already happened, and where those incidents could lead.

But cyberattacks on international events have become common. The 2015 nuclear negotiations in Geneva and the 2009 climate talks in Copenhagen, for example, were plagued by hackers from various nation states. The Olympics are another alluring target — but with wall-to-wall television coverage.

Who was doing it could take several months to figure out.

"The Olympics involve so many countries and so many sports, many of which have their own infrastructure, that it has become a rich target environment for many adversaries," said John Hultquist, director of threat intelligence at the security firm FireEye. He has been tracking the activities of Russian hackers and other groups as they lay the groundwork for attacks on Olympic organizations. In the past few months, Mr. Hultquist said, his team at FireEye has seen several examples of Russian groups tampering with the computers of Olympic-related organizations. The activity is "obviously meant to drag Olympics-related organizations through the mud and discredit them," he said.

The Russian cyberespionage group known as Fancy Bear, which has been tied to the 2016 hack of the Democratic National Committee and has links to Russia's main military intelligence unit, has already started posting hacked emails intended to highlight discord among sports officials and investigators who exposed systemic Russian doping.

Last month, the group posted emails and other documents online from the International Luge Federation, claiming they demonstrated violations of anti-doping rules. And earlier in January, the group released hacked emails and documents from the International Olympic Committee, which it advertised as proof "the Europeans and the Anglo-Saxons are fighting for power and cash in the sports world."

Trend Micro, the Tokyo-based security company, said its researchers had also witnessed Fancy Bear attacks on the International Ice Hockey Federation, the International Ski Federation, the International Biathlon Union, and the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation in the final months of 2017. The attacks occurred while an International Olympic Committee disciplinary panel was preparing bans for Russian athletes caught doping in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

"The Kremlin has its fingerprints on cyberattacks that were retribution for exposing the Russians' Sochi games doping scheme, which was a fraud on the purity of sport," said Doug DePeppe, a founder of Sports ISAO, a nonprofit cybersecurity organization in Colorado Springs. The group is trying to help sports associations, including Olympic organizations, combat threats.

"Their goal is to say, 'No one is following the rules, and Russia shouldn't be singled out,'" Mr. DePeppe said. FireEye, McAfee and other security companies said that over the past few months they had seen attack groups from Russia, and others of unknown origin, dispatch hundreds of "spearphishing" emails, laced with malicious links and attachments, to target Olympic-related groups.

They also have seen the groups set up

computer servers under the names of some of their targets and seemingly innocuous organizations like the South Korean Ministry of Forestry.

In 2016, Russian hackers targeted the World Anti-Doping Agency after it recommended that Russian athletes be banned from the 2016 Rio Games because of doping. The personal data of more than 40 athletes was leaked not long after.

The worst-case scenario would be attacks in which hackers tried to shut off lights in a stadium during an event, or perhaps even tampered with electronic timing results, warned Betsy Cooper, the executive director at the Center for Long-Term Cybersecurity at the University of California, Berkeley.

To protect the Olympics, South Korea has mobilized tens of thousands of security personnel, including cybersecurity analysts and 50,000 soldiers, in what has been described as one of the most militarized security forces in Olympic history.

Over the past few weeks, the United States State Department has set up a temporary security monitoring operation on one floor of its embassy in Seoul. Analysts from the State Department, the intelligence community and the Department of Homeland Security are scheduled to arrive there this week.

But an official who was briefed on the State Department-led operation, and who was not allowed to discuss it publicly, worried that the operation was too focused on combating traditional threats like physical attacks on venues.

The State Department did not reply to a request for comment. Elsewhere in Pyeongchang, an alliance of security personnel from South Korea, various Olympic sponsors, technology suppliers and cybersecurity sleuths from around the world are monitoring computer screens and potential threats at the unmarked Security Command Center.

Each country participating in the Olympics also has its own security delegation on the ground, with those from the United States and Israel among the largest. Those delegations are busy conducting their own threat assessments and receiving daily threat briefings from South Korean law enforcement authorities.

While cybersecurity experts believe the North Korean threat was lessened by the last-minute addition of a North Korean delegation to the Games, they have not ruled out that North Korea may be looking to embarrass its southern neighbor. "One thing is for certain: We can't simply rely on these actors to behave themselves in this context," Mr. Hultquist said. "They've proven, again and again, over the past few years that they are not afraid to flout international norms and create chaos."

Big deficits are back, as austerity era ends

DEFICITS, FROM PAGE 7 years will come back in, creating more economic potential.

"The really big question mark we have is how much slack there really is in the economy," said Donald Marron, a scholar at the Urban Institute who was once acting director of the Congressional Budget Office. "If you look at conventional measures, unemployment looks really low, but on the other hand if you look back to what we used to think of the potential of the economy a few years ago, we may have some room to grow."

THE LONG RUN: HIGHER DEBT-SERVICE COSTS AND LESS ROOM TO MANEUVER The public debt was already on track to rise relative to the size of the economy before the new tax and spending deals; now it will probably rise faster. The Congressional Budget Office projected last June that the nation's debt-to-G.D.P. ratio would rise to 91 percent in 2027, from 77 percent in 2017.

The Congressional Budget Office hasn't updated those numbers to reflect the new tax and spending legislation, but the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimates that it will turn out to be between 99 and 109 percent, depending on whether provisions of the tax law are allowed to expire as they are scheduled to.

But those numbers are just an abstraction. The question is what effects

higher debt loads might have for Americans in 2027 and beyond.

Higher debt service costs are one big one. Taxpayers in 2027 were forecast to pay \$818 billion a year in interest costs even before the tax cuts and spending increases, or 2.4 percent of G.D.P. That will presumably be higher, because taxpayers will be paying interest costs on more debt, and probably at higher interest rates.

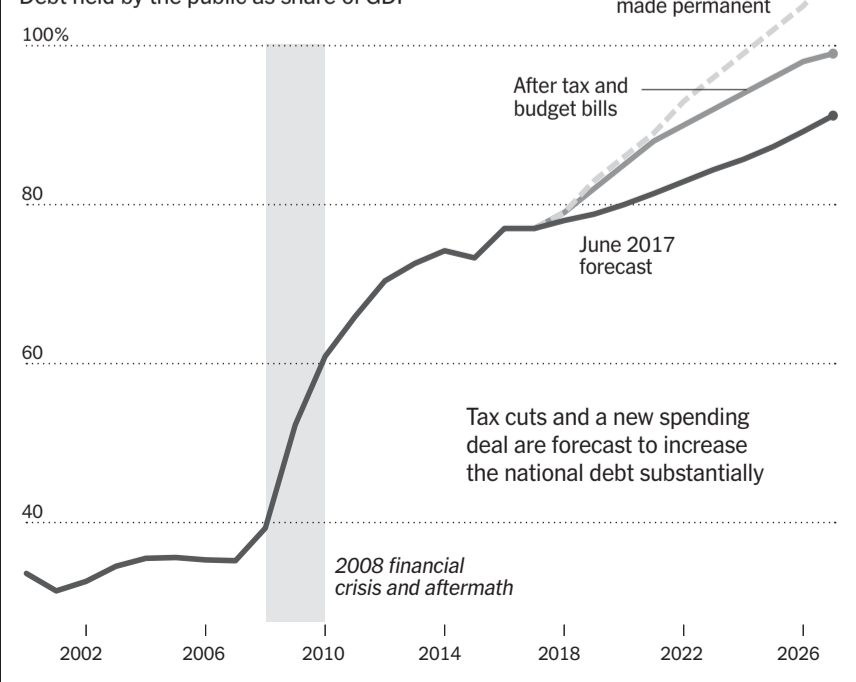
And there is probably some point at which the amount of debt the government takes on crowds out private investment; to the degree that the supply of funds to borrow is finite, every dollar the government borrows is not available to be lent to a homeowner taking out a mortgage or a business looking to expand. That said, in practice, the supply of loanable funds is not finite — households may save more with higher interest rates, for example, and foreign capital might flow in.

The bigger costs of a high national debt may come in how much flexibility policymakers have to respond to a future recession or crisis. If the United States finds itself in a major war or a deep recession, its starting point in terms of debt load will be much higher than it was at the onset of the Iraq War or the 2008 financial crisis.

"It's about risk management," Mr. Posen said. "We may need that fiscal capacity for something else."

U.S. debt is set to rise

Debt held by the public as share of GDP



Opinion

North Korea's gold medal for deception

South Korea could be rushing headlong into a premature détente with its dangerous neighbor to the north.

Jean H. Lee

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA A gaggle of young North Koreans in neon chased me down the mountain on skis, expertly skidding to a stop at my feet as I sat on the slope tightening my bindings.

They peppered me with questions: "What's your name? How old are you? Where are you from? Are you married?"

It was 2014 and we were at Masikryong Ski Resort, a pet project of the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The multimillion-dollar resort, featuring luxury lodges and pristine slopes about 100 miles east of Pyongyang, had opened a few weeks earlier and I was there on a reporting trip — and to get a little snowboarding in. These North Koreans, all students, told me they were assigned to learn to ski during their university break. Six days a week, eight hours a day, all they did was ski.

Even back then, I could see the wheels turning in Mr. Kim's mind. "To compete at the Pyeongchang Olympics in 2018?" I asked the young men. They chuckled. "Maybe," they said.

Four years later, North Korea is sending skiers — probably including some of those young men I met in 2014 — across the Demilitarized Zone to compete as wild-card entries at the first Winter Olympics to be held on the Korean Peninsula. South Korean athletes, meanwhile, have been training at Masikryong, perhaps the world's most controversial ski resort, built in defiance of United Nations sanctions and in spite of North Korea's crushing poverty.

This cross-border athletic exchange would seem to encapsulate the spirit of peace and unity at the heart of the Olympics. But I worry that it is too fast, too soon, and that in their haste to ensure an Olympics without provocation, South Korean officials could be rushing headlong into a premature détente.

All of this may seem like a stunning, surprising turn of events. After all, just weeks earlier, Mr. Kim tested a ballistic missile designed to strike the United States and engaged in a war of words — and Twitter taunts — with President Trump. But Mr. Kim has for years been mapping out a strategy to insert North Korea into these Olympics and to capitalize on the attention focused on its rival to the south. The missile tests were part of that plan.

Thirty-one years ago, as South Korea prepared to host the 1988 Summer Olympics, Mr. Kim's father, Kim Jong-il, hatched his own plot to take advantage of Seoul's Olympic moment: Negotiations over North Korea's participation had disintegrated, and in a move meant to warn Seoul of the perils of sidelining North Korea, the elder Mr. Kim orchestrated the bombing of a Korean Air flight that killed 115 people. The goal: to spook the world into thinking South Korea was a dangerous place. The plan backfired; the Games went ahead without North Korea.

Kim Jong-un, who took power in late 2011 after his father's death, has carved out a savvy route to the Olympics: nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. With every banned test of a bomb or missile, he holds the world in thrall with the threat of nuclear war. That has pushed Seoul onto its back foot. Questions abroad about whether it's safe to send athletes to South Korea have dogged the Pyeongchang Games, and ticket sales have been sluggish. South Korea needs these Olympics to be peaceful in order to be successful.

Then, on New Year's Day, Mr. Kim announced that he wanted to send North Korean athletes to Pyeongchang,

though only two — a figure-skating duo — had qualified. It was a pinky-finger promise not to stage any provocations during the Winter Games. It was also a stunning act of theater.

In swift succession, just days before the opening of the Pyeongchang Games, the two Koreas agreed to march into the Olympic arena under a unified flag, to field a joint women's ice hockey team for the first time at an Olympics and to stage cultural performances. Mr. Kim had yet one more surprise: He sent not only North Korea's ceremonial head of state but also his trusted younger sister in what will be the first official visit by an immediate member of the Kim family to South Korea.

This may sound like a movie-ready Olympic story of peace and reconciliation, but I doubt it will be so simple.

As a young journalist, I was at Sydney's Olympic Stadium in 2000 when the two Koreas marched in together, for the first time at an Olympic Games, under the white-and-pale-blue "unified Korea" flag. The moment, met by cheers and a standing ovation, sent chills down my spine. It felt like we were on the cusp of a new era of peace.

Eighteen years later, the mood is different here in South Korea. Hope for peace has been replaced by distrust and skepticism.

It was sports diplomacy, an example of a shared love of snow and mountains.

The South Koreans who remember Korea as one country and long for its reunification — my grandparents' generation — are gone. Younger people, accustomed to affluence, are less willing to shoulder the financial burden of reconciliation or reunification, a wariness reflected in the drop in President Moon Jae-in's popularity in recent days.

It's not just skeptical South Koreans whom Mr. Moon needs to placate. As the Games begin, South Korea must navigate hosting the North Korean athletes and officials without violating United Nations sanctions — and without alienating Washington, which is leading a global campaign to pressure, punish and isolate Pyongyang for its nuclear defiance.

"We will not allow North Korean propaganda to hijack the message and imagery of the Olympic Games," Vice President Mike Pence said en route to Pyeongchang, vowing to highlight North Korean provocations and alleged human rights abuses and promising new sanctions.

Mr. Pence has a point. North Korea's participation in these Olympics runs the risk of rewarding bad behavior and handing Mr. Kim a diplomatic victory that he will brandish as proof that his strategy was right. Still, we have to start somewhere after so many years of tension.

I don't advocate vacationing at North Korea's ski resort, which serves as propaganda for Mr. Kim and a reward for the political elite while the rest of the people go without heat, food and clean water. And yet, as the first American journalist to work in North Korea, where I opened The Associated Press's Pyongyang bureau, I know the value of giving North Koreans a chance to interact with the outside world.

Back on that slope in 2014, the questions came fast and furious from the young North Koreans who hovered above me, leaning on their poles.

"Where did you learn to snowboard?" one asked.

California, I said, eliciting a look of dismay. The United States remains Enemy No. 1, after all. "Should I say 'Switzerland'?" I joked. His face brightened and he broke into a smile, showing off a mouthful of gold crowns.



AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

"How do you stay balanced? Can you teach me one day?"

I'm typically the one trying to get the stony-faced North Koreans to answer questions. But away from minders and surveillance, in the mountains where no one could hear us, they had no qualms about grilling this curiosity in their midst, a Korean-American woman on a snowboard.

I will never forget that moment, and neither will they. In a small way, it was sports diplomacy, an example of a shared love of the snow and the mountains trumping the barriers that politics and history had created.

In a much bigger way, we have a moment here to allow sports diplomacy to create space for better understanding and communication. These Olympics offer an opening — if handled skillfully and strategically by South Korea and the United States.

North Korea has already hijacked media coverage of the Games. But once the cameras, athletes and tourists go home, diplomats shouldn't allow the region to drift back to threats and provocation. If they do, Mr. Kim will be the only winner in this complicated game of Korean sports diplomacy.

After 20 years of watching the two Ko-

reas veer between reconciliation and re-priming only to bring us to the brink of nuclear disaster, I cannot go into these Olympic Games with the same wide-eyed optimism I had in 2000.

But I will be watching with an open mind and with the hope that this time, the two Koreas and their allies will transform this moment into an opening for negotiations that bring real, lasting peace.

JEAN H. LEE, a former correspondent for *The Associated Press*, is a global fellow at the *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*.

Skiers from North and South Korea at Masikryong, a multimillion-dollar resort about 100 miles east of Pyongyang.

One honorable American's love of Trump

Lesson for Democrats: The same old, same old won't work in 2020.



Roger Cohen

SYRACUSE Shannon Kennedy, son of Jack, retired military officer, ex-stockbroker, voted twice for Barack Obama ("so poised, a really got-it-together guy") before his conversion to Donald Trump. Now he's a true believer, even if he thinks "Donald definitely needs to button it sometimes."

His dad, named John but universally known as Jack, "was such a charmer, he could charm hungry pups from a meat wagon." Married three times with eight kids, Jack was a Democrat and "a very capable political operative who ran a couple of campaigns here in Syracuse." For a while he sold used cars at Shamrock Motors, then opened a bar, Kennedy's Club K, which, his son observes, "was not a great occupation for an alcoholic."

Jack was dry at the time. He said he'd put tea in the whiskey bottles, nobody would know, and he'd drink from those. That worked, until it didn't. He was dead at 49.

We are driving around Syracuse, population 143,000. It's pretty bleak. Most industry and manufacturers are long gone. Poverty and drugs are scourges, as in countless towns across America. Service industries and Syracuse University are significant providers of jobs now, Kennedy recalls a different town in his youth, a thriving magnet to immigrants. After his parents divorced, and his mother died young in 1961, he was raised by his grandmother.

"She was so tight, she wouldn't spend a nickel to watch the Statue of Liberty swim back to France!" Kennedy says. "She kept me busy. I mowed lawns in summer, raked leaves in the fall and shoveled snow in winter to make a buck. Her message was: Never spend a dime when you can spend a nickel."

So there's that in Kennedy's makeup: the scrappy, can-do fighter who's known hard times and believes there's no substitute for a day's work. Then came the military. He served in Japan, in a naval hospital, from 1970- to 1971, treating war wounded from Vietnam. "We'd get the

injured 12 to 24 hours out of Vietnam, generally with at least one limb missing. We'd sew, or suture or ligate stumps. They were my age. My thought was, 'I could be them!'

Later, he trained at Fort Bragg; was commissioned as an officer; and served in Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Egypt, among other countries, retiring with the rank of major in 1997. He recalls, "When I was in Sinai, I would be asked by my commanding officer, 'What did you do for the taxpayer today?'"

Kennedy remains a fervent Trump supporter. He insists that he has no illusions.

If there's a main source of Kennedy's anger, it's that this has become such a quaint, outmoded question in today's America of lobbyists and line-my-pockets politics. "Trust the Clintons? Not with the Lord's breakfast," he says. He tells me he leans right, but he believes that every American should have a functioning public transit system ("as in Germany and Japan") and a good national health service. He thought Obama could be "a breath of fresh air," and was initially in favor of

"Obamacare," until it "went off the rails because the exchanges were not competitive."

Then along came Trump. "The thing about him," Kennedy tells me, "is that there's forward energy. He's like a horse with blinders at the Kentucky Derby. If there's another horse in the way, knock it out and ride the rail. I listened to him, on immigration, on draining the swamp, on lobbyists, and I liked that. As I recall, it was 'We the people' not 'We the empowered.'"

Immigration was an important factor in Kennedy's lurch from Obama to Trump. While he favors the Dreamers program, which shielded some young immigrants from deportation, he says, "There are too many people running around who have no business being here." America First was important: Too many working Americans have lost jobs to unbalanced trade deals.

A little over a year in, Kennedy remains a fervent Trump supporter. He insists that he has no illusions. Trump is "brash," a "rogue." He's also "a fighter, a scrapper, the kind of guy who says 'damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.'" He's proving his stamina against the naysayers "who hate the man with a vileness that is very un-

American." He's draining Washington "of people with contempt for the people they represent." The tax cut will be "beneficial."

And what of the president's racism, lies, warmongering outbursts, vulgarity, and attacks on a free press and the judiciary? "Go beyond the noise," Kennedy tells me. "Don't take him at face value. If I thought he was a racist, I'd be off the train so fast you'd have to mail me my shadow. Respect the office of the presidency."

I disagree. Respect for the office must begin with Trump, who's sullied it with mendacity, bigotry and autocratic contempt for the Constitution. Still, I respect Kennedy. He's served his country. He's a patriot. He's no "deplorable." He's smart. The Democratic Party should listen to him, or risk losing in 2020.

The message is clear. The same old, same old (for example, Joe Biden) won't work. A whiff of got-the-system-rigged elitism from the Democrats will be fatal. A strong economic program for working Americans is essential. Look to purple-state America, not blue-state coastal America, for a candidate who is grappling with the country's toughest issues and is strong on can-do, down-to-earth values.

OPINION

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

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NETANYAHU'S ATTACK FEELS FAMILIAR

Awaiting the conclusion of two corruption investigations, he assails law enforcement officials he appointed.

The head of the government has been under criminal investigation for some time. So he launches a counter-attack against the credibility of the investigators and their chief, and assails media reports as "fake news." Sound familiar?

In this case, though, it's Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel, who is bracing for police investigators to conclude two long corruption investigations as early as next week by presenting their recommendations to the attorney general.

What they will recommend is not publicly known, though it is known that one case under investigation involves gifts from benefactors, and the other allegations that Mr. Netanyahu tried to get favorable coverage from a newspaper in exchange for curtailing a competitor. The attorney general could choose to indict; or he could do nothing, or just issue a reprimand, which would legally allow Mr. Netanyahu to stay in the office he has occupied for a total of 12 years now.

Mr. Netanyahu, who has been called Mr. Teflon for his ability to weather earlier police inquiries, has repeatedly insisted that the current investigations "will come to nothing, because there is nothing." Still, he is taking no chances. (His predecessor, Ehud Olmert, was forced out of office over police accusations of corruption and ended up serving 16 months of a 27-month prison term for bribery and obstruction of justice.)

Things got nasty on Wednesday when the police commissioner, Roni Alsheich, appointed to his current post by Mr. Netanyahu, gave a television interview in which he reiterated earlier allegations that powerful people had hired private detectives to gather information about officers working on the Netanyahu case. Mr. Netanyahu called the allegations "delusional and mendacious" and questioned whether people who make such charges can be impartial in their investigation.

In fact, Mr. Alsheich is not directly in charge of the investigation, which is being handled by a special anti-corruption unit. And the investigations have been conducted with the oversight of the attorney general, Avichai Mandelblit, who was also appointed to his position by Mr. Netanyahu and who has strongly defended the police against those who would "weaken the public trust in the rule of law."

Mr. Netanyahu will have plenty of opportunity to defend himself, politically, legally, publicly and morally, against whatever he might stand accused of. There is no defense for self-serving efforts to undermine the institutions and rule of law he's sworn to uphold.

TROUBLE IN PARADISE COULD SPREAD

The power struggle in a tiny island nation could pull India and China into conflict.

The Maldives is a curious half-paradise, half-hell: The allure of its romantic island resorts often seems to be in inverse proportion to the sordidness of its politics. These could reach a dangerous new level if the political crisis that erupted last week is allowed to embroil India and China.

The current mess started as February began when the country's Supreme Court unexpectedly decided to nullify sentences against nine of the many opposition figures thrown into prison or forced into exile by President Abdulla Yameen. Among those cleared was Mohamed Nasheed, a former president who won the only fair election the country has had, but was replaced by the corrupt and authoritarian Mr. Yameen.

President Yameen refused the court's ruling, declared a state of emergency and ordered the arrest of two of the court's five judges, several opposition members and his 80-year-old half-brother, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who had earlier ruled the Maldives for 30 years. The remaining judges then nullified the court's ruling.

In a nation of about 430,000 people dispersed over an archipelago in the Indian Ocean — which could well vanish as climate change raises sea levels — that might not seem to pose a clear and present danger for the world. Years ago a coup attempt was snuffed when India, then the country with the greatest influence there, sent in paratroopers.

But in recent years, Mr. Yameen has cozied up to China and Saudi Arabia, raising concerns in India that its influence in the Indian Ocean is being challenged.

As the crisis ramped up, Mr. Nasheed asked India to intervene, while Mr. Yameen sent envoys to China, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The United Nations and the United States assailed the state of emergency, effectively taking sides against Mr. Yameen.

There is no easy way out. Mr. Gayoom still commands loyalty in the security forces; Mr. Nasheed has his following, and having imprisoned his foes, Mr. Yameen knows where he'd end up were he to fall. But turning the islands' turmoil into a proxy struggle would only make matters far more dangerous.

Elections scheduled for later this year offer the best way to restore legitimacy to the government. Mr. Yameen has little incentive in a fair election, but that is where international pressure must be focused.

For wedded bliss, act single

Stephanie Coontz

OLYMPIA, WASH. Especially around Valentine's Day, it's easy to find advice about sustaining a successful marriage, with suggestions for "date nights" and romantic dinners for two.

But as we spend more and more of our lives outside marriage, it's equally important to cultivate the skills of successful singlehood. And doing that doesn't benefit just people who never marry. It can also make for more satisfying marriages.

No matter how much Americans may value marriage, we now spend more time living single than ever before. In 1960, Americans were married for an average of 29 of the 37 years between the ages of 18 and 55. That's almost 80 percent of what was then regarded as the prime of life. By 2015, the average had dropped to only 18 years.

In many ways, that's good news for marriages and married people. Contrary to some claims, marrying at an older age generally lowers the risk of divorce. It also gives people time to acquire educational and financial assets, as well as develop a broad range of skills — from cooking to household repairs to financial management — that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives, including when a partner is unavailable.

What's more, single people generally

have wider social networks than married couples, who tend to withdraw into their coupledom. On average, unmarried people interact more frequently with friends, neighbors, co-workers and extended family.

Socializing with friends and family and participating in clubs, political organizations, teams, unions and churches are essential components of what sociologists call social integration. And health researchers report that maintaining high levels of social integration provides as much protection against early mortality as quitting smoking. In fact, having weak social networks is a greater risk factor for dying early than being obese or sedentary. One analysis of 148 separate health studies found that people who cultivated a wide network of friends and other social relationships had a mortality risk 50 percent lower than those with weak ties.

Having a large network of friends rather than relying mainly on family is especially beneficial. A long-term study of more than 6,500 Britons found that men and women who reported having 10 or more friendships at age 45 had significantly higher levels of psychological well-being at age 50, whatever their

partnership status, than people with fewer friends. And two recent studies of nearly 280,000 people in almost 100 countries by William Chopik of Michigan State University found that friendships become increasingly vital to well-being at older ages. Among older adults, relationships with friends are a better predictor of good health and happiness than relations with family.

Don't get me wrong. Marriage can provide a bounty of emotional, practical and financial support. But finding the right mate is no substitute for having friends and other interests. Indeed, people who are successful as singles are especially likely to end up in happy marriages, in large part because of the personal and social resources they developed before marrying.

One representative study of nearly 17,000 people found that almost 80 percent of those who married had reported the same levels of well-being four years before their marriage as they reported four years afterward.

It's true that, on average, married people report higher well-being than singles. But mounting research indicates that most of the disadvantages of singles compared with the currently married are accounted for by distress among the previously married, especially those most recently divorced or widowed.

This suggests an intriguing possibility, says the Ohio State University sociologist Kristi Williams, editor of *The Journal of Marriage and Family*: Many

of the problems experienced by divorced and widowed people may result not so much from the end of their marriage as from having relied too much on their spouse and thus failing to maintain social networks and the skills of self-reliance. In Professor Chopik's research, single older people with solid friendships, whether previously married or never married, were just as happy and healthy as married individuals.

A new study by Daniel Carlson of the University of Utah and Ben Kail of Georgia State finds that the only segment of the population where never-married individuals consistently report worse psychological well-being than the married is among the poorest Americans. This is partly because at this income level, married couples actually maintain higher levels of social integration than their unmarried counterparts.

But as income rises, the advantages of married over never-married individuals evaporate and even reverse. While affluent never-married people continue to multiply their interactions with friends, neighbors and family, affluent married couples don't. This could well be why, at the highest income levels, married people are actually more likely to report depressive symptoms than their equally affluent never-married counterparts.

Maintaining social networks and self-reliance after marriage does far more, however, than protect you against depression and ensure against the worst

COONTZ, PAGE 11



JOSH COCHRAN

Channeling Putin in Cairo

Mona Eltahawy
Contributing Writer

Which country, due to hold a presidential election next month, is led by an autocrat who, having eliminated any serious competition, is basically running against himself?

Hints: A political analyst in that country has said, as a reminder of the deliberate ineffectiveness of electoral competitors, "Some figures are allowed in, like backup dancers." Indeed, the most serious challenger to the incumbent president has been barred from contesting the election, which denies him a platform to broadcast accusations of corruption that could involve the president.

The answer, of course, is Russia, where President Vladimir V. Putin has eliminated all serious competition, most notably Alexei A. Navalny, and is allowing only opponents whose support is mired in single digits.

But it could also describe Egypt, where President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, a former military commander, has pushed his five most serious opponents out of elections scheduled for the end of next month. Among them was Sami Anan, a former chief of staff of the military who was considered Mr. Sisi's most serious opponent.

Like Mr. Navalny, he was arrested and charged — in his case by the military, which accused him of incitement against the armed forces, forgery and breaching military regulations. Had he been allowed to contest the election

and speak publicly, his status as a highly placed officer would have rendered any grievances or criticisms of Mr. Sisi that he expressed especially damning.

And then, just minutes before the deadline for filing, the head of a small political party that had already endorsed Mr. Sisi registered as a candidate. But it was just Mousa Moustafa Mousa dutifully giving Mr. Sisi a "backup dancer" to window-dress a farce so that it could be called an election. Actually, it amounts to nothing more than a referendum, with the winner already known.

That five presidential candidates withdrew or were forced to withdraw from running against Mr. Sisi is a reminder of the impossibility of real politics in Egypt — with "elections" mere charades blessed by a military establishment that has suffocated Egyptian politics for more than 60 years.

It is instructive that three would-be candidates were military men whose high rank clearly could not protect them. The way they were forced to withdraw offers a view into rivalries within the armed forces that we rarely see. It has also tarnished the reputation of the military in a country where compulsory national service means that almost every family has a son in uniform.

We have been under military rule since 1952, when a group of army officers overthrew Egypt's monarchy and ended Britain's occupation of the country. But that only replaced an external occupation with an internal one, in which favored sons of the

armed forces replaced their uniforms with suits, a move meant to create a semblance of civilian rule.

When we complain to Egypt's Western allies about whichever autocrat is in power, we are asked, "But who is the alternative?" It is a question designed to frustrate. The allies, led by America, know full well that by giving billions in aid and selling billions more in weapons to our military, they are ensuring the military's continued political dominance — and in doing that, ensuring the near impossibility of our country coming up with any alternative.

In January, Vice President Mike Pence became the highest-level American official to visit Egypt since President Barack Obama went in 2009. He told Mr. Sisi the United States stood "shoulder to shoulder with the military" in fighting against terrorism, but he avoided giving even lip service to the need to ensure free and fair elections.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is to visit Egypt and other countries in the region, beginning this week. He, too, is unlikely to bring up Egypt's sham elections; after all, the United States consistently puts "stability" at the top of its priorities for countries like ours, inevitably at our expense.

So we are caught between an American-style Sisi and an Egyptian-style Putin. Mr. Pence's — and Mr. Tillerson's — boss, President Trump, is emulating our military-backed dictator,

Mr. Sisi, every time he unabashedly exercises greater executive powers than the Constitution allows, and Mr. Sisi in turn assures continuation of his own rule by emulating Mr. Putin's transparently sham elections.

Caught in such a vise of global authoritarianism, it is cruelly disingenuous and willfully ignorant when the West asks us, "Who is the alternative" to Mr. Sisi? It is imperative instead to stop giving aid and selling weapons to a military-backed regime that is set on smothering all life out of our politics.

It has been seven years since popular uprisings swept across Egypt, forcing the ouster of another autocrat, Hosni Mubarak, who had once served as head of the air force. When the millions of Egyptians who joined that uprising chanted in Tahrir Square and throughout Egypt, "The people demand the fall of the regime!" they meant not just him but the system that propped him up. Mr. Mubarak fell. But the military system remained intact.

In the most recent elections, three years ago, Mr. Sisi was said to have received a difficult-to-believe 96.1 percent of votes. According to the Arab Network for Human Rights Information, these have been the fruits of Mr. Sisi's term in office: 60,000 political prisoners, 7,513 civilians tried in military tribunals, 2,332 death sentences, 500 people barred from travel, 465 internet sites shuttered, 54 journalists and media workers jailed, 17 new prisons. Several leading opposition figures in Egypt have called for a boycott of the presidential election. In response, a scholar from Dar al-Ifta, ELTAHWAY, PAGE 11



South Korea and Japan, friendly foes

MICHISHITA, FROM PAGE 1

administration earmarked a significant portion of that — some \$120 million — to set up a major steel conglomerate.

Two decades later, North Korea's conventional military forces were still far greater than those of South Korea. And so, arguing that it would take more than \$15 billion and over a decade for the South to catch up to the North, Chun Doo-hwan, the South's president at the time, asked Japan for "economic cooperation for national security." In 1983, the Japanese government announced a \$4 billion loan package to South Korea.

Today, Japan also contributes to South Korea's security indirectly, by supporting the United States forces that would come to the South's defense in the event of another war.

Japan hosts about 40,000 American troops. During the Korean War in 1950-53, it served as a major operating platform for United States forces fighting in support of South Korea: American soldiers who had been maintained in Japan after World War II were quickly sent to the Korean Peninsula, and American battleships, aircraft carriers, fighter jets and bombers operated from bases in Japan.

Should conflict break out in South Korea today, the United States could, and presumably would, come to its ally's help by using once again its main footholds in Japan, including its air force base in Yokota, naval base in Sasebo and Marine air station in Futenma.

What's more, the Japanese government stands ready to support American military operations that would be deployed in the event of a conflict. In 1997, the United States and Japan agreed that Japan's Self-Defense Force would provide noncombat assistance to United States troops "in situations in areas sur-

rounding Japan" — a code phrase, in part, for the Korean Peninsula.

Over the years, United States-Japan cooperation for the defense of South Korea became so close that some specialists said it created a "virtual alliance" among the three countries, and have credited it with deterring war in East Asia despite North Korea's steady pursuit of nuclear weapons and regular flare-ups and crises, such as in early 2003 and 2009.

Japan's commitment to South Korea has only been strengthened since, bolstered by Mr. Abe's return to power as prime minister in 2012. For all his nationalistic bluster, Mr. Abe's hawkishness has served South Korea's defense interests well.

In 2014, the Japanese government reinterpreted the Constitution to allow Japan to use force — under limited conditions — to defend itself or its allies, including the United States and South Korea. The legislature passed security legislation in 2015

authorizing Japanese forces to provide combat support to United States troops that might fight in the waters or air space around the Korean Peninsula. If necessary, they may, for example, shoot down a North Korean ballistic missile aimed at Guam or Hawaii, conduct anti-submarine operations to protect American naval forces or clear mines in waters near North Korea ahead of United States amphibious operations.

In other words, Japan's participation in the defense of South Korea is consequential.

And yet it has largely been downplayed, if not deliberately ignored — mostly, again, for pragmatic reasons.

The idea of defending South Korea isn't very popular in Japan, especially among people who identify as liberal pacifists. Some Japanese are wary of seeing their country dragged into someone else's war or cannot fathom having to sacrifice for South Koreans who keep criticizing Japan for its historical record.

Some South Koreans, for their part, are uncomfortable about receiving security support from a government that once colonized them. Many South Korean journalists and academics I have spoken to over the years gladly acknowledge the importance of America's security commitment, but regard any such contribution by Japan as suspect — or even, as one legislator has said, as an attempt to "seize hegemony in East Asia."

But matters are different at the highest official levels, even since Mr. Moon became president in May. At first he seemed to adopt a harder position on Japan than his predecessor, notably by criticizing the agreement that she and Mr. Abe reached in 2015 in hopes of settling the comfort women issue. Yet the Moon administration has since announced that it would not try to renegotiate the treaty. Realpolitik, again. The memory of past belligerence recedes in the face of fresh threats.

Indeed. After meeting with Mr. Moon in Pyeongyang on Friday, Mr. Abe is said to have told reporters, "North Korea must recognize that the strong ties between Japan, the United States and South Korea will never waver."

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Act single for wedded bliss

COONTZ, FROM PAGE 10

outcomes of divorce or widowhood. It can also enhance and even revitalize your marriage.

Many marriage counselors focus narrowly on improving partners' couple skills without taking into account how the marital relationship is affected by interactions with other people. Yet a 2017 study found that when people socialize more frequently with good friends, they not only report fewer depressive symptoms themselves, but so do their partners.

People feel better when their spouses have good friendships, over and above the effects of their own friendships. In another example of how friendships can benefit a marriage, happily married wives who experience conflicts in their marriage generally feel closer to their husbands when they can discuss and reframe the issues with a good friend.

As the U.C.L.A. social psychologist Benjamin Karney told me, "You are my everything" is not the best recipe for a happy marriage.

Research his team will present next month at the annual conference of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology found that having supportive friendships is associated with more satisfying marriages, even among couples already content with the support they get from each other.

"Even the happiest couples have something to gain by nurturing relationships with people outside their marriage," he said.

That's what's wrong with the pressure put on couples to plan the perfect date night. Aside from having sex, which most of us prefer to do without outsiders around, people enjoy doing activities with their partner and friends together more than with only their spouse.

Socializing with others provides some of the novelty and variety that leading

social psychologists call "the spice of happiness." It also allows partners to show off each other's strengths. My husband tells great stories, but I've heard most of them and am not interested in hearing them again when we're by ourselves.

When we're out with others, however, I urge him to tell away.

Their positive reaction validates me as well as him.

Still, don't couples need date nights to renew their romantic passion? In one experiment, researchers assigned some couples to spend time by themselves and have deeply personal conversations, while others were set up with a couple they had never met and told to initiate similar conversations. Afterward, all the couples reported greater satisfaction with their relationship, but couples who had been on the "double date" reported feeling more romantic passion toward each other than those who had engaged only with each other.

So this Valentine's Day, if you're in the throes of early love, by all means plan a romantic evening alone with your partner. But if that first rush of passion has passed, you're probably better off going on a double date.

And if you're without a romantic partner, why not hone your singlehood skills by organizing a dinner party with friends or inviting over a few people you'd like to get to know better?

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Channeling Putin

ELTAHAWY, FROM PAGE 10

the authority responsible for issuing religious edicts, or fatwas, told a satellite television show that anyone who did not vote would be a traitor. The endowments minister said that participating in the election was required by Shariah and national duty.

Neither the minister who oversees religious affairs nor our clerics have issued fatwas or told us the position of Shariah on torture, police brutality or forcible disappearances. Instead, Muslim and Christian leaders have thrown their moral left behind Mr. Sisi — just as Russia's Orthodox Church unabashedly supports Mr. Putin.

While the 2011 revolution did not remove the regime, it has shortened the seemingly endless patience that many Egyptians once had for military rule. And Mr. Sisi knows that.

"Be warned," Mr. Sisi said recently, channeling Mr. Putin. "What happened seven or eight years ago will not happen again in Egypt."

Mr. Sisi will win the March election, undoubtedly. But he has lost whatever popular support he once had. Those with access to social media in Egypt can find a litany of complaints, accusations and derision directed at him and his regime. Economic austerity, a failure to quell the insurgency in Sinai and a harsh security crackdown are to blame. And the military establishment that has so obviously shown its hand in propping him up is losing a reverence it once thought was unquestionable.

The military belongs in its barracks, not our ballot boxes.

MONA ELTAHAWY is the author of "Headscarves and Hymens: Why the Middle East Needs a Sexual Revolution."

Tillerson tries to mend ties

Christopher Sabatini

MEXICO CITY Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's five-country trip to Latin America and the Caribbean didn't start well.

He kicked off the tour last week with a stop at his alma mater, the University of Texas, Austin, where he gave a tin-eared endorsement of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, saying that America's right to block outside interference in the hemisphere is "as relevant today as it was the day it was written."

In a region that has suffered countless United States interventions in the name of the Monroe Doctrine, invoking it as a legitimate guide for American foreign policy is only slightly better than advocating the "white man's burden."

For the past year, the Trump administration has consistently offended many of the basic tenets of hemispheric relations. What made the embrace of the Monroe Doctrine so surprising — though it was intended as a warning of creeping Chinese influence in the region — was that the unstated purpose of Mr. Tillerson's six-day swing through Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Colombia and Jamaica was to repair some of that damage from the past year and attempt to shore up regional support for isolating Venezuela's autocratic government.

While in the end Mr. Tillerson may have achieved his basic goal of securing support for tighter sanctions on the Venezuelan government, it was a narrow victory in a region where the United States has broad, varied interests.

In his campaign and first year in office, President Trump has managed to hit all the regional nerves. He insulted Mexican immigrants and threatened to build a border wall — an affront not just to America's second-largest trading partner but also to the rest of the hemisphere. He called the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement the "worst trade deal" in history — a pact that has helped bring increased wealth and stability to Mexico and beyond. And he suspended the temporary protected status of hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans, Haitians and Salvadorans, forcing them to return to their countries.

It was no surprise then that even before the suspension of T.P.S. for Salva-

dorans, a 2017 Gallup poll revealed that only 16 percent of the citizens in 20 countries in the region had a positive opinion of Mr. Trump.

The president dropped another surprise during Mr. Tillerson's tour. At a televised round table in Virginia on Feb. 2, he called out countries that had accepted American anti-narcotics assistance — he didn't name them but everyone knew he meant Colombia, Peru, Mexico and the countries of Central America. He claimed they are laughing at the United States as they continue to take American taxpayer dollars while still benefiting from the drug trade. The president threatened to cut off assistance to countries that weren't doing enough to end the illegal production of drugs.

The comment was an insult to Washington's partners in their decades-long war on drugs. All of the countries — three of which Mr. Tillerson would visit on his trip — have been solid allies in tackling the narcotics problem. Those governments and their people have borne the brunt of America's appetite for drugs and its long-standing strategy of focusing on the "supply side" — until the administrations of George W. Bush and

While the U.S. secretary of state may have secured support for tighter sanctions on Venezuela, it was a narrow victory.

Barack Obama increased the focus on demand.

Violence, economic upheaval, corruption, organized crime, civil war and the hollowing out of state authority in Latin America have been the results — hardly a laughing matter for any of these countries. As President Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia said with Mr. Tillerson standing next to him, "We have lost our best leaders, our best journalists, our best judges, our best policemen in this war against drugs."

Despite Mr. Trump's latest insult and the clumsy curtain raiser in Austin, Mr. Tillerson tried to hit all the right notes on the trip. In Mexico he emphasized Nafta's importance to the American economy, proudly declaring that the trade deal employed more than three million American workers and that it just needed to be "updated" (avoiding Mr. Trump's threats to end it altogether).

er). In Argentina, he and his counterpart, Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie, talked about opening the United States market to Argentine fruits and vegetables — an important deal for the Argentinians.

As the trip progressed it appeared as though Mr. Tillerson achieved his narrow goal. The governments that received him appeared willing to declare illegitimate the plan of the Maduro government of Venezuela to hold an early presidential election in April and refuse to recognize any government that resulted from the ballot.

And as the secretary hoppedscotch his way across the region, he also spoke more of the possibility of Washington's applying sanctions on Venezuelan oil imports and the refinement of Venezuelan crude in the United States, an indication that his various hosts were willing to accept stronger efforts to close off Venezuela's most important petroleum market. By the end, Mr. Tillerson quietly boasted that this was now on the table and that Mr. Trump would ultimately decide.

Was Mr. Tillerson's trip a success?

While a tougher collective response to President Nicolás Maduro's march to autocracy and the looming state collapse is necessary and long overdue, the United States has a diverse range of interests that go beyond mobilizing action against Venezuela. Battling narcotics trafficking with local partner governments, expanding markets for American businesses, promoting broad-based prosperity, and defending democracy and human rights — not just in Venezuela and Cuba but in other countries like Honduras — are equally important.

But the administration's rhetoric on immigration, free trade and American allies' commitment to battling the scourge of narcotics — not to mention Mr. Tillerson's embrace of the Monroe Doctrine — have weakened Washington's leverage throughout Latin America, as the declining popular approval of the Trump administration demonstrates. Mr. Tillerson may have incrementally improved America's standing in the region, but with all his baggage, he couldn't fully restore it.

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Sports

Old favorite re-emerges in N.H.L.'s absence

MOSCOW

Flush with top players, Russia has best chance to win gold since 1992

BY PATRICK REEVELL

There were few cheers in international hockey when the N.H.L. announced it would skip this year's Winter Olympics. But it was good news for one team: Russia's.

The Russian Olympic Committee might be barred from the 2018 Pyeongchang Games for widespread doping, but many of the country's athletes will still be allowed to compete under a neutral flag and in neutral uniforms.

The N.H.L. announced in April that it would not hold its usual three-week break around the Olympics, citing injury risks and lost earnings during a lucrative period when it doesn't have to compete with baseball or football.

The N.H.L.'s decision means that Russia's most prized team, men's hockey, has an opportunity to shine at the 2018 Winter Games despite the dark doping cloud. For a country where hockey is paramount among sports and where few people accept the doping allegations against Russia, it's a chance for restitution.

"If they win the hockey, then people will forgive a lot," said Igor Eronko, a hockey writer for the popular journal Sport Express.

Without N.H.L. talent, Canada and the United States had to rebuild almost from scratch, pulling together players from European and minor leagues, as well as collegians. European heavyweights like Sweden and Finland have also had to scramble to refill their rosters.

"At the end of the day, the Russian team, I think, is the most talented team, based on the available players they have," said Sean Burke, Canada's general manager.

The Russians — or the "Olympic Athletes from Russia," as the I.O.C. calls them — have perhaps the best chance for gold since they last won, in 1992, when Russian players were part of a unified team representing the former countries of the Soviet Union.

"A lot of teams are sure they can win," Burke said. "That's probably the first time that has happened in a long time."

Without N.H.L. talent available, Canada and the United States had to rebuild their teams almost from scratch.

Others countries have found replacements in Russia — players competing in the Kontinental Hockey League, the world's second-best league. It is centered in Russia but takes in clubs from Central Europe to Asia. Several countries have drawn heavily from the K.H.L. for the Olympics — Canada is taking 13 players, Sweden 10 and Finland 16.

The Russians, however, have a particularly deep K.H.L. bench, with a preponderance of former top N.H.L. stars. It means that while they were not untouched by the N.H.L. losses — Alex Ovechkin, Evgeni Malkin and Sergei Bobrovsky are not easily forgotten — they still have a roster stacked with big names. The former N.H.L. All-Stars Pavel Datsyuk and Ilya Kovalchuk are leading a team that includes the former Los Angeles Kings defenseman Slava Voynov and the K.H.L.'s career scoring leader, Sergei Mozyakin.

The Russian team is built almost entirely from two K.H.L. teams, Moscow CSKA and SKA St. Petersburg, and is coached by SKA's current coach, Oleg Zharkov. The K.H.L. has also in some ways been built with an eye on this moment. When the N.H.L. announced it wouldn't participate, K.H.L. officials said they would work to bring home Russian players from North America. The league is also holding its longest ever Olympics break this year.

"Everything has been done for this team to win," Eronko said.

That doesn't mean it will. Russia's recent Olympic record is unpromising: crashing out to Finland in the quarterfinals at the Sochi Olympics in 2014; drubbed by Canada at the same stage at the Vancouver Games in 2010.

"The Russians are beatable," Milan Hnilicka, the Czech Republic's general manager, said. "They get frustrated if things don't go their way. And I think that's what everyone is going to try to play against."

The Russians themselves have publicly refused to be swayed by predictions that they are favorites. They learned from the 1980 "Miracle on Ice."

"One of the reasons we lost is we got cocky about the Americans," said Vladimir V. Yurzinov, who was a coach for the 1980 Soviet team in Lake Placid, N.Y. "Olympics are such a thing. Anything can happen."



DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Victorious again Sven Kramer of the Netherlands, left, as he won his third straight men's 5,000-meter speedskating gold medal at the Olympics. He beat the rest of the field Sunday by nearly two seconds.

Among the locals, one sport turns heads

GANGNEUNG, SOUTH KOREA

Like Brazil loves soccer, South Korea goes wild for short-track speedskating

BY JOHN BRANCH

It was the third heat of the opening night of competition, with both a South Korean and a North Korean in the field, when the short-track speedskating competition established itself as the place to be for the Winter Olympics.

Like a thunderbolt from a cloud, a previously quiet audience of 12,000 at Gangneung Ice Arena burst to be noticed when the South Korean skater Hwang Dae-heon was introduced for the men's 1,500-meter race. Fans held the anticipation level at mid frenzy as the North Korean Choe Un-song and four others joined him at the starting line.

The crowd was hushed for the starting gun with a "shhh" from the public-address system, then built itself up again as the six skaters spun in counterclockwise oval. It oohed at every bump between skaters and roared at every pass. It got louder as the "laps to go" counter clicked down with every spin

around the rink.

Hwang won, and the crowd showered him with a piercingly loud ovation. It did not matter that it was just a preliminary heat that merely advanced him to the next round.

There may be no Olympic pairing of site and sport like South Korea and short-track speedskating. Entering the Pyeongchang Olympics, South Korea had won 53 medals in its Winter Olympic history, and 42 of them were in short-track speedskating.

That is why, long before they arrived, teams from places like the United States were excited for the Olympics to be in South Korea, in front of a loud and knowledgeable audience. It was a bit like playing baseball in Boston or soccer in Rio de Janeiro. The people get it.

One big difference was the presence of the North Korean cheering section, consisting of more than 100 young women in matching red warm-up suits and ceaseless smiles. They performed a choreographed song from their seats in the upper bowl, moving in perfect formation, swaying their bodies and swirling their hands. Sometimes they waved small flags, first the North Korean one (long banned in South Korea, but increasingly routine at these Olympics) and then the one being used as a unified flag between the two nations. South Koreans clapped with them or aimed their

smartphones at the spectacle. Eventually, predictably, they started a wave.

But not before the South Korean president, Moon Jae-in, was ushered to his seat at midice, next to Vice President Mike Pence of the United States. Or before two Korean singers performed "Uptown Funk" and were later joined by a horn section, a house band like a Korean version of the Roots. There was a kiss cam.

By the end of the night, after the political dignitaries were gone, after the superstar Choi Min-jeong set an Olympic record in the 500-meter qualifying, and after the South Korean women's relay team set another Olympic record despite a midrace tumble, a quiet 21-year-old named Lim Hyo-jun was on the top step of a podium, winner of South Korea's first gold medal of these Olympics, soaking in the adulation of the crowd and a nation.

The one who acted the least excited about the night, besides the grim-faced security detail surrounding the politicians, was Lim. With the type of understated modesty that feels hard-wired in South Korean skaters, he thanked everyone around him and barely broke a smile.

"Those 12,000 people are also the ones I would like to thank," he said.

(Lest anyone think there are no quotable athletes on the South Korean team,

consider what Kim Ye-jin said on Thursday after practicing alongside two North Korean male skaters. "We had general conversations," she said, according to South Korean media. "Jong called me ugly, so I told him back, 'Did you look in the mirror?'")

It was the first of five nights of short-track speedskating sprinkled through the Olympics like booster shots. The events are held in the same arena that hosts figure skating. While figure skating has a special place in South Korea's Olympic legacy — Kim Yuna, an Olympic gold and silver medalist, lit the cauldron at the opening ceremony — it is short-track speedskating that gets South Korea excited.

Saturday night did not get off to a thrilling start. At least a quarter of the seats were empty for the first heat of the men's 1,500, the longest individual event with a uniquely unexciting start. At the sound of the starting gun, the six racers meandered off the starting line, in no great rush. They pace themselves and position themselves, soon twirling faster and faster, like a merry-go-round winding up.

Once the Koreans took the ice, the crowd was fully wound, too. It dipped just a bit when Maame Biney, an 18-year-old American, captured second place in one heat of the 500-meter qualifications ahead of the South Korean Kim

A-lang. That result sent Biney, but not Kim, to Tuesday's quarterfinals.

The home crowd was ratcheted back up by a stirring, record-setting comeback in the women's 3,000-meter relay semifinal. A South Korean skater caught the skate of a competitor early in the race and tumbled to the ice. A teammate tagged her hand and jumped in, well behind the other three teams. The South Korean team slowly closed the gap, a fraction each lap, until it leapfrogged past teams from Russia, Hungary and Canada, each with a roar of approval. The performance, fall and all, set an Olympic record of 4 minutes 6.387 seconds.

It was safe to wonder if the moment also set a decibel record for short-track at an Olympic venue. If so, it might have been broken soon after, when Hwang and Lim positioned themselves 1-2 during the gold medal final of the men's 1,500.

But Hwang crashed out, colliding with a competitor, and the chorus of fans dropped an octave for a bar or two, only to rise again in its push of Lim. He finished just in front of Sjinkee Kneigt of the Netherlands and Semen Elistratov of Russia, who both expressed joy for their place on the medal podium and their place at the Gangneung arena.

"It's amazing to skate for 12,000 people in a small rink like this," Kneigt said.

Patriotic fervor grips Russia's celebration house

GANGNEUNG, SOUTH KOREA

BY TARIQ PANJA

Russia isn't supposed to be at these Olympic Games, and yet the country is very much here.

There are nearly 170 Russian athletes in South Korea and even a converted seafood wedding hall decked in all manner of Russian paraphernalia that is serving as Russia's social headquarters.

At about 9.30 p.m. Saturday, Russia's national anthem filled what is known simply as Sports House. Many of the two dozen people at the venue rose to their feet and sang along with gusto.

They were celebrating a first Russian medal at the 2018 Winter Olympics, a short-track speedskating bronze won by Semen Elistratov. Elistratov was unable to parade in his nation's flag under restrictions imposed by the International Olympic Committee for Russia's state-sponsored doping scheme.

Being unable to use the word "Russia" or the Olympic rings in the facility's logo appears to be the only restrictions at the house.

Yet the feeling of Russian pride here is unmistakable. A giant nesting doll plastered onto a wall identifies the entrance, and a flight of stairs leads into a main room filled with memorabilia evoking Russian Olympic success and culture. Guests can grab tea from large samovars before viewing an exhibit of jerseys and medals from the country's hockey successes, dating to the Soviet period.

For a country that continues to re-

ceive international condemnation for a systematic, yearslong doping conspiracy, Russia isn't intent on keeping a low profile.

"Russia is a full participant in the Olympic Games, and Russia can show its sporting power," the country's ambassador to South Korea, Alexander Timonin, said when opening the celebration venue Friday. "We believe in our athletes, we are proud of them, and we hope that they can achieve their very best sporting results and bring glory to our great motherland."

The nationalist fervor is at odds with the demands issued by the I.O.C., which told Russia that if its delegation behaved, it would get its flag back for the closing ceremony on Feb. 25. Yet Russia continues to dispute the existence of a doping conspiracy, and the overt display of Olympic success seems to be at odds with the I.O.C.'s request for a more contrite posture.

The I.O.C. said it was monitoring events at the facility to ensure it complied with the ban issued to Russia's Olympic committee.

The Sports House "is a hospitality venue that is available to all sports fans to celebrate the Olympic Winter Games Pyeongchang 2018," the I.O.C. said in a statement. "It is run by a commercial third party, and the I.O.C. has made the operator aware of the conduct guidelines."

Elistratov dressed in a blue and white outfit with the letters OAR, for Olympic Athletes from Russia, on his right breast pocket as he skated to a third-place finish. He added an understated gray track



FELIPE DANA/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Photographs of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia blanketed Sports House, a sort of social headquarters for the supporters of the "Olympic Athletes from Russia."

top for the medal ceremony.

Elistratov dedicated his victory to the scores of athletes banned from the Olympics for their connection to the doping scheme. After the race, he urged his countrymen and women to "fight to the end and never give in."

"Under all these circumstances, the medal is like a gold one to me," he said. "Everyone was encouraging me. They would say, 'Listen to nobody and go ahead to the end.'"

Others have taken to social media to express patriotic displays of support and contempt for the I.O.C. They include

the two-time pole vault gold medalist and current member of the I.O.C.'s Athletes Commission, Yelena Isinbayeva. On Instagram, she vowed that even though the team was depleted, Russia would prosper in Pyeongchang because "Russians become invincible in anger."

At Sports House, there was similar emotion. "Our hearts are broken for the athletes not here," said a young staff member who traveled from Moscow earlier this week.

Between events that were broadcast on a giant screen beaming in a live transmission of the Games from Rus-

For a country that continues to receive international condemnation for a systematic doping conspiracy, Russia isn't intent on keeping a low profile.

sian state television, a party host mounted an elevated stage to lead the few guests present to dance along to upbeat tracks, including Will Smith's "Gettin' Jiggy Wit It."

On the other side of the room, there were multiple framed photographs of Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin. Mr. Putin has brushed off the doping scandal as an invention of the United States to destabilize his efforts at reelection later this year.

Olympic houses, like Russia's, are a Games tradition and have become increasingly elaborate over the years. At the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Summer Games, the Netherlands created a giant dance floor that would mechanically cut away to form a runway for their medal winners to parade in front of hundreds of adoring fans. The venues also act as a refuge for athletes to spend downtime with friends and family members.

Sports House — where the slogan "Russia in My Heart" is emblazoned in large type across temporary red-colored walls — won't be able to host athletes because of the ban, according to an official there. The I.O.C. has limited patriotic displays by Russian athletes, permitting them to keep flags inside their bedrooms in the athletes' village.

Fiercest opponent at Games: The bitter cold

PYEONGHANG, SOUTH KOREA

BY TARA PARKER-POPE

The Americans are wearing battery-powered parkas, while the Canadians are using heated snow pants. The Norwegians brought their own hot chocolate.

Then there's the scene at the moguls skiing hill, where yoga mats — or things that look like yoga mats — are used to create a barrier between one's feet and the freezing turf.

The conditions here are severe. The men's downhill ski racing event, scheduled for Sunday, was postponed to Thursday because of strong winds and the unfavorable forecast. Some training sessions scheduled for Monday were canceled.

So at this unusually chilly Winter Olympic Games — with wind chills expected to make it feel below 0 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 18 Celsius), elite athletes long accustomed to cold weather are trying anything and everything to stay warm.

Some are going high-tech. Others are using home remedies.

The most lasting images of these Winter Olympics may be the taped faces. Skiers from Slovakia and other countries are strapping sticky athletic tape across their cheeks and noses to protect their skin.

Whether any of this actually does much to warm the body — or make a difference between gold and 12th place — is another question. The scientific consensus is rather unscientific. If the Olympians think they feel warmer, they may feel less distracted and perform slightly better.

"You're talking about really small margins, so if you've got them feeling comfortable, that's a large step in the right direction," said Mike Tipton, a professor in the Extreme Environments Laboratory at the department of sport and exercise science of the University of Portsmouth in England.

Dr. Lubomir Soucek, who works with Slovakia's Olympic team, said his country's biathletes were using both Vaseline and tape to protect their exposed skin. "The issue is serious in the Alpine skiing," he said. "You have to protect your face not to have frozen skin."

Experts say face-taping probably offers some degree of comfort during bitter weather conditions. Tape and Vaseline can add a layer of insulation to de-



DOUG MILLER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

crease the amount of sweat evaporating off the skin, Dr. Tipton said. But the benefit is mostly psychological — eliminating the distraction of a cold nose and cheeks rather than changing overall body temperature, which would have a much more significant effect on performance.

Canada's Alpine skiers have battery-heated pants to wear during downtime on the slopes. The defending giant slalom champion Ted Ligety of the United States has a pair, too. He said he also intended to spend a little extra time in the tent at the top of the course.

The United States delegation has jackets with battery-powered heating elements. Concern about cold conditions prompted the Italian team, which was 59th in the parade of nations at the opening ceremony, to advise its athletes to skip the entertainment portion of the ceremony.

"It's the first time we decide this," said Danilo Di Tommaso, deputy chief of mission for Italy. "Vancouver was covered. Sochi was not cold. Torino was beautiful. In the recent past, we didn't have this problem."

Some cross-country and biathlon ath-

letes have been spotted holding a whistle-like gadget in their mouths as they ski. The device is a respiratory heat exchanger.

Aluminum coils inside it capture the heat from an athlete's breath. When the athlete sucks in cold air, the air is warmed by the residual heat so it feels

Canada's Alpine skiers have battery-heated pants to wear during downtime on the slopes.

less cold going into the athlete's lungs. The Czech biathlete Eva Puskarikova has been photographed using it. A team spokesman said it helped her breathing during the event. But the gadget looks odd, like a hustling whistle, and sometimes icicles made of saliva form on the end of it.

In 1988, University of Wisconsin researchers studied the device, called a Lungplus, when used by 91 subjects in various cold-weather conditions. Overall, Lungplus users reported more comfort breathing in very cold tempera-

tures. The researchers noted that Lungplus breathing at minus 15 degrees Celsius received similar scores, in terms of comfort, as regular breathing in 20 degrees Celsius, according to the research published in Applied Ergonomics.

The Norwegian athletes, who are accustomed to very cold weather, have adopted several strategies to stay warm in Pyeongchang, according to the team's chief medical officer, Dr. Mona Kjeldsberg. Members of the Alpine team and support crew use heated socks while they wait to compete, she said. Most wear wool undergarments and use tape and buffs to protect exposed skin on the face. To stay warm, "hot chocolate from Norway is a favorite," she said.

Despite the bitter cold, the wind chill and temperatures in Pyeongchang have not dropped low enough to create serious concerns about hypothermia or frostbite for the athletes, experts say. (Frostbite risk becomes significant if the temperature drops below minus 13 Fahrenheit, or minus 25 Celsius.)

During competition and training, most athletes will generate enough heat to keep their internal body temperature at a comfortable level. Between events,



DOUG MILLER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Clockwise from left, different ways to fight freezing temperatures: Tape on the face, hand warmers on a television camera and a respiratory heat exchanger.



JAMES HILL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

athletes will need to keep moving to maintain deep body temperature. One mistake athletes and spectators can make is to focus on warming hands and feet, which often feel cold first, rather than warming the rest of the body.

"An old mountaineering adage is, if you want to keep warm hands, wear a hat," Dr. Tipton said.

For elite athletes, feeling cold can affect performance in several ways. The discomfort becomes a distraction. Hands and feet can become numb and lose motor function — a problem for

biathletes who stop midrace to fire guns. Then there is something called "cold-induced diuresis" — as the body concentrates blood flow to key body parts, blood pressure rises and urination increases. That can lead to a corresponding loss in blood volume — a hazard for endurance athletes.

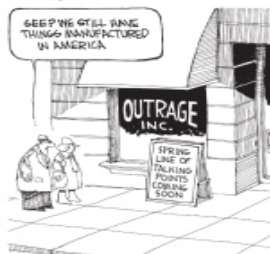
And if athletes get cold enough to begin shivering, that can spell real trouble. When shivering is induced in a research setting, the study subject typically feels extremely tired after the experiment and the next day as well. Dr. Tipton said, since it causes "muscles to work against each other in asynchronous fashion."

Warm drinks do little to warm the body, but holding and sipping a hot beverage in the cold do offer psychological benefits. (In one study, just holding a hot cup of coffee not only made the study subjects more generous, but they perceived the people around them to be more caring and warm as well.)

"Warm drinks may make you feel better, but they don't make a lot of difference," Dr. Tipton said. "In a 70-kilogram athlete, 300 milliliters of warm drink won't make much difference to body temperature."

Martin Moller, a cross-country skier for Denmark, grew up in Greenland and recommends learning to love the frigid environment of Pyeongchang. "If you think you are going to freeze, you're sure to freeze faster," he said. "Try to feel the clear, cold air and love its crispy flavor."

NON SEQUITUR



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SUDOKU No. 1202

9x9 grid for Sudoku puzzle No. 1202 with some numbers filled in.

SUDOKU No. 1203

9x9 grid for Sudoku puzzle No. 1203 with some numbers filled in.

THE SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Word game section with 'DONPU', 'HYLLS', 'CLIEPO', 'REBYEZ' and a grid for solving.

Print answer here: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

PEANUTS



GARFIELD



WIZARD OF ID



KENKEN

Kenken puzzle grid with numbers and mathematical symbols.

CROSSWORD | Edited by Will Shortz

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and answers.

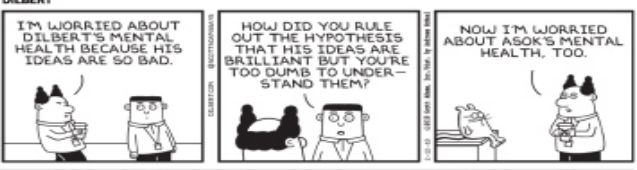
DOONESBURY CLASSIC 1990



CALVIN AND HOBBES



DILBERT



PUZZLE BY MICHAEL BLACK

A large crossword puzzle grid with clues and answers.

Culture

'Parsifal' galvanized by a conductor

OPERA REVIEW

Yannick Nézet-Séguin leads the Metropolitan Opera to Wagnerian glory

BY ANTHONY TOMMASINI

Last week, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Metropolitan Opera's music director designate, conducted a magnificent performance of Wagner's "Parsifal." This demonstration of his artistry and his ability to inspire the best from the company's orchestra and chorus was a good sign of things to come.

It was also frustrating. Not until 2020, three seasons from now, will Mr. Nézet-Séguin become the music director full time. This seven-performance run of "Parsifal," which ends on Feb. 27, and six performances of Strauss's "Elektra" next month are his only engagements this season.

This teaser comes just as the company is in dire need of musical leadership. James Levine had already been mostly sidelined when he was suspended as music director emeritus in December over allegations of sexual harassment. The Met official in charge of artistic administration, Robert Ratnayek, died suddenly on Jan. 30.

Are all artistic matters now entirely in the hands of the general manager, Peter Gelb? This has long been the way Mr. Gelb conceived his role. But even regarding musical matters, how much input can Mr. Nézet-Séguin, whose substantial workload includes the directorship of the Philadelphia Orchestra, be having?

These questions hovered over the opening-night revival of François Girard's bleakly poignant 2013 production, even as Mr. Nézet-Séguin brought his own strong take to this profound, challenging and very long score. (With two lengthy intermissions, the performance lasted nearly six hours.)

During the first sighing unison phrase of the prelude, the strings played with hushed yet penetrating tone, rising with a touch of hesitation and slowly swelling in sound and radiance, until the upper strings crested into delicate, lacy arpeggios. Mr. Nézet-Séguin took a daringly restrained tempo here. The prelude — and whole episodes of the opera proper — invite the listener into a spiritual realm where, as one character puts it, "time becomes space." Mr. Nézet-Séguin conveyed that beautifully.

Yet when called for, he also brought out the urgency and incisiveness of the music. At the opening of Act II, set in the bewitched castle of the sorcerer Klingsor, Mr. Nézet-Séguin tore into the heaving music with searing fervor. I've never heard the passage sound so fraught and dangerous.

The tenor Jonas Kaufmann sang the title role when this production was new and set a high standard. Klaus Florian Vogt may have a lighter voice and lacks Mr. Kaufmann's charisma. But on



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD TERMINE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



Top, Klaus Florian Vogt and the prone Evelyn Herltzius, foreground, and René Pape, background right, in "Parsifal." Above, Ms. Herltzius and Mr. Vogt amid a sea of blood.

this night, he was deeply affecting as Wagner's clueless youth, who chances upon the sanctuary of the desolate knights of the Holy Grail and is baffled by their sacred rituals. (He sang the role to acclaim in a new production at the Bayreuth Wagner Festival in Germany in 2016.)

Mr. Vogt's voice has youthful brightness. In climactic moments, his focused sound penetrated the orchestra with vigor. But while the knights await a "pure fool" who, he has been prophesied, will bring renewal to the brotherhood, sometimes he played the fool a little too well. He seemed a bit lost.

The bass René Pape may not have all the stentorian power he once did. But with his deep, dark and imposing voice, he again proved ideal as Gurneman, a veteran knight. And the way he links crisp enunciation of the words to vocal sounds and colorings remains a model for singers.

The baritone Peter Mattei was extraordinary as Amfortas, the suffering

king of the grail knights, when this production was new, and was perhaps even more so last week. Amfortas suffers from a wound that will not heal, inflicted when he was lured into Klingsor's realm; seduced by the mysterious, ageless Kundry; and stabbed with a sacred spear he had been entrusted

François Girard's production retains its gloomy power.

to protect. Mr. Mattei brings such desperate fervor to his singing that you can believe in this Amfortas's vulnerability. The character's suffering and guilt were apparent in the anguished tone of Mr. Mattei's singing and the racked movements of his body.

The slightly hard-edge sound of the soprano Evelyn Herltzius, making her Met debut as Kundry, takes some getting used to. Her voice can wobble on sustained tones. But there was

earthy intensity, even a kind of beautiful fragility, to her singing. And dramatically she drew out every elusive nuance of this confounding character.

Mr. Girard's production retains its gloomy power. The costumes are modern: The knights wear white shirts and charcoal pants and go barefoot. Their "forest" has a post-apocalyptic bleakness. In a theatrical tour de force, the female demons who, at the command of Klingsor (the menacing bass-baritone Evgeny Nikitin), become the flower maidens who try to seduce Parsifal in Act II, slosh around in a shallow pool of blood that drips from the walls and covers the stage. There are no traces of the meadows or the woodland murmurs the libretto refers to. But the production counts as a high point of Mr. Gelb's tenure to date.

Still, who is advising him on musical (and larger artistic) priorities? Mr. Nézet-Séguin's full arrival, which this performance made me anticipate even more excitedly, seems a long way off.

Passages not easily traversed

As to whether authors of fiction can write well about sex, opinions differ

BY SARAH LYALL

One day while he was working on his book "The Sympathizer," Viet Thanh Nguyen made squid for dinner. The recipe required him to grasp the raw squid and place his fingers deep inside its inner cavity. A little light bulb went off in his head. "I thought, 'It reminds me of something,'" he said recently.

Not just a thing but also the classic moment in Philip Roth's "Portnoy's Complaint" when the protagonist masturbates into a piece of raw liver and puts it back in the refrigerator. Nguyen combined the two notions, the squid and the liver, and allowed his fictional narrator the pleasure of having his way with his own family's dinner-to-be.

It's rare for real people to find sexual partners in the seafood aisle of the supermarket, but lovers of fiction stumble into this sort of thing all the time. We're happily reading at the breakfast table, or on the subway, or in line at the passport office, when all of a sudden the characters stop what they're doing, jump into bed (or wherever) and start having sex, or some approximation of it: sex with each other, sex with themselves, sex with whatever moist inanimate object comes easiest to hand.

Hurray! (Probably.) In theory this should be as thrilling for us as it is for the people doing the things they're doing. Who doesn't like learning the spicy particulars of a raunchy sex scene? Who would begrudge an imaginary person the chance to pursue the moist cephalopod of his dreams?

"If there were a union for fictionalized characters, they would insist on having sex in a book at least every Friday," said Allan Gurganus, famous among writing students for his enthusiastic "let's get it



TIM LAHAN

on" philosophy about sex in fiction. "We love our main characters and they stick with us for 350 pages and the least we can do is give them one moment of sexual pleasure."

It's been 90 years since Lady Chatterley adulterously wove flowers into her lover's pubic hair in D.H. Lawrence's book, to the scandalized delight of readers wily enough to score early samizdat copies. But now that anything goes, now that we've seen it all, now that we have Pornhub to amuse us on demand, is there anything left to get excited about? Should novelists try to counteract the numbing aspects of porn, as Gurganus advised in an interview, by giving the characters the gift of more active sex lives?

"There's an inverse ratio between the abundance of pornography and the scarcity of sex in modern fiction," he said. "We talk about where people live, what they eat, what they do, what they drive, but we're leaving out the question of their sexual pleasure, and that's depriving them of something extremely important."

Sex is notoriously tricky to describe. A writer's tumescent member is a reader's risible euphemism. "No throbbing manhoods," declared Jennifer Weiner, who wants her fictional sex to be consistent with what her characters would normally do and say: "You try to make the way people behave toward one another when they're in bed line up with the way they behave when they're out of bed."

In a climactic sex scene in the novel "Golden Hill," set in mid-18th-century Manhattan, Francis Spufford's narrator briefly steps outside the story to grumble to the reader. "How hard it is to describe a desirable woman without running into geography! Or the barnyard. Or the resources of the fruit-bowl," he complains. "I do not want to write this part of the story."

Is there anything left to get excited about?

Stephen King agrees. "Every part of writing a novel is daunting, but very few novelists deal with sex very well," he wrote in an email. "The act is usually far better than writing (or reading) about the act."

Perhaps it was better in the old days, he added. "When I was a kid, reading my first adult paperbacks, the guy would take off the gal's blouse . . . they would kiss . . . then there would be a double space, after which the story would resume the following morning."

Not so much now. As luck would have it, lots of writers are up for writing about sex — even, or maybe especially, when the sex isn't that good. (With her short story "Cat Person," Kristen Roupenian has perhaps created a new vernacular for expressing the particular ways it can be not-good for women who think they want it, but who become repelled mid-encounter by the weird or sloppy or self-

ish or alarming behavior of the men they go home with.)

Indeed, a lot of literary fiction seems to feature glum lovers "who have two reluctant orgasms" before, basically, calling it a night, said Carmen Maria Machado, who relishes a saucy sex scene, especially from the point of view of women who like to have it with other women.

"Often I feel when I'm reading sex scenes by men, there's a sense of disdain for the female body, a sense of its alienness, its otherness," she said in an interview. "But I like to write about sex," she continued, "and I feel there's a real joy to clear, joyful sex."

The novelist Tom Perrotta said via email that he favors characters who "think and talk about sex all the time, but don't have a lot of it." (In his latest book, "Mrs. Fletcher," his main character mostly sticks to porn.) Meanwhile, Anthony Marra's story collection "The Tsar of Love and Techno" includes a scene between a pair of desperately-in-love teenagers who have sex as if they were the first to discover it. Their age "allows for a little descriptive leeway, because so much of adolescent life is overwrought to begin with," Marra said in an email.

Writing with pungent frankness about sex in "Jeff in Venice, Death in Varanasi," Geoff Dyer was inspired by the lyrical yet matter-of-fact gay eroticism in such Alan Hollinghurst novels as "The Line of Beauty." "I was struck that he was writing this classical prose and

then without any change of register suddenly he was writing in this very explicit, up-to-date way," Dyer said. "I wondered whether it was possible to do a heterosexual version of that."

He also wanted to be sure everyone knew who was doing what when, how and to whom. "Generally speaking, I get frustrated and irritated when I can't tell what's happening" in a novel, Dyer said. "I want to know who's speaking and where they're going and all that." So for his sex scenes, "I wanted it to be, 'This goes there and he does this . . . Just the sort of mechanics of it. It was technically interesting because even moving people around — getting them in and out of rooms — is difficult.'"

What doesn't work? "Ocean metaphors — those are terrible," said Daniel Handler, whose latest book, "All the Dirty Parts," fulfills the promise of its title.

This brings us to the Bad Sex in Fiction Award, which since 1993 has been given annually by Literary Review magazine in Britain to "draw attention to poorly written, perfunctory or redundant passages of sexual description in modern fiction."

Over the years, writers have been cited for their overly creative synonyms for male genitalia ("his bulging trousers," "his old battering ram," "the billiard rack," "a plank," "his peg," "my pole," "his big generative jockey," "the Hound") and female genitalia ("her sap," "her viscera," "her relief map of mysteries," "her assemblage," "her

pelvic saddle," "her most unmentionable body part" and "the no man's land between her 'front parlor' and 'back door'").

Placed in elaborate metaphorical forests, seascapes, gardens, transformative celestial planes and ecstatic alternative universes, the characters can be found in various convoluted configurations, biting, gasping, whacking, smacking, glugging, grabbing, grinding, gripping, grunting, scratching, swallowing, squeaking, sucking, stroking, lathering, panting, prodding, moaning, thrusting, tugging, rubbing and rattling. If they're lucky, they might achieve a "Wagnerian crescendo," or at least a "puny muscular spasm."

As in real life, the male ego is disproportionately large. "Male writers often have vaginas squeezing the sides of penises to show how into it the women are," said Frank Brinkley, assistant editor of the magazine, speaking of nominees for the prize. "For men, it often needs to be bigger and larger and the best sex ever and better than the sex before, and it's clear that the man's penis is brilliant and the woman loves it and it's the best one she's ever seen."

It's hard to pick the best (worst) Bad Sex winner. But many people familiar with the prize have a soft spot for the 2015 recipient, Morrissey, former lead singer of the Smiths, for a passage in his debut novel, "List of the Lost." Not only does he use the phrase "bulbous salutation," but also he describes how it — the bulbous salutation, that is — "whacked and smacked its way into every muscle of Eliza's body except for the otherwise central zone."

That made people think of the London Underground, which they found especially amusing.

As Jonathan Beckman, a Literary Review editor, wrote at the time: "For future reference, the best way to reach the otherwise central zone is almost certainly by getting off the Victoria Line at Oxford Circus."

Trouble knows no boundaries

THEATER REVIEW

Eve Ensler connects global violence and her own life-threatening illness

BY JESSE GREEN

Eve Ensler has a word she wants you to get comfortable with.

No, not that one.

Her remarkably successful play "The Vagina Monologues," first seen Off Off Broadway in 1996 and then pretty much all over the world except where it was banned, helped normalize the frank discussion of women's sexuality (and anatomy) onstage. It also fostered and financed a project called V-Day, which has raised tens of millions of dollars for antiviolence organizations.

But the new word Ms. Ensler wants you to embrace — a word that is the subject of her play "In the Body of the World," receiving a Manhattan Theater Club production through March 23 — is not so lovable. It's "tumor."

In May 2010, just as she was about to attend the opening of City of Joy, a sanctuary she helped to found for rape victims in Congo, Ms. Ensler received a diagnosis of uterine cancer. "In the Body of the World," directed by Diane Paulus, is a troubling record of her attempt to survive that illness, in part by understanding its meaning. Had she somehow poisoned herself, as humans every day poison the earth? (The recent BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was on her mind.) Could the disease growing inside her be an expression of the global disease of violence done to women by men?

"Cancer threw me into the center of my body's crisis," she says near the beginning of the play. "The Congo threw me into the crisis of the world, and these two experiences merged as I faced what I felt sure was the beginning of the end."

This is grim stuff, but you will recognize from earlier works Ms. Ensler's palliative strategies. With her Scarsdale honk and Louise Brooks bob, she still presents herself as your wacky activist bohemian aunt, the kind who tried to "unionize all the unpopular girls" in high school. She bubbles with psychological insight and empathy for anyone in distress.

And, as always, she laces her tales with humor, gallows or otherwise. Rochester, Minn., where she undergoes treatment at the Mayo Clinic, is called Tumor Town; her encounter there with Cindy the "fart deliverer" is destined to be a comic audition piece for decades.

But unlike "The Vagina Monologues" and a later play, "The Good Body," which were told in the voices of many different women, "In the Body of the World" is all Ms. Ensler all the time. For 80 minutes, she impersonates no one else, except in passing.

The result is a story that's less about connecting to people than to ideas, some of them fairly airy. Whether the play's intensely autobiographical self-focus will come off as liberating or oversharing depends, in part, on how open you are to the meanings of those connections. I was often troubled by them.

To begin with, Ms. Ensler seems to blame herself (and her icy, narcissistic mother) for her cancer. She has lived much of her life, she says, preoccupied with a feeling of exile from her body and a frantic struggle to return to it through "promiscuity, anorexia, per-



Above and below, Eve Ensler, the author of "The Vagina Monologues," sharing her experience of illness in the one-woman show "In the Body of the World."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARA KRULWICH/THE NEW YORK TIMES

formance art." Never having given birth, she even wonders if the tumor now growing within her is a "trauma baby."

But what eventually turned a putative predisposition into the hard fact of cancer, she concludes, is the evil she bore witness to in Africa. In an earlier

The story of Ms. Ensler's disease would have been compelling enough on its own to justify a play.

trip to Congo, she listened as a woman named Angelique told a tale of unimaginable horror. "It was here I walked out of the world," Ms. Ensler says. "Here in the suspended somnolent zone where I told my body to die."

One cannot but honor Ms. Ensler's devotion to facing and improving the world. She has arguably done as much practical good as any playwright now working. And it's understandable that in telling a story that takes place in her own body an activist would want to

connect it to something beyond that small space.

But aside from painting disease as a kind of moral rebuke — an idea that many people with cancer, and their loved ones, will find distasteful — "In the Body of the World" seems to flow in the wrong direction. Rather than using Ms. Ensler's illness to illuminate the world's, it too often borrows from the world's suffering in an effort to legitimize her own.

Suffering at any level doesn't need legitimizing, and survival is not, in itself, selfish. The story of Ms. Ensler's disease, which she first related in a 2013 memoir of the same title, would have been compelling enough on its own to justify a play; in that respect, she had me at "tumor."

As a performer, she seems to know that. Whenever she returns from her spiritual, political and environmental disquisitions to the medical and personal heart of the story, the wet feeling of longing for significance that sometimes swamps the narrative dries right up. And Ms. Ensler is never more trenchant (or self-aware) than when

butting against a bureaucracy. After a doctor suggests radiating her vagina to prevent recurrence, she says, in mock dudgeon but with real irony, "Do you have any idea who I am?"

Still, I could do without the tribute to every nurse and friend and assistant who helped her through the ordeal; these name checks make it sound as if she is giving an acceptance speech at an awards show for winning cancer. Seeing Ms. Ensler so obviously invigorated is happy ending enough.

Until then, Ms. Paulus — who staged the play's 2016 premiere at the American Repertory Theater — keeps the production spare, with little more than a divan, a chair, some projections (by Finn Ross) and sound effects (by M. L. Dogg and Sam Lerner) to support the monologue. All the more lovely, then, is the scenic coup prepared by the designer Myung Hee Cho, which leaves the audience with a vision of what it can mean not merely to survive but to flourish.

The play itself, though, still ails; like most one-person shows, it needed a second opinion.



Israel's clandestine killing

BOOK REVIEW

RISE AND KILL FIRST: THE SECRET HISTORY OF ISRAEL'S TARGETED ASSASSINATIONS

By Ronen Bergman. Translated by Ronnie Hope. Illustrated. 753 pp. Random House. \$35.

BY JENNIFER SZALAI

A reader might begin a 750-page history of killing committed by Israel's intelligence services with some trepidation; the tightrope is high, and it's shaky. Much of the truth is classified — and much of it is in dispute. The moral quandaries are, to put it mildly, enormous.

Ronen Bergman knows this. And from the looks of "Rise and Kill First," he knows more than he's supposed to. In 2011, the Israel Defense Force's chief of staff accused him of "aggravated espionage"; a historian for the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, told Bergman he would refuse to talk to him even if everybody else did: "I despise whoever it was who gave you my phone number, just as I despise you."

Still, Bergman, a journalist based in Israel, managed to conduct a thousand interviews along the chain of command, from political leaders to intelligence operatives. For a subject as contentious and bloody as this one, he leads with some numbers and a brute fact: "Since World War II, Israel has

assassinated more people than any other country in the Western world."

What follows is an exceptional work, a humane book about an incendiary subject. Blending history and investigative reporting, Bergman never loses sight of the ethical questions that arise when a state, founded as a refuge for a stateless people who were targets of a genocide, decides it needs to kill in order to survive.

Of course, such decisions are kept secret. Israel neither confirms nor denies the existence of the targeted assassination program that Bergman so assiduously documents. The book's title comes from the Talmud: "If someone comes to kill you, rise up and kill him first." This is assassination defined as self-defense. But as Bergman shows, motives aren't always so righteous and clear-cut; revenge, wrath and other impulses have ways of sneaking in. Before the establishment of Israel in 1948, Zionist underground movements employed what they called "personal terror" — a campaign of bombings and killings — against the British, who controlled Palestine and restricted immigration by Jews trying to flee Europe.

"We were too busy and hungry to think about the British and their families," one assassin told Bergman, recounting how he shot a British officer on a Jerusalem street in 1944. "I didn't feel anything, not even a little twinge of guilt. We believed the more coffins that reached London, the closer the day of freedom would be."



Ronen Bergman.

DANA KOPEL

Many men who fought in the Zionist underground later became establishment figures in Israel, including Yitzhak Shamir and Menachem Begin; they imported guerrilla methods into the security apparatus they helped create. Assassinations offered a tactical method for a tiny country with rudimentary defenses. The Holocaust, Bergman writes, reinforced the sense that the country and its people would be "perpetually in danger of annihilation."

Meir Dagan, the spymaster who led

the Mossad from 2002 to 2011, kept a photograph in his office of a bearded man in a prayer shawl, kneeling in front of German troops. Whenever Mossad operatives were about to carry out a particularly sensitive mission, he would invite them to his office and explain that the man pictured was his grandfather, shortly before the Nazis murdered him. "Most of the Jews in the Holocaust died without fighting," Dagan told Bergman. "We must never reach that situation again, kneeling, without the ability to fight for our lives."

A number of Bergman's sources express a version of this sentiment. So pronounced is this line of thinking that others have gone so far as to propose that cowardice kept the Jews from revolting — a statement Primo Levi found "absurd and insulting." Still, Levi recognized that this premise provided a sense of agency and a way out of despair. What it also did, and what Bergman is especially attuned to, is mark the country's political life from the beginning in terms of existential threats. The hostile regimes surrounding Israel have continually stoked such fears; just hours after Israel declared independence in 1948, seven armies from neighboring countries attacked, and opportunistic despots have encouraged terrorism against Israel and its citizens ever since. Extreme measures seem less extreme when it's a matter of survival.

Despite this historical context, "Rise and Kill First," parts of which appeared

in The New York Times Magazine, is far from an apology. If anything, Bergman suggests that Israel's honed aptitude for clandestine assassinations led the country to rely on them to a fault, approaching some complex strategic and political concerns as problems that an extrajudicial killing could fix. Bergman argues that the assassination of certain militants — chief among them Khalil al-Wazir, known as Abu Jihad, in 1988 — emboldened ever more radical upstarts, and pushed a sustainable resolution with the Palestinians even further out of reach. "As Israel would learn repeatedly," Bergman writes, "it is very hard to predict how history will proceed after someone is shot in the head."

It's also hard to predict how an operation will unfold. Bergman recounts a number of missions gone very wrong, including one with a booby-trapped dog that ran away (only to be discovered later by Hezbollah), and a harebrained "Manchurian Candidate" scheme to hypnotize a Palestinian prisoner into becoming an assassin for the Mossad. (After he was armed with a pistol and sent on his mission, the man promptly turned himself in to the Palestinian police and said the Israelis tried to brainwash him.)

Another wild card is a belligerent Ariel Sharon, who keeps turning up in this book — first as an army commander, then as minister of defense and eventually as prime minister. Bergman describes Sharon as a "pyromaniac," and his obsession with killing Yasir

Arafat, the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as verging on monomaniacal. In his hunt for Arafat, Sharon almost had the Mossad shoot down a plane of 30 wounded Palestinian children by mistake; he even countenanced the downing of a commercial airliner if Arafat were on it. As Bergman bluntly states, this would have amounted to "an intentional war crime."

But Sharon was just one man, and today there is a bigger institutional problem that Bergman traces, having to do with Israel's security apparatus getting more technologically savvy and ruthlessly efficient. Instead of taking months or years to plan a single killing, the Mossad and its domestic counterpart, Shin Bet, are now capable of planning four or five "interceptions" a day. "You get used to killing. Human life becomes something plain, easy to dispose of. You spend a quarter of an hour, 20 minutes, on who to kill." This quote is from Ami Ayalon, who as the head of Shin Bet in the late '90s helped shepherd the organization into the digital age. He also told Bergman: "I call it the banality of evil."

The irony of Ayalon's inflammatory language — an echo of Hannah Arendt's line about Nazi functionaries — is as pointed as it is jarring. This book is full of shocking moments, surprising disturbances in a narrative full of fateful twists and unintended consequences. As one naval commander says, "Listen, history plays strange games."

TRAVEL

Practical tips for traveling in China

FRUGAL TRAVELER

How to pay for services and find your way around the most populous country

BY LUCAS PETERSON

China is one of the world's most exciting and rewarding places to visit, but it can be intimidating even to experienced travelers, who might struggle with communication and lack of familiarity with rules and customs. Here are some practical tips to help make sure your trip to the world's most populous country is smooth sailing from start to finish.

VISAS AND PASSPORTS

Passport and visa expiration dates rarely line up exactly, creating situations in which a passport might expire while a visa is still valid. I found myself in this exact situation before my last trip — would I have to go through the whole costly and time-consuming application process again? No — you are allowed to travel on a valid visa that's in an expired passport as long as personal details like name and date of birth match up exactly (bring both new and expired passports).

CASHLESSNESS

You'll notice blue and green QR codes at nearly every business in China, from the glitziest boutique to the most humble dumpling shop. WeChat Pay and Alipay are gradually turning the Chinese economy cashless: Simply enter the amount you want to pay, scan the business's QR code, and boom, you have paid directly from your bank account. It's something of a revolution — one that you, as a tourist, will not be part of.

Cashless payment in China requires a Chinese bank card, which you can't get unless you're a citizen or resident. Don't count on businesses' accepting your foreign credit card, either — you'll frequently find yourself out of luck. So load up on cash when you can — fortunately, I've never had trouble finding A.T.M.s in Chinese cities. Or you can exchange for some at your local bank before you go.

RIDE SHARING, WITH A HICCUP

While you probably won't be participat-

ing in the cashless revolution, you will be able to use Didi Chuxing, the Chinese version of Uber (the company, in fact, purchased Uber's operations in China in 2016, forcing Uber out). I found Didi to be inexpensive and as reliable as Uber is in the United States, with one caveat: paying by credit card. Didi wouldn't accept my Chase card, but did accept one from my credit union. Then, unfortunately, my credit union repeatedly flagged the charges as suspicious, leading to several long phone conversations with the fraud department. While not foolproof, you can set a travel notification on the card you plan to use before you leave.

You can also enroll in text notifications for fraudulent activity, which allow you to verify the veracity of charges right away.

PHONE HACKS

Speaking of phone conversations, I found the best way to cheaply make calls was through the WeChat app. A \$9.99 credit (which comes with a \$2.50 bonus), purchased within the app, lasts a long time. Calls to the United States are only a penny per minute, and the sound quality is decent. Texting on WeChat is easy, and I was also able to use iMessage without issue. WhatsApp is blocked in China.

STAYING SAFE

While you should always remain alert, China is remarkably safe for foreigners. In total, I've spent over a year in China, and have never felt in danger or threatened while walking around, no matter the hour.

Chinese traffic, however, can be horrendous, and navigating streets as a pedestrian is always an adventure. Buckle up when in a vehicle, and be extremely careful when crossing the street: Cars do not necessarily yield to pedestrians, and motorcycles and scooters do not seem to yield to anything — not even red lights.

GETTING ONLINE

While you won't be able to buy a SIM card for your phone that includes a Chinese phone number, data plans with 4G speed are available for foreigners. Check at the airport (I bought one in a convenience store), or at the hostel or hotel where you're staying, and be ready to show your passport.



WANG ZHAO/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Wi-Fi is everywhere in China but can require the use of a local phone number. (Taking a photo, however, should be fine.)

Wi-Fi is everywhere in China, from the pricey malls of Shanghai to modest mom-and-pop restaurants in the smaller cities. The bad news is that you won't be able to gain access some of the time, as it frequently requires you to enter a local phone number to receive a Wi-Fi access code.

There are ways to circumvent this. Having a WeChat account will grant access to certain Wi-Fi networks. I also use a Google Voice number to receive internet access codes, which works part of the time. But wait — isn't Google blocked in China? That brings us to...

VIRTUAL PRIVATE NETWORKS

The Chinese government does a fairly thorough job censoring websites and traffic from sources it deems potentially unsavory or damaging to the ruling

Communist Party. Say goodbye to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, any Google-related services (including Gmail), and even (gasp!) The New York Times.

There are, however, a few holes in the Great Firewall, as it is called. Virtual Private Networks, or VPNs, essentially function as tunnels under the aforementioned firewall, connecting to a private network in a country with more internet freedom, like the United States or Japan. (VPNs are a legal gray area in China. The unauthorized business or commercial use of VPNs in China is not legal, but tourists checking their email or Facebook are not likely to run into problems.) While it's a fairly easy way for you — and almost every young Chinese person I interacted with — to connect with the outside world, VPNs do have limitations: They can slow traffic noticeably

and aren't always reliable.

There are a number of well-reviewed VPNs with names like Golden Frog and NordVPN — I opted for one called ExpressVPN, which costs \$12.95 per month and offers a discount if you purchase a yearly subscription. I'd put my overall connection success rate between 85 percent and 90 percent. I also tried a free service called TunnelBear with slightly less consistent results. TunnelBear is free up to 500 megabytes of data per month — after that, you'll have to pay. To get an idea of how long that will last you, loading The Times home page and clicking on an article consumed 6 megabytes.

One obvious, but essential, tip: Download and set up your VPN before you leave for China.

Once you're there, you'll be blocked

from downloading any VPNs.

NAVIGATION

If you're like me, you've come to depend on Google Maps considerably during your travels. In China, you would be wise to rid yourself of that notion. Even with a VPN, Google Maps in China is filled with incomplete or sometimes just flat-out incorrect information. For example: There are no fewer than six subway lines currently operating in Chengdu. According to Google Maps, there are just two.

I recommend downloading the app Tencent Maps for your trip. While it can be difficult to navigate for those who don't read Chinese, it's worth having for its accuracy. Moreover, it will sometimes recognize English words you input ("airport," and names of some businesses, for example). It also does a great job plotting out directions. Just drop a pin (like you would in Google Maps) on a location in Tencent Maps, and it will give you accurate public transportation, driving, or walking directions.

OTHER APPS

WeChat dominates the country and is used to keep in touch with friends, pay for meals in restaurants, get news and play games — it even serves as something of a dating app. Download it if you're going to spend any significant amount of time in China, as you will need it to keep in touch with locals you meet along the way. Just don't use the messaging feature to say anything you wouldn't want the Chinese government to read — your privacy protections are nil (WeChat disputes the extent to which it stores and shares information with the Chinese authorities).

I've found Pleco to be a useful translation app — you can drop in English words, or paste in Chinese characters to receive their counterparts. And Dianping, the Chinese version of Yelp, is helpful for finding restaurants.

FINALLY, T.P.

You'll notice plenty of well-maintained public restrooms in China, but they're not always stocked with toilet paper. You would be wise to carry a small stash with you.

This applies to napkins in restaurants as well — at smaller, more casual places, diners are expected to have their own supply on hand.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY EL BODEGÓN

El Bodegón, opened by Gastón Acurio, has a menu that is a deep dive into casera home cooking and Peru's multicultural cuisine.

Reimagining everyday food

BITES

Peru's most famous chef goes old school with his latest taberna, El Bodegón

BY SHAUN PETT

The trick of Gastón Acurio's latest restaurant, El Bodegón, is to make you believe it has always existed on its quiet corner in the Miraflores neighborhood of Lima, the Peruvian capital. Mr. Acurio, Peru's most famous chef, with a global empire of 50 restaurants, kept the name and much of the design of the previous restaurant to evoke a classic Limaña taberna. The walls are covered in old portraits of famous soccer players and Peruvian celebrities. Classic rock — Sting, Clapton, the Beatles — plays in the background. Mostly local workers fill the intimate space, textured with dark wood, brick and marble tables, during a late lunch.

With nearly 50 dishes, the ever-evolving menu at Bodegón (which opened in July) is a deep dive into casera home-cooking and the multicultural cuisine of Lima. Over 20 years ago, Mr. Acurio lit the fuse for the boom in Peruvian cuisine, and here he is again, offering a new statement of possibilities. The chef said he is remembering and recovering the food from his childhood, "all the dishes that I lost in time because they were only made by my grandmother or my



Arroz con chanchito at El Bodegón.

family or because they were just made in the '70s." While this effort could easily descend into an exercise in nostalgia, Mr. Acurio's playfulness and sincerity grounds things in the present: The menu follows seasonal, local ingredients and he solicits food memories from his customers and on social media.

During a recent visit, baffled by options, we depended on the friendly and knowledgeable waiters to decipher the menu. We started with the salty and rich crab causa, poetically named "more crab than causa," which arrived as a Pop Art provocation of golden mashed potato layers overflowing with a crab and

egg salad, drenched in a Pepto-Bismol-pink sauce. A salad of lima beans was fresh and tasty. A whole cauliflower did something new with a vegetable oft overlooked in Peru, subbing here for chicken in the popular dish aji de gallina; cooked in a rich creamy sauce spiked with Parmesan and peppers, the cauliflower melted in my mouth. The huatia de res — an ancient pre-Columbian preparation of braised beef in herbs — was succulent.

For dessert, we ordered the suspiro (breath) de chiramoya, chunks of the buttery custard apple bathed in dulce de leche and topped with soft meringue. This is fun, casual gluttony, and the copious portions have many diners leaving with leftovers. My only quibble — a minor lapse encountered at other Lima restaurants — was a glass of local draft beer delivered with far too much foam. But one can't go wrong with classic pisco-based cocktails.

The experiments of Lima's high-end tasting menus have taken the spotlight, but El Bodegón is part of a growing movement to renovate the food of the everyday. Mr. Acurio is broadening the accessibility of Peru's culinary gains and offering a quality of cooking rarely found at this price in Lima. The hour-long lines at lunch — reservations are accepted for dinner only — already have him planning another taberna.

El Bodegón, Calle Tarapacá 197, Miraflores; www.elbodegon.com.pe. An average meal for two, without drinks or tip, is 130 soles, about \$40.

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