Case No. 1:26-cv-815 (JEB)

# EXHIBIT 2

# *The 27-Year-Old Diplomat Waging Trump's Cultural War With Europe*

Five years out of college, Samuel Samson has driven the Trump administration's push to upend America's postwar relationship with Europe.

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**By Michael D. Shear, Catherine Porter, Jane Bradley and Christopher F. Schuetze**

Reporting from London, Paris and Berlin, the journalists spoke to more than two dozen American and European diplomats, lawmakers and former officials to understand how President Trump's views on Europe are turning into policy.

April 17, 2026

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When Samuel Samson, a senior adviser at the State Department, sat down privately with far-right German lawmakers in an office just steps from the White House, he was breaking with history.

For eight decades after World War II, America's foreign policy establishment had usually steered clear of Germany's hard-right parties, seeking to ensure that they never seized power again. That changed under President Trump, leading last September to Mr. Samson's meeting with Beatrix von Storch and Joachim Paul of Alternative for Germany, or AfD — a party designated as a suspected extremist organization by German intelligence.

As the meeting evolved into a general gripe session, the AfD politicians told Mr. Samson, then 26, and several other American diplomats that they feared the German government might ban their party, according to Mr. Paul and another person familiar with the conversation. The Americans railed against European regulation of social media, calling it a tool for stamping out conservative opinions. And the group discussed a bogus far-right conspiracy theory that mainstream European leaders were seeking to replace white populations with nonwhite immigrants.

"I got the impression — partly from the length of the conversation — that they were very interested in hearing from us," Mr. Paul said in an interview. "They took a lot of notes."

For much of the past year, Mr. Samson has been at the forefront of President Trump's effort to reshape America's relationship with Europe. Touring the continent, Mr. Samson has sought to cultivate Washington's ties with far-right Europeans and bolster such figures at the expense of Europe's centrist establishment.

He has shocked its mainstream leaders, many of them with decades of experience in diplomacy, by accusing them of stifling freedom and by frequently meeting with and promoting their hard-line challengers. He is just five years out of college, and he has repeatedly advocated an approach that overturns three generations of American diplomatic orthodoxy.



Mr. Samson met last fall with lawmakers from Germany's AfD party, upending decades of American policy in Europe. Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times

Last March, Mr. Samson was in London for a secret breakfast meeting with Nigel Farage, Britain's most prominent right-wing populist, to discuss abortion and censorship. In May, he was in Paris trying to convince a human rights commission that Marine Le Pen, a French far-right leader recently convicted of embezzlement, had been unjustly persecuted.

"They were looking for elements that could give credibility to this narrative," recalled Magali Lafourcade, who leads the rights commission.

It is an approach that has yet to have lasting effects on the ground. Ms. Le Pen is so far still disqualified from running for president. Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary, one of the far-right European leaders praised by Mr. Samson, lost power in a recent vote. And some far-right politicians in Europe have indicated that they now see association with Mr. Trump as a liability rather than an asset.

Yet this approach is core to the Trump administration's agenda in Europe.

For Mr. Samson and much of the administration, the Europe of 2026 has become a place where woke, gender-based politics is at its peak, the nanny state is empowered, and patriotism and national pride go to die. In this view, the European bureaucracy has sacrificed free speech by regulating American tech companies, an effort that includes trying to stamp out child sexual abuse imagery on social media outlets and limiting children's access to them.

"Europe has devolved into a hotbed of digital censorship, mass migration, restrictions on religious freedom, and numerous other assaults on democratic self-governance," Mr. Samson wrote in an essay posted to the State Department's official Substack account.

For most of 2025, Mr. Samson was the highest-profile diplomat wagging his finger at Europe's leaders. The delegation began to evolve in November, after the Senate confirmed Sarah Rogers as the State Department's head of public diplomacy, a much more senior government position.

She was soon in Europe, too, meeting with British diplomats in December, complaining to them about what she characterized as unchecked migration in Britain and demanding they produce statistics to prove the claim that migrants cause crime, according to four people familiar with the meeting. Her message was similar to Mr. Samson's, but with a slightly more diplomatic tone, reflecting the department's push to become more professional after the administration's chaotic beginnings.




An anti-abortion demonstration in London in September. Mr. Samson has met with Nigel Farage, Britain's most prominent right-wing populist, to discuss abortion and censorship. Mary Turner for The New York Times

Private meetings and discussions held by Mr. Samson and Ms. Rogers were described for this article by more than two dozen people, many of whom were present during the meetings and others of whom were briefed about them later. Many requested anonymity because they were not authorized to reveal the contents of the discussions.

Mr. Samson and Ms. Rogers declined to be interviewed for this article. Tommy Pigott, the deputy spokesman for the State Department, said that "Under Secretary Rogers and Senior Adviser Samson have been having these hard conversations and raising these issues. Europe and America, our relationship, and our future, will all be stronger because of it."

## 'Building the Kingdom'

The son of a Filipino mother and an American father, Mr. Samson has been religious since he was young.

In 2013, as student president of his Catholic elementary school in Houston, he spoke about having "a personal and active faith in God, a deep respect for intellectual values, a social awareness which impels to action."

In high school, he ran for student affairs council under the MAGA-inspired slogan "Make SAC Great Again," and was known for being a "Savage Conservative," according to the school newspaper. Later, he appeared to grow frustrated at the University of Texas in Austin. After working for a summer as a staffer for Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, Mr. Samson complained about racial slurs and threats he said he had received at the college because he was conservative.

"I can't walk to class in a Reagan-Bush shirt without someone screaming f-bombs at me," he told the school newspaper.



Mr. Samson, photographed while attending the University of Texas at Austin. Texas Student Media/The Daily Texan

Heidi Altman, who got to know Mr. Samson when he volunteered at a Catholic school she runs near Austin, said he was "very committed to building the kingdom. He would talk about politics and would teach the young boys that it's our job to lead

in the world, in the values God has placed on us."

Mr. Samson's faith-based activism soon led him to Washington, D.C. — and to Vice President JD Vance's orbit. Then a senator, Mr. Vance was an early supporter of American Moment, a nonprofit group that aims to create a career pipeline for young conservative leaders seeking jobs in government. Mr. Samson worked for almost three years at the group, mostly as its director of strategic partnerships.

"If you want to win this fight," Mr. Vance told the group in a video on its website, "the country's not going to be saved by people who are depressed and have given up. It's going to be saved by people who believe in the future."

When Mr. Trump returned to the White House, Mr. Samson was appointed as a senior adviser at the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

The bureau was created by Congress in 1977 to advance freedoms around the world. It made deep connections to groups committed to women's rights, gay rights, press freedoms, free elections and impartial courts.

Diplomats in the bureau looked Mr. Samson up on Google when he arrived, according to people working in the department in the time. Few had heard of him, but he told one official that he knew the vice president from his time with American Moment.

Armed with that reputation, Mr. Samson came in "guns blazing," another official recalled. Mr. Samson told some of his colleagues, the official said, that the United States had "gone woke" and that he sought to give voice to Christians and conservatives.

Nick Solheim, the chief executive of American Moment, said that Mr. Samson's government role was a "perfect fit" given his longtime focus on Christianity, free speech and Europe.




Vice President JD Vance at the Munich Security Conference last year. His speech, in which he called on European leaders to work more closely with far-right politicians, has reshaped the U.S.-Europe relationship. Sean Gallup/Getty Images

The second official, who has also since left government, recalled Mr. Samson instructing the staff to brainstorm how to punish the European Union for, as Mr. Samson saw it, restricting speech. Another former official said the office spent three months assessing if E.U. tech regulations had led to what Mr. Samson perceived as censorship.

Mr. Samson disliked that the bureau's name included a reference to human rights. He wanted to change it to the Bureau of Natural Rights, according to three former State Department employees.

To Mr. Samson and other conservatives, the concept of human rights is often a radical expression of a human-made political ideology. By contrast, they say, "natural rights" indicates something god-given.

Mr. Samson gave his staff a document, seen by The New York Times, that was titled "Natural Rights Theory." It asserted that his goal was to "prevent political ideology from distorting what is/is not a natural right."

The bureau's name was congressionally mandated, so Mr. Samson was stymied. Instead, he created the Office of Natural Rights, a unit within the bureau.

## Europe Destabilized

For much of 2025, Mr. Samson traveled across Europe, putting his ideas into action.

One of the first people he tried to help was Ms. Le Pen, France's veteran anti-immigrant leader, who hoped to become France's first far-right president since World War II. She finished second to Emmanuel Macron in the country's last two presidential elections.

In April 2025, a court convicted Ms. Le Pen of overseeing an embezzlement scheme and barred her from running for another public office for five years. Though she led many polls, another run for the presidency would now require a favorable verdict from an appeal hearing.

At a May meeting with an independent commission that advises the French government on human rights, Mr. Samson advocated for Ms. Le Pen. He asked if the commission had considered intervening on Ms. Le Pen's behalf, according to Ms. Lafourcade, its director. Mr. Samson clearly viewed Ms. Le Pen as a victim, not a perpetrator, Ms. Lafourcade said.



Marine Le Pen, a far-right French leader whom Mr. Samson sought to help, sitting in the French Parliament. Gonzalo Fuentes/Reuters

Ms. Lafourcade described the hourlong conversation as "circular," and said that it had so unsettled her that she refused to have a photo taken with Mr. Samson and his colleague. After escorting the diplomats to the lobby, she said, she reported them to the French government on the grounds of potential foreign interference.

"To me, it seemed more like a search for disinformation," she said.

That same day, Mr. Samson and his colleague visited the office of Reporters Without Borders, a press freedom watchdog, according to Thibaut Bruttin, the group's director. They expressed opposition to the Digital Services Act, the E.U.'s flagship tech regulation, Mr. Bruttin said.

To its European backers, the act is part of a broader attempt to protect users from abuse. It requires social media companies to police their platforms for illicit content, hate speech and misinformation — or risk hefty fines. Conservative U.S. administration officials like Mr. Samson say the act endangers free speech by preventing Europe's right-wing voices from speaking freely online.

During the meeting, Mr. Samson "said France was gradually becoming North Korea," Mr. Bruttin recalled.

By the final weeks of the year, Mr. Samson's aggressive approach on matters like tech regulation had been echoed in official U.S. policy — first in the president's national security strategy and then in the State Department's internal strategic plan.

In a memo sent to embassies, the department said its aim for 2026 to 2030 was to "rebuild the civilizational alliance" with European states that had been "infected with the dogma of the post-Cold War neoliberal moment."

The memo, seen by The Times, was a significant departure from previous internal directives. It instructed diplomats to "condemn anti-democratic actions which restrict free speech or the free exercise of religion" and to treat mass migration as "a threat to national cohesion, social stability, and civilizational values" across Europe.

The memo's subtext appeared clear — and alarming — for mainstream leaders in Europe. In country after country, the United States was drastically shifting its approach. Groups fighting for gender equality, women's rights, gay rights and electoral reform were out. Organizations dedicated to religious freedom, right-wing speech and fighting abortion rights were in.

The United States, under Mr. Trump, was preparing to loosen its support of the continent unless its politics shifted rightward.

## Jaws Dropped

By the end of 2025, both Mr. Samson and Ms. Rogers were both fully engaged in pushing that message, spending the final weeks of the year separately crisscrossing the continent to implement Mr. Trump's new European diplomacy.

In early December, face to face with British diplomats in London, Ms. Rogers did not hold much back. In the meeting, previously unreported, Ms. Rogers railed against migration levels in Britain, accusing migrants of stoking a crime wave.

(Crime against individuals and households has generally fallen in Britain over the past 10 years, according to official figures.) She criticized British police for arresting a comedy writer critical of advocacy for transgender rights. She insisted that the diplomats knew something was wrong with the British system, according to four people familiar with the conversation.

The British officials were left stunned.

“Jaws dropped,” one person said.

Ms. Rogers, a former First Amendment lawyer whose clients included the National Rifle Association and Charlie Kirk, the slain MAGA activist, has not always matched Mr. Samson’s most bombastic rhetoric and rarely echoes his concerns about natural rights.




Sarah Rogers answering questions from senators in Washington last year. U.S. Senate

Though Ms. Rogers, who outranks Mr. Samson, has sometimes taken an approach that is less confrontational, her focus in the first three months of 2026 remained largely the same one that the young diplomat developed through the previous year.

In his last big trip through Europe in December, Mr. Samson toured Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. It was in Hungary that Mr. Samson made his boldest public broadside against the old European order.

He gave a speech at the Hungarian Institute for International Affairs, a think tank founded by the Hungarian government.

"Clearly, this is not a Europe of free speech and self-governance," Mr. Samson said.

His new Office of Natural Rights, he said, would take "targeted action to resist traditional authoritarians and modern ideologues alike who seek to undermine these core societal goods."

Four months later, that message may not look as effective as the Trump officials had hoped.

Days before the general election in Hungary, Mr. Vance traveled to Budapest, hoping to boost Mr. Orban's re-election chances. The vice president called the Hungarian a "statesman" and one of the few leaders in Europe to "stand up for the values of Western civilization."

When Hungarian voters went to the polls last Sunday, Mr. Orban lost heavily after 16 consecutive years in power.

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A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Envoy, Five Years Out of College, Leading Cultural War in Europe