

## U.S. HOPES BOOM IN NATURAL GAS CAN CURB PUTIN

### EASING YOKE ON UKRAINE

#### A Push to Start Exports to Europe as a Lever Against Russia

By CORAL DAVENPORT  
and STEVEN ERLANGER

WASHINGTON — The crisis in Crimea is heralding the rise of a new era of American energy diplomacy, as the Obama administration tries to deploy the vast new supply of natural gas in the United States as a weapon to undercut the influence of the Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin, over Ukraine and Europe.

The crisis has accelerated a State Department initiative to export American natural gas to Europe as a lever against Russia, which supplies 60 percent of Ukraine's natural gas and has a history of cutting off the supply during conflicts. This week, Gazprom, Russia's state-run natural gas company, said it would no longer provide gas at a discount rate to Ukraine, a move reminiscent of more serious Russian cut-offs of natural gas to Ukraine and elsewhere in Europe in 2006, 2008 and 2009.

The administration's strategy is to act as swiftly and aggressively as possible to weaken any moves by Mr. Putin in future years. Although Russia is still the world's biggest exporter of natural gas, the United States recently surpassed it to become the world's largest natural gas producer, largely because of breakthroughs in hydraulic fracturing technology, known as fracking.

"We're engaging from a different position because we're a much larger energy producer," said Jason Bordoff, a former senior director for energy and climate change on the White House's National Security Council.

The administration's strategy has attracted unlikely allies, including major oil and gas producers like ExxonMobil and Republican leaders on Capitol Hill, who this week have urged the ad-

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**DIPLOMATIC PUSH** An American effort to broker the first face-to-face meeting between Russia and Ukraine failed, but more talks are planned. PAGE A15

**ON RUSSIAN TV** Influential channels offer nightmarish images of events in Ukraine. PAGE A15

## With Move to Limit Gun Sales, Facebook Is Caught in Debate

By DAVID STREITFELD

Facebook wants to unite the world so everyone can talk about everything. One of the big things people want to talk about, it seems, is guns.

The social network is one of the world's largest marketplaces for guns. A DoubleStar AR-15 is offered for \$650. A raspberry-colored Taurus pistol can be had for \$239.95, a Bushmaster M4 "fresh from the box" for \$1,200. "We've got over 550 guns and we need buyers!" posts a Louisiana seller.

Under pressure from law enforcement and advocacy groups, Facebook took steps Wednesday to regulate gun sales on its site as well as on its photo-sharing app Instagram. Pages advertising guns for sale, for instance, will be shielded from minors.

Facebook does not want its growing prominence as a private



CHERYL SENTER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

### Vermont Town Faces Heroin Scourge

Stephanie Predel says she is now off heroin, but the Bennington, Vt., area, where she lives, is gripped by an epidemic. Page A16.

## Some Policies Get More Time In Health Shift

By ROBERT PEAR

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration, grappling with continued political fallout over its health care law, said Wednesday that it would allow consumers to renew health insurance policies that did not comply with the new law for two more years, pushing the issue well beyond this fall's midterm elections.

The reprieve was the latest in a series of waivers, deadline extensions and unilateral actions by the administration that have drawn criticism from the law's opponents and supporters, many saying President Obama was testing the limits of his powers.

The action reflects the difficulties Mr. Obama has faced in trying to build support for the Affordable Care Act and the uproar over his promise — which he later acknowledged had been overstated — that people who liked their insurance plans could keep them, no matter what.

Under pressure from Democratic candidates, who are struggling to defend the president's signature domestic policy, Mr. Obama in November announced a one-year reprieve for insurance

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## A New SAT Aims to Realign With Schoolwork

By TAMAR LEWIN

Saying its college admission exams do not focus enough on the important academic skills, the College Board announced on Wednesday a fundamental rethinking of the SAT, ending the longstanding penalty for guessing wrong, cutting obscure vocabulary words and making the essay optional.

The president of the College Board, David Coleman, criticized his own test, the SAT, and its main rival, the ACT, saying that both had "become disconnected from the work of our high schools."

In addition, Mr. Coleman announced programs to help low-

income students, who will now be given fee waivers allowing them to apply to four colleges at no charge. And even before the new exam is introduced, in the spring of 2016, the College Board, in partnership with Khan Academy, will offer free online practice problems and instructional videos showing how to solve them.

The changes are extensive: The SAT's rarefied vocabulary challenges will be replaced by words that are common in college courses, like "empirical" and "synthesis." The math questions, now scattered across many topics, will focus more narrowly on linear equations, functions and proportional thinking. The use of a calculator will no longer be al-

lowed on some of the math sections.

The new exam will be available on paper and computer, and the scoring will revert to the old 1,600-point scale — from 2,400 — with top scores of 800 on math and 800 on what will now be called "evidence-based reading and writing." The optional essay, which strong writers may choose to do, will have a separate score.

Once the pre-eminent college admissions exam, the SAT has lost ground to the ACT, which is based more directly on high school curriculums and is now taken by a slightly higher number of students. Last year, 1.8 million students took the ACT and 1.7

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ADREES LATIF/REUTERS

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo with Mayor Bill de Blasio after the mayor's inauguration on Jan. 1.

## Cuomo Burnishes His Brand, Using Mayor as Foil

This article is by Thomas Kaplan, Susanne Craig and Michael M. Grynbaum.

ALBANY — In his first two months in office, Mayor Bill de Blasio has found himself repeatedly at odds with New York's governor, Andrew M. Cuomo. And at every turn, Governor Cuomo has not only stymied the mayor, but also seized the moment for his own gain.

As the mayor has pushed for a tax increase on New York City's wealthiest residents, the gover-

nor has turned the tables and talked up his desire to cut taxes. When the mayor proposed raising the minimum wage in the city, the governor derided the idea as illogical.

Even the mundane municipal matter of snow removal became fodder for a Cuomo tweak; at one point, the governor seemed to imply that Mr. de Blasio had not stocked up on enough salt to respond to a recent blizzard.

Mr. Cuomo took advantage again this week, styling himself as a champion of charter schools just as Mr. de Blasio took steps to

curb their expansion. On Tuesday, he displayed an unusual verve in whipping up a crowd of thousands of charter school parents and students who gathered for a rally outside the Capitol.

A Cuomo aide was so eager to show off the size of the crowd that he encouraged a news photographer to climb through a bathroom window to capture a shot of the gathering from above.

A few blocks away, speaking at a cavernous 19th-century armory, Mr. de Blasio recited his oft-repeated argument for a tax

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#### Rare Rebuke for Obama

Seven Senate Democrats joined Republicans to reject President Obama's nominee to head the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. PAGE A16

#### Silver Lining for Tea Party

While establishment candidates in some top primary races won, Texas Republicans continued to tilt right. PAGE A16

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#### Charges in Law Firm's Failure

Three former top executives of Dewey & LeBoeuf are expected to be charged in the law firm's collapse. PAGE B1

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Testimony from Rebekah Brooks, former editor of The News of the World, offered a view of the skating-on-the-edge culture of the popular press. PAGE A6

#### 3 Pull Envoys From Qatar

Persian Gulf tensions rose after three countries withdrew envoys from Qatar over its support of Islamists. PAGE A10

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Two new series on CNN look at Chicago's gang-plagued schools and at wrongful death sentences. PAGE C1

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#### New Era At Vuitton

Nicolas Ghesquière provided a highlight of Paris Fashion Week with his debut collection for Louis Vuitton, seen as a satisfying return after his bitter departure from Balenciaga. Also, a review of the collection. PAGES E1, E13

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#### A Bumpy Trade Center Debut

Some rough workmanship in the new transportation hub detracts from what is meant to be breathtaking grandeur. Building Blocks. PAGE A25

#### G.O.P. Candidate for Governor

Rob Astorino, the Westchester County executive, is seeking to unseat Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, a Democrat. PAGE A22

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Three basketball players from Brooklyn are pursuing their goals at a junior college in Mississippi. PAGE B10

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Taxidermy, bad art, Polaroid tints: some find the filmmaker's "lovely-weird" aesthetic an inspiration for décor. PAGE D1

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Landscape designers offer solutions for a neglected corner of the yard. PAGE D1

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#### Gail Collins

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