

## REPUBLICANS GUT FILIBUSTER RULE TO LIFT GORSUCH

### A BYPRODUCT OF RANCOR

#### Senate Move Is Likely to Reshape Supreme Court Fights

By MATT FLEGENHEIMER

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans on Thursday engineered a dramatic change in how the chamber confirms Supreme Court nominations, bypassing a Democratic blockade of Judge Neil M. Gorsuch in a move that will most likely reshape both the Senate and the court.

After Democrats held together Thursday morning and filibustered President Trump's nominee, Republicans voted to lower the threshold for advancing Supreme Court nominations from 60 votes to a simple majority.

In deploying this so-called nuclear option, lawmakers are fundamentally altering the way the Senate handles one of its most significant duties, further limiting the minority's power in a chamber that was designed to be a slower and more deliberative body than the House.

The move, once unthinkable among senators, is a testament to the creeping partisan rancor in recent years, after decades of at least relative bipartisanship on Supreme Court matters. Both parties have warned of sweeping effects on the court itself, predicting the elevation of more ideologically extreme judges now that only a majority is required for confirmation.

Senate Democrats in 2013 first changed the rules of the Senate to block Republican filibusters of presidential nominees to lower courts and to government positions. But they left the filibuster for Supreme Court nominees untouched, an acknowledgment of the court's exalted status. On Thursday, that last pillar was swept away on a party-line vote, with all 52 Republicans choosing to overrule Senate precedent and

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## Brands Wrestle With Whiplash Of Viral Anger

By MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM  
and SAPNA MAHESHWARI

In this age of rage, Madison Avenue is finding itself on red alert.

Advertisers are increasingly in the cross hairs of populist activists — aided by the power and reach of social media — who are demanding that brands quickly take sides on divisive social and political issues, posing a new challenge to corporations that usually prefer to stay out of the fray.

After a groundswell of online anger over reports that Bill O'Reilly, the Fox News host, had settled with at least five women who accused him of harassment, more than 50 companies pulled their ads from Mr. O'Reilly's popular prime time program. The exodus followed similar campaigns to pressure brands with ties to President Trump, like L.L. Bean, Uber and advertisers on "The New Celebrity Apprentice."

"Americans are now demanding that their brands articulate their values and weigh in on political issues, and I think the degree to which they are expecting that is really quite new," said Kara Alaimo, who teaches public relations at Hofstra University and worked in communications for the

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# U.S. LAUNCHES MISSILES INTO SYRIA



DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Trump, speaking Thursday at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, said the strike in Syria was in the "vital national security interest" of the United States. Transcript at nytimes.com.

## Tomahawks Hit Base Tied to Gas Attack — Trump's Warning to Assad

By MICHAEL R. GORDON and MICHAEL D. SHEAR

WASHINGTON — President Trump said Thursday night that the United States had carried out a missile strike in Syria in response to the Syrian government's chemical weapons attack this week, which killed more than 80 civilians.

"Tonight, I ordered a targeted military strike on the air base in Syria from where the chemical attack was launched," Mr. Trump said in remarks at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. "It is in this vital national security interest of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons."

Mr. Trump — who was accompanied by senior advisers, including Stephen K. Bannon, his chief strategist; Reince Priebus, his chief of staff; his daughter Ivanka Trump; and others — said his decision to act had been prompted in part by what he called the failures of previous efforts by the world community to respond effectively to the Syrian civil war.

"Years of previous attempts at changing Assad's behavior have all failed, and failed very dramatically," the president said, referring to President Bashar al-Assad of Syria. "As a result, the refugee crisis continues to deepen, and the region continues to destabilize, threatening the United States and its allies."

The Pentagon announced that 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles had been fired at Al Shayrat airfield in Syria. The missiles were aimed at Syrian fighter jets, radar, fuel

pumps and equipment to operate aircraft. No chemical weapons were known to be stored at the installation.

"Russian forces were notified in advance of the strike using the established deconfliction line," said Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman. "Military planners took precautions to minimize risk to Russian or Syrian personnel located at the airfield." No Russian aircraft were at the base, military officials said.

"We are assessing the results of the strike," Captain Davis added. "Initial indications are that this strike has severely damaged or destroyed Syrian aircraft and support infrastructure and equipment at Shayrat airfield, reducing the Syrian government's ability to deliver chemical weapons."

The cruise missiles struck the airfield beginning around 8:40 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, and the strikes continued for three to four minutes.

According to Captain Davis, the missiles were fired from the destroyers Porter and Ross in the eastern Mediterranean.

Administration officials described the strikes Mr. Trump ordered as a graphic message to the world that the president was no longer willing to stand idly by as Mr. Assad used horrific weapons in his country's long civil war.

To do otherwise, they said, would be to essentially bless the use of chemical weapons by Mr. Assad and others who might use

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## Meeting Xi, and Ready a Harder Line on Trade

By MARK LANDLER  
and MICHAEL D. SHEAR

PALM BEACH, Fla. — The Trump administration is planning to roll out its first concrete measures against China on trade, administration officials said on Thursday, hardening its position toward America's largest trading partner just as President Trump welcomed President Xi Jinping of China to his seaside club here for their first face-to-face meeting.

Sometime after Mr. Xi leaves the United States, these officials said, Mr. Trump plans to sign an executive order targeting countries that dump steel into the American market, an aggressive measure aimed mainly at China.

It is unclear exactly what the order would do or how harsh it would be, but it would be designed to begin to make good on Mr.

Trump's promise during the campaign to redress China's huge trade surplus with the United States.

In addition, an official said, the White House is moving out a senior economic policy official, Andrew Quinn, who had helped negotiate the Trans-Pacific Partnership, former President Barack Obama's signature trade initiative.

Mr. Quinn had become the subject of a battle between two camps in the White House: economic nationalists, who wanted him out, and more mainstream backers of free trade, who defended him.

Taken together, these developments constituted a potentially significant victory for the hardliners, coming off a string of setbacks in their efforts to persuade the president to deliver on the most combative anti-free-trade planks of his presidential cam-

aign. But the ultimate outcome of this policy debate is still far from clear, several officials said. Mr. Trump does not plan to confront Mr. Xi with the most aggressive of his campaign threats: a 45 percent tariff on Chinese goods.

Nor is the United States likely to designate China a currency manipulator, something he promised to do as a candidate. Holding back those moves suggests Mr. Trump is also heeding the more moderate voices among his advisers, who argue that the United States cannot afford to ignite a trade war with China.

"The nativist and nationalist forces certainly have influence," said Nicholas Lardy, an expert on the Chinese economy at the Peterson International Institute for Economics. "But it looks like it's dwindling rapidly."

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## Trump Aides Wage Battle For His Ear

This article is by Maggie Haberman, Jeremy W. Peters and Peter Baker.

WASHINGTON — Thick with tension, the conversation this week between Stephen K. Bannon, the chief White House strategist, and Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, had deteriorated to the point of breakdown.

Finally, Mr. Bannon identified why they could not compromise, according to someone with knowledge of the conversation. "Here's the reason there's no middle ground," Mr. Bannon growled. "You're a Democrat."

The schism within Mr. Trump's perpetually fractious White House has grown in recent weeks, fueled by personality, ideology and ambition. At its core are Mr. Bannon, the edgy, nationalist bomb-thrower suddenly in the seat of power, and Mr. Kushner, the polished, boyish-looking scion of New Jersey and New York real estate. Even as Mr. Kushner's portfolio of responsibilities has been expanding, Mr. Bannon's in recent days has shrunk with the loss of a national security post.

The escalating feud, though, goes beyond mere West Wing melodrama, the sort of who's-up-and-who's-down scorekeeping that typically consumes Washington. Instead, it reflects a larger struggle to guide the direction of the Trump presidency, played out in disagreements over the policies Mr. Trump should pursue, the people he should hire and the image he should put forward to the American people.

On one side are Mr. Bannon's guerrilla warriors, eager to close the nation's borders, dismantle decades of regulations, empower police departments and take on the establishment of both parties in Washington. On the other are

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PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Recusal in House

Devin Nunes stepped aside from an inquiry into election meddling by Russia. Page A19.

## C.I.A. Tracked Russian Prying In the Summer

By ERIC LICHTBLAU

WASHINGTON — The C.I.A. told senior lawmakers in classified briefings last summer that it had information indicating that Russia was working to help elect Donald J. Trump president, a finding that did not emerge publicly until after Mr. Trump's victory months later, former government officials say.

The briefings indicate that intelligence officials had evidence of Russia's intentions to help Mr. Trump much earlier in the presidential campaign than previously thought. The briefings also reveal a critical split last summer between the C.I.A. and counterparts at the F.B.I., where a number of senior officials continued to believe through last fall that Russia's cyberattacks were aimed primarily at disrupting America's political system, and not at getting Mr. Trump elected, according to interviews.

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CLINTON ON LOSS Hillary Clinton said that Russia contributed to her defeat. PAGE A21



ERNESTO BENAVIDES/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

## Mudslides Uncover Deeper Perils

Flooding in Peru, near Lima, shows risks of haphazard development in South America. Page A4.



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## Murder in the 4-0

Survivors of shootings can't escape more gun violence. The latest in a series about killings in the South Bronx. PAGE A28

## Tracing a Derailment's Cause

Amtrak said weakened timber ties set off a derailment, a problem whose severity had not been clear. PAGE A26

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## Nerds Defending the Amazon

A brainy squad operating in some of the most lawless parts of the Amazon River basin is on the front lines of Brazil's struggle to curb deforestation. PAGE A10

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## Rumor Rattles Immigrants

In a working-class Massachusetts city, reports of a raid by immigration agents spread quickly. PAGE A14

## HPV Infections Widespread

Almost half of Americans between 18 and 59 are infected with the ubiquitous virus, researchers said. PAGE A22

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## Twitter Sues the Government

The social media giant aims to block the unmasking of an account that has been critical of the president. PAGE B1

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## Comedy's King of the Insult

Don Rickles, known for equal-opportunity put-downs, was 90. PAGE B14



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## 'Day to Fight' at the Masters

Gusts up to 40 miles per hour at the Augusta National grounds had golfers trying to guess what the wind would do to their shots. Dustin Johnson withdrew because of a back injury. PAGE B11

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## The Vin Diesel Formula

The onetime bouncer and current action hero decided to make himself a movie star after Hollywood took its time giving him a chance. PAGE D6

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David Brooks

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## A Clash of Cosmetic Titans

The musical "War Paint" recalls the rivalry between the beauty magnates Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden. A review by Ben Brantley. PAGE C1



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