

David
McWilliamsThe Government's
cavalier
spending is
deeply worrying

In the upmarket Johannesburg suburb of Rosebank, I sip a beer. This is an affluent place full of beautifully designed – but heavily-guarded – homes. “Bunkering” is what white South Africans call it. When you are afraid of going out, you invest in your fortified “bunker”.

This is where you entertain friends, where your kids feel safe and where you can block out some of the more threatening realities of daily life in this teeming metropolis.

At a hipster bar called the News Cafe, people of various colours and creeds are

glued to the TV watching the cathartic commission of investigation into the misuse of state funds. This story is dominating South Africa as President Cyril Ramaphosa's government reveals the outrageous corruption that characterised the Jacob Zuma regime.

For the ANC, this is a particularly difficult process as the entire movement is suffering with each new episode of wholesale plundering of the national coffers. Day by day, judges scrutinise, in painful detail, how state funds were misused. Lucrative state tenders were manipulated by private

contractors who offered low bids to get the contracts and then jacked up the prices, citing inflation and unforeseen costs, once the contracts were secured.

In South Africa the investigation is focused on direct involvement of the upper echelons of former President Zuma's ANC, some of whose members siphoned off state money for their own cronies.

Only in Africa?

It would be comforting to reassure ourselves that this type of carry-on happens only in Africa. Yet it reminds me of the financial fiasco that is the national children's hospital at St James's.

It is important to say that the corruption that defined the Zuma regime has not occurred in the Irish context. But the children's hospital project has been the victim of other failings.

A combination of ineptitude, lack of oversight and insouciance at the highest level of our public service means that an outrageously cavalier approach to taxpayers' money is being tolerated by the Government.

It's not corruption, but it is a blatant failure of the process of public tendering.

In the case of South Africa, the issue is direct political involvement in the misuse of taxpayers' money. Here the problem is different, but the end result is the same: massive cost overruns and an assumption by all involved that the taxpayer will cough up.

How come the cost of a hospital that started at €400 million is now likely to be €1.7 billion? Who is looking out for the

66

How come a hospital that
started at €400 million
is now likely to cost
€1.7 billion? Who is looking
out for the taxpayer here?

taxpayer here? Who is protecting our money and giving us value for money?

If the civil servants charged with costing and overseeing these State projects fail in their duty to protect the taxpayers, then something should be done about it – not just to protect the public purse but because prestige projects such as the children's hospital set the standard for other public works initiatives, driving up the costs of infrastructure and driving down competitiveness.

With the State about to embark on building a Dublin Metro, the potential knock-on effect of this type of fiscal incontinence is worrying.

Let's take a close look at the numbers, because it is your money that is being spent.

During the last coalition government, the cost of a new children's hospital was suggested to be in the region of €400

million. This was clearly a back-of-the-envelope calculation, but it did form a basis for discussions.

Raised some concerns

Tenders were returned on October 21st, 2016. The lowest bid of €637 million received from BAM was very competitive, €131 million lower than the second-placed bid.

Maybe this should have raised some concerns that a bid could be so much below the second-lowest bid, given that both developers would have been pricing more or less the same manpower, administration costs, material and margins.

In April 2016, Leo Varadkar said the total cost of the project would be €650 million, including two satellite clinics, paying VAT, and contingency for inflation and unforeseen events.

Last December the total cost of the project had jumped to €1.73 billion.

Stephen Donnelly, the Fianna Fáil TD who has done much of the digging on this case, claims Irish taxpayers would be paying more than twice as much per bed for the hospital as it has recently cost to build the most expensive hospitals in the world: the Royal in Adelaide and the Karolinska in Stockholm.

In Dublin now both sides (politicians and those charged with delivering the project) are arguing over culpability. But what should concern all of us is who represents the taxpayer in this blame game? At the moment it seems nobody does.

If a builder came to you and priced a job

at €10,000 and then came back, having started the work, with lads on site, and told you it would now cost the guts of €27,000, you'd seek justification for every cent of price increase.

But when the State is paying the bill, who shouts out for you? The Government should be the last line of defence for the taxpayer. That is, after all, its job; it is the custodian of the country's finances. If it doesn't shout “stop”, who will?

Looted

We are not in South African territory, where the coffers were looted by those close to the president, nor am I suggesting that the contractors are forcing up the price.

Yet we end up in the same place, where the people who are employed to look after our interests don't seem to care enough about the bottom line. Things slip. The fact that the government's chequebook is the final payer is clearly part of the problem.

It's hard to see what the other factors are. Materials and wage inflation have not doubled since 2016. In fact in the last year, as demand from China has weakened substantially, commodity prices – steel and glass, for example – have fallen, not risen.

Ask lads who work on sites whether their wages have skyrocketed, and they will laugh at you. Wage inflation in Ireland is running at under 3 per cent. It may be higher in construction, but it hasn't risen 300 per cent.

So the cost overruns have come from somewhere else. I'd like to know where and you – the payer of the bill – should too.

THE TRUTH
BEHIND A
VIRAL VIDEO

Last week's widely shared video of apparently racist behaviour by high-school students in Washington provoked fury in the US and beyond. But gradually, a more complex narrative emerged

Suzanne
Lynch

Washington Correspondent

It began like any typical January day in Washington. Beneath the bright blue skies, tourists and visitors braved the icy cold temperatures to walk along the grand National Mall, despite being shut out from many of the museums due to the government shutdown.

The long stretch of land that runs through the US capital has long been the site of civil protest, from Martin Luther King's “I Have a Dream” speech to protests against the Vietnam War.

Last Friday, the annual March for Life was scheduled to take place. The pro-life demonstration is held each year in Washington to mark the anniversary of Roe v Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court decision which legalised abortion. The event has gained a higher profile in the last two years following Donald Trump's election. This year the US president delivered a video message to the demonstrators, promising to veto legislation that “weakens the protection of human life”. Vice-president Mike Pence and his wife Karen walked with the protesters and addressed the crowd.

The rally took place on the eve of the Women's March, a movement spawned by the election of Donald Trump. Though

smaller this year due to internal divisions within the movement and allegations of anti-Semitism, thousands of women still demonstrated across the country, many supported by abortion-rights groups.

But it was not the potential clash between these two groups that caused disturbance. The tension spilled over elsewhere.

As the march finished and the crowds began to peter away, an incident unfolded on the west side of the National Mall on the steps of the iconic Lincoln Memorial.

By Saturday, a video clip surfaced online showing a group of male high-school students from Covington Catholic High School in Kentucky, wearing red “Make America Great Again” hats, in a stand-off with a group of Native Americans. The students had attended the March for Life rally, while the Native American group were in town for the Indigenous People's March. In particular, one student was captured in an intense face-to-face stare-off with a Native American elder who was beating a drum and singing. As the tense standoff continued, groups of students – some appearing to chant “Build the Wall” – surrounded the two as they cheered and taunted.

The clip lit up the internet, prompting outrage and accusations of racism on the part of the Maga-hat wearing boys, encapsulated by the apparently smug grin of the student involved in the standoff who did not speak to the elderly man in front of him but just stood there, smiling. He was later named as Nick Sandmann.

For the millions of people who retreated it, the incident exemplified the deep racial and cultural divisions that underpin American life during the Trump era, and an alarming example of mob mentality at work. That outrage was underscored by a CNN interview with the Native American

elder, Nathan Phillips, on Saturday, during which he described trying to bring calm to the situation, and describing the fear he felt as he was surrounded by the group and blocked by one particular student.

As reaction to the story grew, Covington Catholic High School and the Diocese of Covington issued a joint statement on Saturday night, apologising to Phillips. “We condemn the actions of the Covington Catholic High School students towards Nathan Phillips specifically, and Native Americans in general,” the statement said. It continued: “We extend our deepest apologies to Mr Phillips. This behaviour is opposed to the Church's teachings on the dignity and respect of the human person.”

It also said it would investigate the incident and take “appropriate action, up to and including expulsion”.

Real story

But the real story was what evolved subsequently, and how the established version of the incident changed. It gradually emerged that the prevailing narrative surrounding the events was not all it seemed. A second video surfaced showing a group from the Black Israelites, who believe Africans are God's chosen people.

Shouting anti-homosexual slurs and swearing, the group in this video approached the Covington students, at one point appearing to tell a student that his classmate was going to harvest his organs.

The Covington students then began performing their “school spirit” chant, often used by high schools in America, led by one student who took off his shirt and began performing the song.

At this point, video footage shows the group of Native Americans approaching the student group when the apparent face-off between Nathan Phillips and Nick Sandmann takes place. As debate erupted about why the Native American group approached the boys, conflicting reports began to emerge about Phillips's Vietnam War record (he claimed he was a veteran). As a more detailed and complicated picture emerged about what unfolded on the Lincoln Memorial, several well-known figures began to retract their original comments on the incident. By Sunday a full-blown collective mea culpa was in swing across the internet.

Julie Irwin Zimmerman of *The Atlantic* admitted that “like many people who spend too much time on Twitter”, she was outraged when she watched the video that chugged-up her timeline on Saturday. But by Sunday she had begun to reassess her initial response.

“As I watched the longer videos, I began to see the smirking kid in a different light.” Describing how we are all now “primed for outrage”, she described the story as a “Rorschach test – tell me how you first reacted, and I can probably tell where you live, who you voted for in 2016, and your



■ From the top: Covington Catholic High School student Nick Sandmann in a face-off with Native American Nathan Phillips in Washington; Ray St Clair of the Chippewa Tribe prays outside the school (below) in Park Hills, Kentucky.

PHOTOGRAPHS: KAYA TAITANO, MADALYN MCGARVEY/REUTERS, AARON BORTON/NEW YORK TIMES

66 The controversy has
also exposed how a
single video clip, without
context, can become a
dangerous tool

general take on a list of other issues – but it shouldn't be.”

The scene that unfolded last week – a group of white male teenagers aligned with President Trump and a Native American man protesting centuries of injustice – seemed to conform to an easy narrative, a modern-day morality tale that tells us all we need to know about the problems of America.

That it took place on Martin Luther King weekend on the very steps where Dr King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech only underscored the symbolism of the moment.

But the picture was in fact more nuanced.

Nonetheless, many believe the counter-narrative has gone too far. Nathan Phillips still maintains that he felt threatened by the situation and that he was being actively blocked by Sandmann, even though he forgives him. Meanwhile, photographs have surfaced of former Covington school students in blackface at basketball games.

Donald Trump has weighed in. On Twitter he said that Nick Sandmann and the students of Covington “have become symbols of Fake News and how evil it can be”.

Press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders has invited them to the White House. “Certainly no one understands better than this president when the media jumps to conclusions and attacks you for something you may or may not have done,” she told Fox News.

Unsurprisingly, Trump's supporters in the right-wing press have seized on the incident to lambast mainstream media channels. They have highlighted the fact that CNN, for example, initially reported that the Black Israelite group was “preaching about the bible and oppression”.

The timing of the incident was helpful for those using the Covington controversy as a way of delegitimising the media, given that it unfolded on the same day that special counsel Robert Mueller disputed a story in BuzzFeed claiming that President Trump had instructed his former lawyer to lie to Congress.

The controversy has also exposed the limitations and dangers of social media – how a single video clip, without context, can become a dangerous tool.

Rather than the promise of unmediated first-person reportage, the power of the smartphone has generated complex questions of perception and reality, fuelled by a groupthink that can cause people to rush to judgment.

As the national conversation about the incident continued this week, with both Sandmann and Phillips giving sit-down interviews with cable networks, in Kentucky, the small town of Covington appeared to close ranks.

The school was forced to close on Tuesday, citing security concerns. Some of the students, including Nick Sandmann, have reportedly received death threats. Many locals have criticised the diocese for its statement on Saturday and have rallied around the students.

Soul-searching

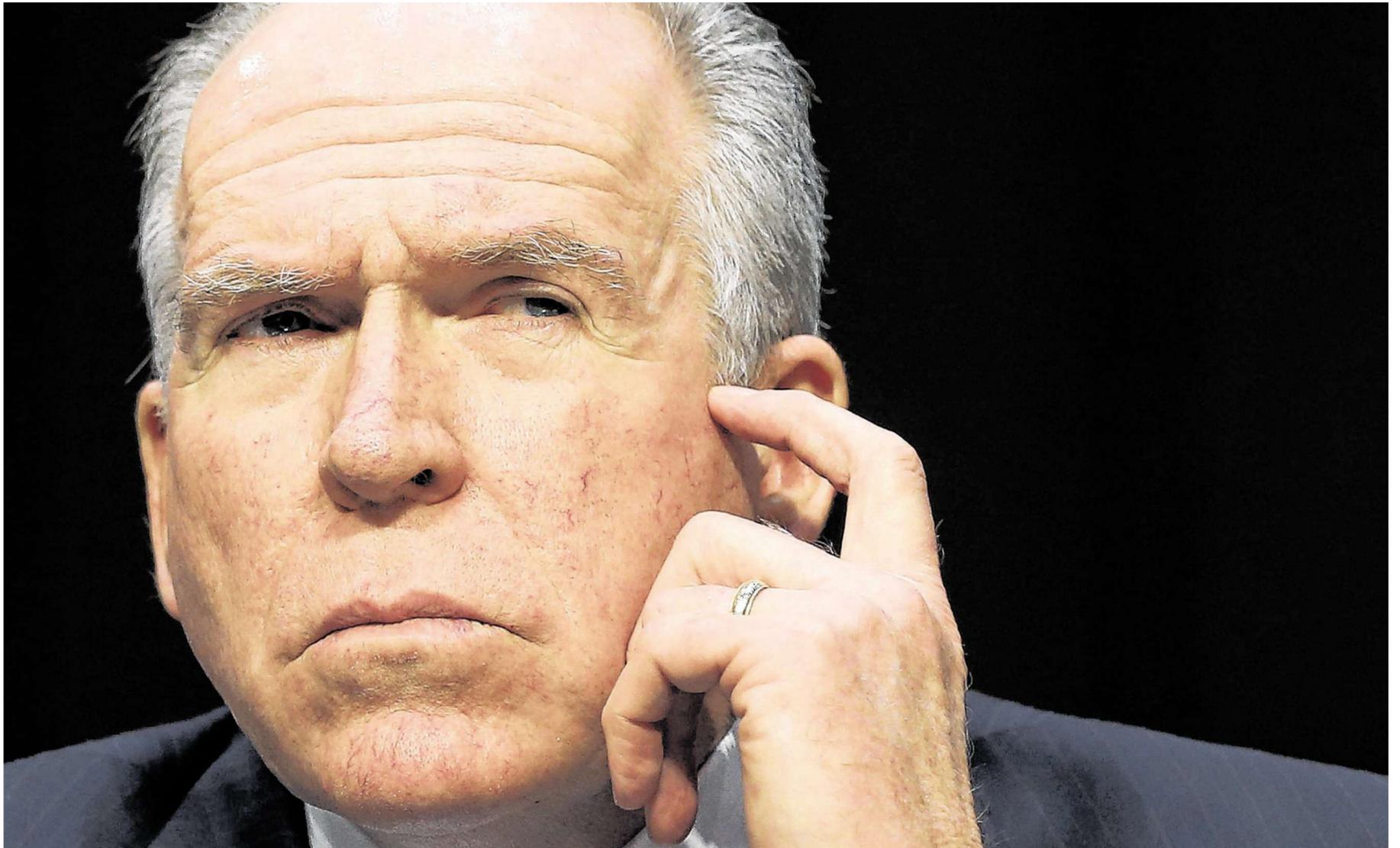
Nationally, the incident has prompted some soul-searching by commentators and analysts.

New York Times columnist Frank Bruni wrote that many of those who seized on the incident on Twitter on Saturday were simply “burnishing their brands ... each pundit one-upping the disdain of the pundits who vented before him or her”.

“We react to news by trying to fit it into the argument that we routinely make ... We have our narrative, and we're on the lookout for comments and developments that back it up.”

As he succinctly put it, “instead of bucking the political tribalism in America, we ride it”.

As the dust settles on the controversy, it remains unclear what lessons America will take from the controversy. Given the polarized nature of debate on mainstream and social media, it is most likely that people will just continue to see what they want to see.



JOHN BRENNAN MY TROUBLE WITH TRUMP

Former CIA director John Brennan is a fierce critic of Donald Trump – and the feeling is mutual. He explains how the US president differs from the others he has worked with



Suzanne Lynch
Washington Correspondent

As John Brennan takes his seat on the patio of the historic Willard Hotel, a few blocks from the White House, there is a ripple of recognition among those sitting nearby. The former CIA director is a man more used to being in the background. As the head of America's foreign intelligence agency he was privy to the nation's most sensitive secrets.

Today, he has become a very public and outspoken critic of President Donald Trump, his fame cemented by his regular appearance on cable news channels such as MSNBC. As we talk, a member of the public approaches Brennan to shake his hand. He responds politely, his shy smile suggesting that he is still not entirely comfortable with his new public persona.

Brennan will visit Dublin next week for the Dalkey Book Festival. It is one of his many visits to the country, since his first trip more than 40 years ago.

Brennan is intensely proud of his Irish-American heritage. His story is in many ways representative of the thousands who made the journey from Ireland to America to seek a better life. His father, the seventh of 10 children from Co Roscommon, trained as a blacksmith before leaving Ireland for the United States in 1948 when he was 28 years old. Many of his generation took a similar path.

Within a couple of years in the US he met Brennan's mother, whose grandparents had emigrated from Ireland, at an Irish dance. They settled in New Jersey, and Brennan recalls being brought up in a typical Irish-American household.

Irish history was "deeply embedded in us", he says. "For a while I knew as much about Irish history as I did about American history. I think we had a glorified impression of the old country, and we'd often asked my father, 'why did you come here?'"

"He used to say – it took me 28 years to come here, why would I go back?" he smiles. "There was very little opportunity at the time, especially in Connacht."

Nonetheless his father maintained a deep interest in his home country. Brennan first accompanied his father back to Ireland in 1972, when he was 17. The last time

was in 2014 when, together with his brother, he brought his 93-year-old father back to Ireland for The Gathering. "We were in the local paper," says Brennan with a smile.

The son of an Irish immigrant who rose to the top of the CIA, John Brennan's career trajectory in many ways encapsulates the American Dream.

After attending high school in New Jersey, he enrolled in Fordham College in New York, commuting an hour and a half each way every day to Manhattan. A trip to Indonesia during his sophomore year – his cousin Tom was working there as a diplomat – sparked a wanderlust in him.

He first considered attending the American University of Beirut but it closed in 1975 and instead he went to the American University in Cairo. There he learned Arabic and developed a lifelong interest in the Middle East. After completing a master's in governance at the University of Texas in Austin on his return, he saw an advertisement for the CIA and applied.

Brennan joined the agency in 1980, moving rapidly up the career ladder. After a tour in Saudi Arabia, he held senior positions within the CIA. Brennan served under six American presidents including – most controversially – George W Bush. Under this administration he was involved in the response to the 9/11 attacks, including interrogation programmes.

His knowledge of and involvement in those programmes would later dog him when he was first considered as CIA director by President Barack Obama.

Obama man? While President Trump has accused him of being an Obama man, Brennan is quick to stress that he is non-partisan. "I worked with six presidents – three Democrats and three Republicans. I'm not a Democrat or a Republican. I'm a non-partisan."

Indeed, he points out that when he was in the Obama administration most of his troubles were with Democratic senators, who raised concerns about the detention interrogation programmes.

Nonetheless, Brennan has a huge respect for Obama. Having acted as a long-distance adviser to Obama during the campaign – he did not meet the president in person until he was elected – he was invited to Chicago. "We had a lot of shared experiences. He spent years in Indonesia, of course, and there was a very strong alignment of our views as well as our principles, and I would say, moral compass."

While Obama asked him to be CIA director, Brennan eventually withdrew from consideration over the controversy about his knowledge of the "enhanced interrogation programmes". Instead he joined the White House as assistant for homeland security and counterintelligence.

"Ironically I got to know him much better and have more influence than if I'd been in Langley," he says, referring to CIA headquarters in Virginia.

When David Petraeus resigned as head of the CIA in 2012, Brennan replaced him, a move that put him at the very top of America's decision-making powers.

Brennan's central role in the Obama administration is captured in the famous photograph taken inside the White House situation room on the night Osama bin Laden was captured and killed – there he stands behind President Obama, secretary of state Hillary Clinton, and others, watching the operation unfold.

The trouble with Trump But it is since leaving the US intelligence services and the election of Donald Trump that Brennan has stepped out of the shadows and into the public arena.

The 63-year old has become one of the most vociferous critics of Trump. On Twitter and in multiple interviews he has blasted the president, most memorably describing the president's behaviour in Helsinki when Trump appeared to take the side of Russian president Vladimir Putin over his own intelligence agents as "treasonous". His status as one of the US's most vociferous critics of Trump was chillingly underlined when he was one of several prominent Americans, including Obama, who were the intended recipients of explosive packages in the mail last year.

As we sit, with the White House grounds just metres away, talk turns to Trump. Brennan doesn't hold back.

"I have disagreed with past presidents about their policy choices, and I worked for them, and I have no problem with differences in policy. But all the presidents I worked for, I really felt that what they were trying to do was in the best interests of the United States government. I always felt that they were trying to represent the American people, and I always felt that they were respectful for the office, and were fulfilling those obligations that we all should expect and demand of a president of the United States," he says, his voice steady and restrained.

"So my beef with Donald Trump is not because he has done some very foolish things – like reneging on the Iran nuclear deal, or how he has handled the North Korea situation. I find that many of his policies are deeply flawed and are purely tactical to give him a political bounce.

"But if that was the only problem I had with him, I would be silent. What really just riles me to no end is his dishonesty, his lack of ethics and principles and character, the way he demeans and degrades and denigrates individuals or institutions of government, what he has done and said about the FBI and CIA and the former leadership, the fact that he willfully misleads not just the American people but the world."

He pauses to take a sip of water: "He is a pathological deceiver and that lack of ethical, principled behaviour is something that I never thought I would see in the president of the United States who is the most powerful person in the world, who should serve as a role model to all Americans."

"I feel that Donald Trump has not just fallen short of that standard, he has totally trampled that standard. He has always been motivated by personal advancement and gain, so the things he does, the things he says, the tweets that he puts out I find are disgraceful, unconscionable, disrespectful, and are not in keeping with the great tradition this country has tried to establish."

Clearly, the feeling is mutual. Trump has derided Brennan as an Obama appointee, who is a "disgrace to the intelligence community". The White House announced last year that it was removing Brennan's security credentials, though it has not yet followed through with the threat.

In particular, Trump has highlighted the fact that Brennan was CIA director in the run-up to the 2016 elections – one of the

“I still stand by my argument that there was extensive collusion, but what the Mueller investigative team determined was that there was not a basis of evidence to establish a criminal conspiracy”

so-called "deep state" actors that his supporters believe were biased against Trump. Indeed Brennan was one of those who briefed Trump on the threat of Russian interference following the election.

With Trump accusing the US intelligence agencies of illegally spying on his campaign, it is likely that Brennan could be interviewed as part of the new probe opened by attorney general William Barr into the origins of the Russia investigation.

Brennan's past commentary on the Mueller report came under renewed scrutiny by Trump supporters and conservative commentators, in the weeks following the publication of William Barr's four-page summary of the Mueller report.

No evidence of collusion That summary said the report had found no evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia – vindicating the claims of many Trump supporters that the US intelligence services were biased against Trump.

Did people such as Brennan jump the gun when it came to the Mueller report? "No. I still stand by my argument that there was extensive collusion, but what the Mueller investigative team determined was that there was not a basis of evidence to establish a criminal conspiracy," he says.

"Even though the report made no reference to no collusion at all, attorney general Barr said that there was no collusion and Trump continues to say no collusion. That's not the case – again it didn't meet the criminal conspiracy threshold."

As for the current challenges facing Trump, Brennan is hugely concerned about the administration's strategy on several foreign policy issues.

As we meet, he has just come from a private meeting with House and Senate Democrats on Capitol Hill, where he briefed congressional figures on Iran. The threat of war between Washington and Tehran has appeared to increase in recent weeks amid signs of increased US activity in the region.

"The United States has gone down this cul de sac with Iran, by putting pressure on the regime, in the false belief that they will change. It's a culture of resistance in Iran," he says, describing national security adviser John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike

Pompeo as "Iran zealots".

"By reneging on the Iran nuclear deal, by designating the IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] as a terrorist organisation, by tightening sanctions on Iran and forcing European parties to the agreement to renege on their obligations, the perception in Iran is that the Trump administration ultimately wants to overthrow the regime." This has emboldened hardliners, he says, and even moderates who put their trust in the US when they signed the 2015 accord.

Brennan is equally dismissive about Trump's North Korean policy, arguing that he played right into Kim Jong-un's hands.

"It was my impression that Kim Jong-un was already planning before the election that when a new president came into office he would ratchet up his activities to get the nuclear programme to a certain point that it could be a serious threat, and then pivot to try and demonstrate more statesman-like behaviour in the hope of being accepted as a responsible nuclear power like India, or France."

Trump swallowed it hook, line and sinker, he says.

Trump "gave Kim the prominence and profile that he wanted without any commensurate reduction in his nuclear or missile capability" and left the US with very little to show, he says. "North Korea has been able to further develop its nuclear capabilities since Trump came into office."

Foreign policy failings

Ultimately for Brennan, he believes Trump's foreign policy failings encapsulate his failings generally as a president.

"These are all very complex and complicated issues that really require very delicate moves and an understanding of just how complicated the situations are," he says. "President Obama, President Bush and President Clinton – the ones I worked most closely with – they really absorbed a lot of information. They wanted to understand all of the different aspects, all of the details."

"Clearly Donald Trump feels – and he has said – that he is the smartest man in the world, that he knows more than military generals know. This type of ad-hocery on foreign policy is a recipe for disaster."

Trump's modus operandi has "always been to go in high and hard but then to settle for less but to try to undercut your opponents by threatening them", he says. "That does not work in the same way on the international stage. I think Trump is finding this out, despite his claims of his tremendous acumen when it comes to negotiations, deal making."

As for the next chapter in the Trump presidency, Brennan believes that Democrats should continue their methodical investigations into the president's behaviour in the wake of the Mueller report.

"I really do believe that Mr Trump is hiding something. Preventing people from testifying in front of Congress, not releasing his tax returns? I don't know what it is, but I think that the American people deserve to know whether their president is a criminal or vulnerable to foreign exploitation."

As we finish up our discussion, he jokes about if he has been candid enough about his views on the president. He says he puts it down to his Irish heritage.

"I tend to be a bit outspoken, my Irish identity gets the better of me," he smiles. "I do speak rather bluntly and candidly, but that's what my father taught me, to be honest and true and to carry out your responsibilities with the greatest integrity. Then you can and let the chips fall where they may." With that, he steps out onto the busy streets of Washington DC, ready to respond to whatever the next chapter of this extraordinary US presidency will bring.

John Brennan will discuss Trump's America and his former role as the head of the CIA at the Dalkey Book Festival. The festival runs from Thursday, June 13th, to Sunday, June 16th. dalkeybookfestival.org

■ **Main:** former CIA director John Brennan: "I tend to be a bit outspoken, my Irish identity gets the better of me."

■ **Below:** President Barack Obama briefs him on the details of the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School, in December 2014. **Bottom:** The Situation Room of the White House during the mission against Osama bin Laden on May 1st, 2011.

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES & PETE SOUZA/THE WHITE HOUSE VIA GETTY IMAGES & PETE SOUZA/THE WHITE HOUSE VIA GETTY IMAGES



Pompeo rejects Pyongyang criticism

US secretary of state anticipates 'difficult and challenging' denuclearisation

North Korea said the two days of talks brought country to 'a dangerous situation'

US secretary of state Mike Pompeo brushed off North Korean accusations of "gangster-like" diplomacy during negotiations in Pyongyang, saying yesterday he will pursue denuclearisation talks after meeting his Japanese and South Korean counterparts.

Mr Pompeo said in Tokyo there was still a lot of work to do but he was confident North Korean leader Kim Jong-un would stick to a commitment to abandon nuclear weapons he made

during a summit with US president Donald Trump in Singapore last month.

Mr Pompeo's meeting with Japan's minister of foreign affairs Taro Kono and South Korean foreign minister Kang Kyung-wha followed two days of talks in Pyongyang. "When we spoke about denuclearisation, they did not push back," Mr Pompeo told a news conference. "The road ahead will be difficult and challenging and we know critics will try to mini-

mise the work we've achieved."

Mr Pompeo spoke after North Korea said the two days of talks with America's top diplomat "brought us in a dangerous situation where we may be shaken in our unshakable will for denuclearisation, rather than consolidating trust between the DPRK and the US". The statement, which referred to the North's formal name of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), was carried by the official KCNA news agency on Saturday soon after Mr Pompeo left Pyongyang.

Military drills

Mr Kim made a broad commitment in Singapore to "work toward denuclearisation" but did not give details on how or when he would dismantle North Korea's nuclear programme. Mr Trump in turn offered security

guarantees to Pyongyang and pledged a halt to large-scale military drills with South Korea. North Korea's latest comments, which came after Mr Pompeo said talks had made progress, are a reminder of the

“A rushed summit and demands that NK denuclearises is not a test of diplomacy”

difficulties previous US administrations have had negotiating with the reclusive state and suggest Pyongyang may not agree to any rapid denuclearisation.

Leaked US intelligence findings concluded North Korea does not intend to give up its nuclear programme completely. Mr Trump has vowed North Ko-

rea will not be allowed threaten the US.

Mr Pompeo said he did not meet Mr Kim on his latest visit to Pyongyang. Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, said on Twitter there was a danger military action could be called for because Mr Trump might claim he had tried diplomacy but was betrayed by Mr Kim. "But a rushed summit and demands that NK denuclearise in short order or else is not a serious test of diplomacy," he tweeted.

Japan's Mr Kono thanked Mr Pompeo and said the three allies had reaffirmed a commitment to keeping sanctions on North Korea until it abandoned nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. "We confirmed that security assurances will be provided to North Korea as agreed in the summit. At the same time,

we have reaffirmed that the international community will continue to fully implement relevant UN Security Council resolutions," Mr Kono said.

Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe earlier heaped praise on Mr Pompeo at his residence in Tokyo. "I would like to pay my tribute to the strong leadership you have demonstrated in negotiating with North Korea," Mr Abe told Pompeo. "This really shows the unwavering bond of the Japan-US alliance."

South Korea's Ms Kang said her country did not believe the US had weakened its demands on Pyongyang. "Secretary Pompeo's visit to Pyongyang this time has taken the first steps," she said. "We expect this to be followed up by further constructive and productive negotiations." - Reuters

Donald Trump, Twitter addict, is making the US meaner



Maureen Dowd

The hostility that flows from his fingers defines his immigration policy

meaner place." This, even as Twitter - under pressure like the rest of Silicon Valley for letting the monsters get out of control - is developing "health metrics" to promote civility and communicate "more holistically".

On its company blog, Twitter said it was inspired by Cortico, a non-profit research organisation that is trying to measure "conversational health" with four indicators: shared attention, shared reality, variety of opinion and receptivity. Not exactly the attributes we see in Trump.

Falsehoods

It will be hard for Twitter to become more civil and holistic given that in January it instituted a world leaders policy exempting a certain head of state from any tempering efforts. "Blocking a world leader from Twitter or removing their controversial tweets would hide important information people should be able to see and debate," the company said. That leaves Trump free to grab his phone at all hours to shove and to smear and to spew falsehoods. As Michiko Kakutani writes in her new book, *The Death of Truth*: "Trump, of course, is a troll - both by temperament and by habit. His tweets and offhand taunts are the very essence of trolling - the lies, the scorn, the invective, the

Donald Trump was profoundly affected by watching his older brother, Freddy, die from alcoholism at 43. He proselytised against drinking and smoking, warning his kids away from those vices. Even with his casinos, Trump wasn't a gambler, saying he'd rather own slot machines than play them.

And yet, in a strange twist, Trump has ended up an addict. One of the more chilling things I've heard recently came from Jaron Lanier, the Silicon Valley founding father whose new book is *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*.

Lanier, who met Trump a couple of times back in the real estate developer's New York heyday, thinks the president's addiction to tweeting is rewiring his brain in a negative way.

As Trump picks up speed on Twitter, the Oval Office is becoming a Skinner box. Like other "behaviour modification empires," as Lanier calls social media sites, Twitter offers positive reinforcement for negativity. "Twitter addicts take on this kind of nervous, paranoid, cranky quality, sort of itching for a fight," Lanier said in an interview. "Trump used to be in on his own joke, and he no longer is. He's just striking out every morning, fishing for somebody to harass or seeing who's harassing him."

"I do think it creates a terrifying situation because somebody who is addicted is easy to manipulate. It's easier for the North Koreans to lie to him than if he wasn't an addict."

Hostility

The hostility and insensitivity that flow so easily from his fingers now define his immigration policy. I saw a report on PBS about a mother on the border who was reunited with her 14-month-old child after 85 days. "The child continued to cry when we got home and would hold on to my leg and would not let me go," the mother wrote. "When I took off his clothes, he was full of dirt and lice. It seemed like they had not bathed him the 85 days he was away from us."

On the occasion of America's 242nd birthday, we must ask who we are, if we can see accounts of infants snatched from their parents and returned covered in lice, and not worry about our country's soul.

Trump has certainly made political discourse more crude and belligerent. But is he making the whole country meaner, coarser and less empathetic? Or was the pump primed for a political figure like him because the internet had already made America meaner, coarser and less empathetic? Did they happen simultaneously?

Launching a comeback, Twitter recast itself in a harsher light. The company, the *New York Times's* Farhad Manjoo wrote, "tweaked its central feed to highlight virality, turning Twitter into a bruising barroom brawl featuring the most contentious political and cultural fights of the day".

Manjoo told me: "Now when you log in, they show you the most interesting tweets you missed while you were away. They highlight the tweets of people arguing, the big news brawls of the day, as a way to engage the rest of the audience. That makes it a



“Trump is a troll - both by temperament and by habit. His tweets and offhand taunts are the very essence of trolling - the lies, the scorn, the invective, the trash talk, and the rabid non-sequiturs”

trash talk, and the rabid non-sequiturs of an angry, aggrieved, isolated, and deeply self-absorbed adolescent who lives in a self-constructed bubble and gets the attention he craves from bashing his enemies and trailing clouds of outrage and dismay in his path." Be best! We have a president who is an addict running a country overflowing with opioid and social media addicts. (In an interview with the *Times* a few days ago, tech reporter Nellie Bowles said she dealt with her smartphone addiction by grayling out her screen, noting, "these phones are designed to look and work like slot machines, hit us with bright colors and little pings to activate and please," and "we all have to figure out little hooks to pull back into the physical world".)

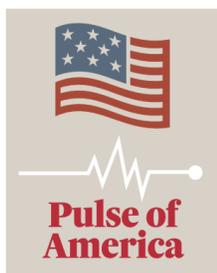
Art Markman, a psychology professor at the University of Texas at Austin who has lamented the extraordinarily aggressive online comments at media outlets, hopes people will resume a sense of decorum when they realise "there's very little long-term profit from a viral tweet".

"We don't have to cater to those megalomaniacal instincts," he said. "We can be better than that."

But I don't think Trump can. He figured out how to dominate Twitter, not with the cool-kid arch style of making fun of someone, but by being school-yard-bully mean. His tweets propel the story on cable news and shape the narrative for reporters - who are addicted to the First Addict. For Trump, who is also an attention addict, that is about as holistic as it's going to get. - *New York Times* service



'It is so cruel, to lock up someone who is working'



Suzanne Lynch
in Eloy, Arizona

Families visit loved ones detained in an Ice facility as policies tighten

As the sun inches higher across the empty blue sky of southern Arizona, a steady stream of cars drive through the gates of the Eloy Detention Centre.

The institution, half-way between Arizona's capital, Phoenix, and the city of Nogales on the Mexican border, is one of hundreds of detention facilities run by the US government's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency.

It is located in an isolated area of desert shrubland a few kilometres north of the Interstate 10 that cuts through the state; a freeway linking Phoenix with Nogales and connecting the US and Mexico.

If you listen closely you can hear the sound of trucks and freight trains ferrying goods and exports to and from the border, a material reminder of the close ties of trade and commerce that bind these contiguous countries together.

But for the thousands of people detained in Eloy, the outside world is little more than a memory. For many - in particular those detained in this concrete immigration centre for years - time has stood still.

On this hot summer Sunday, detainees are outside in the yard playing ball and exercising. It's 10am and already the temperature is approaching 40 degrees. From behind the razor wire the plaintive sound of singing can be heard.

Outside the centre, 20-year-old Leslie Rosales and her family are on their way to visit their mother, who has been living in the detention centre for two years.

"She was a manager at McDonald's but one day the ICE officers came and arrested her," says Rosales, holding her one-year-old daughter, Mia. Rosales, who also works in McDonald's, believes someone tipped off the authorities, prompting her mother's arrest.

Rosales and her two sisters were born in the US and have full citizenship. Her parents were born in Mexico and crossed the border without papers 30 years ago.

'Cruel' locking-up

Her mother's detention has left their father heartbroken. A quiet man in his 50s with little English, he has made the journey with the family to Eloy from their home in Mesa, the Phoenix suburb an hour north.

Rosales says her mother spends most of her time sleeping. Her case is tied up in the court system, and they have an attorney working on her behalf. Their family is allowed one hour-long visit a week. "It is the same as a prison," she says, pointing to the heavily fortified women's block. "It is so cruel, to lock up someone who is working hard, supporting a family."

While her mother was arrested during the Obama presidency, Rosales blames much of today's problems on President Donald Trump. "Things have got worse since his election. His own wife is an immigrant, you know. It is not right that he has such openly racist views, and represents our country."

Patricia Guadarrama Sánchez has also made the trip to Eloy to visit a family member. Her daughter Arianna was arrested in February and is being detained in the facility. In the meantime, Sánchez is minding her two grandchildren - Arianna's 10-year-old son Shamari and eight-year-old daughter Kamile - who have just been to visit their mother. Because they were born in



the US, they are American citizens. "We see her for an hour, and we are only allowed to hug her at the end," says Sánchez.

Sánchez, who is 49, moved to the US 20 years ago from Mexico, and has been working for an assisted living centre in Phoenix. She shows me her employment authorisation card, which allows her to work in the US but does not allow her re-entry to the country.

In addition to her daughter's arrest, her husband was deported last May, after more than 20 years living in the US. She chokes up as she tells me how he was arrested. "He was dropping the grandchildren to school when the ICE officers arrested him. He called me from a prison in Phoenix saying he did not know what was going on. We learned he had a court date this March but our attorney never communicated to us that he was supposed to be in court."



“I was brought here when I was three years of age. America is my home, I live and work here, but I don't know what the future holds for me”
Dreamer Alex Valenzuela

Sánchez says her husband was taken from his Phoenix cell within hours of his arrest and flown back to Mexico. He is currently in Nogales, on the Mexican side of the border. "My attorney says he must stay three or four years in Mexico before coming back. I don't know what to do," she says, through tears.

The situation facing Rosales and Sánchez is reflected in many states across the US's border as Mr Trump's approach to illegal immigration takes root.

While arrests and deportations have occurred for decades and throughout different administrations in Washington, changes at state level in Arizona in recent years have led to an increase in deportations here, in tandem with the immigration crackdown at federal level under Mr Trump.

Under a new law, police officers can inquire about the immigration status of anyone they en-

counter as part of their regular activities, even though immigration and deportation is technically a federal, not a state issue. The practice of local police co-operating with ICE officers is the opposite of what is happening in so-called "sanctuary cities" such as Boston and San Francisco, where state law enforcement agencies refuse to do the work of federal immigration officials.

Immigration has long been part of the fabric of this corner of southern Arizona. The border with Mexico is embedded in the landscape to the point that it can be hard to see where the US ends and Mexico begins.

Some 160km south of Eloy is the border city of Nogales, which spans two countries. The US side of Nogales lies in the jurisdiction of Santa Cruz county, Arizona; Nogales, Mexico, is a stone's throw across the border.

A 3m-high metal wall separates the two. In many ways Nogales is a typical border town - US border control officers police the official border control posts, checking IDs and number plates as the occupants of a long line of cars wait to cross.

Lost children

Trucks and freight vehicles are channelled through a different entry and exit route. But in other ways, Nogales is very different from most other parts of the US. The streets are lined with small shops selling Mexican wares and cheap American products. Most residents are Mexican or South American, and speak only Spanish.

A few hundred metres from the border crossing, one company offers one-way bus tickets to Phoenix. Posters around the town display pictures of lost children who have been separated from parents.

For many, Nogales is a place of transit - a place where they cross from Mexico into America, hoping never to return. Many of the undocumented immigrants who enter the US through Nogales are moved to detention centres such as Eloy once they are assessed by immigration officers at the border.

■ Leslie Rosales with her daughter Mia outside Eloy Detention Centre, where her mother has spent two years.
PHOTOGRAPHS: SUZANNE LYNCH

centres in Phoenix.

Alex Valenzuela is one of the many immigrants who crossed through Nogales and settled in the Tucson area. He is a "Dreamer" - one of the hundreds of thousands of people given sanctuary by former president Barack Obama.

Under the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (Daca) programme, immigrants brought to the US as children received a two-year renewable permit legally allowing them to live in the United States. Valenzuela's next renewal date is 2019, but he is worried about his long-term status following Mr Trump's decision to end the programme last year.

Legal limbo

With no new legislation forthcoming from Congress, he finds himself in legal limbo, despite having grown up in the US and attending school and college there. "My sisters were born here, but I was brought here when I was three years of age. America is my home, I live and work here, but I don't know what the future holds for me. The country has changed under Donald Trump. It's frightening," he says.

As media attention on the plight of families separated by Trump's immigration policies recedes, many hope the plight of America's immigrants is not forgotten.

Apart from the Sunday visits by family members, the other main visitors to the Eloy detention centre are attorneys working for the many immigrant charity and representative groups around the country. With no end in sight to the Trump administration's crackdown on immigration, the residents of Eloy detention centre are placing their faith in the legal system, and hoping that some day their legal status will be resolved.

Tomorrow

"Sheriff Joe" Arpaio, one of the most infamous law enforcement officials in the US

→ For the first time in the Brexit process the pressure and spotlight have shifted on to the EU. How will they respond?
Chris Johns, Business Today