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Abstract

Although "constraint" is generally not the first word that comes to mind when one is analyzing the behavior of President Donald Trump, this chapter presents the contrarian view of a president enjoying far less freedom of maneuver than he is often perceived to possess. The constraints discussed herein are of two sorts. One constraint can said to be exogenous to the president, and the other endogenous. Each, albeit in different ways, affects both the manner in which Trump approaches his responsibilities (as he takes these to be) and the way in which others interpret his decision-making; together, the dual constraints act to shed light on the rudiments of the president's "operational code" (or worldview), especially insofar as it concerns America's relations with allies.

America's Surprisingly "Constrained" Presidency: Implications for Transatlantic Relations

David G. Haglund

Introduction

If ever there was a truism regarding the 44 individuals who have occupied the American presidency since the inception of the republic, it would appear to be that the current one, the 45th president, is such a special case that he really *has* to be considered sui generis.[1] There has never been anyone quite like him sitting in the highest office in the land, so

[1]See Arthur Paulson, *Donald Trump and the Prospect for American Democracy: An Unprecedented President in an Age of Polarization* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). Although there have been 45 administrations, an enumerative oddity results in there having been only 44 actual human beings presiding over these administrations. This relates to the manner in which Grover Cleveland's time in power is assessed. Because he served two *discontinuous* terms—elected in 1884, failing to be reelected in 1888, and regaining the White House in 1892—his reign is counted as two separate administrations, thus he is both America's 22nd president and its 24th. In contrast, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was elected *four* consecutive times from 1932 through 1944, is counted as only one president, the country's 32nd.

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the consensus view maintains. This is so, whether one believes that Donald J. Trump has been doing a wonderful job or an atrocious one. His admirers and critics alike agree that this polarizing president has been cut from a decidedly different bolt of cloth than any predecessor, no matter from which party.[2] What admirers like to stress, namely, Trump's willingness to shatter taboos and venture where no others have dared to go, his detractors chalk up to his simply being out of control.[3] In either case, this president is regarded to be free of the constraints that normally encumber the ability of a chief executive to translate every policy whim into a political outcome.

In this chapter, I am going to take a skeptical stance regarding the image of Trump unchained (some say, unhinged). In doing so I will invoke two sets of constraints—one derived from analytical categories derivative of the broad sweep of US foreign policy, the other dating from the decade of the 1980s. What I will *not* be addressing are two very recent, and *constitutional*, constraints upon the Trump presidency. Those two recent constraining developments reflect the reality that America's political system of checks and balances continues, despite many alarms to the contrary, to function.[4] The first was the Democrats' capture of the House of Representatives in the midterm election of November 2018. Then, the following April, came the appearance of the long-awaited (if heavily edited, or to use the current term of art, "redacted") report produced by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III, probing allegations

[2] For assessments, pro and con, see Victor Davis Hanson, *The Case for Trump* (New York: Basic Books, 2019); Bob Woodward, *Fear: Trump in the White House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

[3] This latter, best exemplified in Michael Wolff, *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* (New York: Henry Holt, 2018).

[4] Regarding those checks and balances, the locus classicus is Edward S. Corwin, *The President: Office and Powers*, 4th rev. ed. (New York: New York University Press, 1957). Corwin is remembered especially for observing that when it came to matters of foreign policy, the Constitution offered the executive and legislative branches of government a "permanent invitation to struggle." Others have lately been arguing that the "struggle" has been increasingly a one-sided contest, favoring the executive; see, for example, Barbara Hinckley, *Less Than Meets the Eye: Foreign Policy Making and the Myth of the Assertive Congress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Douglas L. Kriner, *After the Rubicon: Congress, Presidents, and the Politics of Waging War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); and Walter A. McDougall, *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy: How America's Civil Religion Betrayed the National Interest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

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whether the Trump campaign had colluded with Russian operatives to influence the outcome of the 2016 presidential ballot.[5]

Important as these are, they are not the sort of constraints upon which I concentrate in this chapter. Instead, I will restrict my focus to a pair of *extra-constitutional* sources of constraint upon the presidency of Donald Trump, and to demonstrate how each of these can be said to have had a bearing upon American foreign policy over the past few years, with a particular focus upon the country's relationship with its transatlantic allies. One constraint might be said to be exogenous to the president, and the other endogenous. Each, albeit in different ways, affects both the manner in which Trump approaches his responsibilities (as he takes these to be) and the way in which others interpret his decision-making; together, the dual constraints act to shed light on the rudiments of the president's "operational code" (or worldview).[6] The section immediately below examines the constraint that I characterize as "exogenous." Let us see what it entails.

Paradigm Constraint: The Geopolitical Significance of Eponym

The category of exogenous constraint employed in this section of the chapter draws its inspiration from notions regarding "ideal types," first introduced by the German sociologist, Max Weber, as a means of assisting investigators in carrying out their task of characterizing and assessing social phenomena. As Weber employed them, ideal types owed their existence to the need for scholars to be able to synthesize meaning out of

[5] While the Mueller report ultimately found that the Trump campaign had not colluded with Russian state figures to influence the election, the president's own reaction upon learning in May 2017 that Mueller had been appointed to lead the investigation into the collusion allegations spoke volumes about his own perception of the tenuousness of his situation. Upon discovering from his then attorney general, Jeff Sessions, of Mueller's appointment at a meeting in the Oval Office, Trump responded dejectedly, "Oh my God. This is terrible. This is the end of my presidency. I'm fucked." Quoted in Peter Baker and Maggie Haberman, "A Portrait of the White House and Its Culture of Dishonesty," *New York Times*, April 18, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/18/us/politics/white-house-mueller-report.html?emc=edit_th_190419&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=621718380419.

[6] On this concept, see Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13 (June 1969): 190–222.

a universe of discrete, variegated, and confusing phenomena; they would serve as indispensable templates for advancing knowledge.[7] In the study of American foreign policy, ideal types have often had a presence, even if at times more of an unspoken than a spoken one. During the closing years of the Cold War, for instance, John Lewis Gaddis betrayed inspiration of a Weberian origin when distinguishing between what he held to be the two chief scholarly approaches to the study of US foreign policy, called by him (borrowing his rubrics from J. H. Hexter), "lumpers" and "splitters." The former camp consisted of synthesizers for whom ideal types, whether so named or not, constituted an essential component of their methodology; the latter represented a body of analytical investigators smitten with the charms of rampant disaggregation.[8]

Another, more recent, Weberian is Walter Russell Mead, who has provided an extremely useful, even if far from perfect, metaphorical typology of America's foreign policy, in a book that can be taken as representing the "lumper" approach on steroids—save that this time, it is the *decisionmakers* rather than the scholarly and policy analysts who are situated within constructs that illuminate the boundary conditions within which they operate. Writing at the start of the twenty-first century, Mead invited his readers, both abroad and at home, to rethink what they believed they knew about US foreign policy, going back to the very dawn of the country's independent existence. To both American and European observers, Mead delivered a stern reminder: you do not know as much as you think you know. He bade them to realize that America's foreign policy drew from a long established legacy of policy experience, and sometimes wisdom, such that it was simply wrong to imagine that *nothing* from the pre-Second World War decades could possibly provide foreign policy guidance for an America suddenly assuming the role of superpower.

To the contrary, Mead reached back to the past to produce four ideal types (he called these "paradigms") that, over the long sweep of American history, have formed the basis of the country's strategic culture, either on their own or in combination with another paradigm. At various times, and in differing circumstances, these were each to provide effective guidance for the national interest. There have been four, and only four, such

[7] Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed. and trans. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York: Free Press, 1949).

[8] John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. vii–viii.

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paradigms, each represented eponymously. In no particular chronological order, these four eponyms are the Hamiltonians, Wilsonians, Jeffersonians, and Jacksonians. Each is associated by Mead with a particularly distinctive foreign policy dispensation. Thus, for the Hamiltonians, measures that seek to promote the country's economic interests in accordance with reliance upon international law, all in close association with Great Britain, represent the epitome of sound policy. By contrast, the Wilsonians prioritize the promotion not of commercial but of political values, in particular those associated with liberal democracy, and while the fostering of their agenda need not preclude close cooperation with Great Britain on a bilateral basis, the Wilsonian preference is to "multilateralize" and institutionalize world order. Jeffersonians are, like Wilsonians, also acutely focused upon defending liberal democracy, but they believe—quite unlike the Wilsonians—that too ambitious a foreign policy, even and especially one dedicated to promoting the spread of liberal democracy, can result in the loss of democratic liberty at home. For this reason, Mead likens the Jeffersonians to American "Stalinists" in that they believe in revolution in one country only, whereas the Wilsonians are American "Trotskyites," convinced that unless liberal democracy can be spread far and wide, it will end up getting extinguished at home.[9]

The final, and in some ways the most interesting, ideal type is represented by the Jacksonians. This group is said to be most enamored and expressive of the political values of nationalism, augmented by a preference, when intervention abroad is needed to defend legitimate security interests, for the robust use of force. It is easy to see why Donald Trump so often chooses to portray his foreign policy as coming straight out of a Jacksonian playbook, and thus to be founded upon, and *bounded within*, an established paradigm that serves both to guide and to constrain policy. He calls himself unabashedly a nationalist, is highly suspicious of multilateralism, even when it takes the form of a military alliance, and for good measure he has core supporters—his celebrated "base"—said to reside in the Jacksonian heartland of America, the part of the United States often dismissed by coastal elites as "flyover" country, populated by the great

[9] Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), p. 181.

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rural unwashed.[10] If that were not enough, he hangs a portrait of Jackson on conspicuous display in the Oval Office, using it as often as he can as backdrop to visual images showing him hard at work, and somehow guided by the reassuringly restraining hand of the 7th president.

Despite this not-so-subtle attempt to market his presidency as the second coming of Andrew Jackson's—and hence not at all the frightful policy salmagundi of his critics' imaginings—there are obviously certain Jacksonian vestiges that can only correspond poorly with the Trump brand of policymaking. So important are these vestiges that they should give us reason to dismiss outright the relevance of this Weberian ideal type when it comes to understanding current American policy. The president's base might be Jacksonian; he himself is not. In fact, shocking if not scandalous as the analogy might appear to some, you could say that in certain salient respects, Donald Trump has more in common with America's 28th president, Woodrow Wilson, than with its 7th, Jackson. For starters, there is the matter of military service. Andrew Jackson was a military hero before he was anything else, and it was only because of his victory at the Battle of New Orleans that he became elevated to cult figure in early nineteenth-century America, and eventually a viable political candidate on the national stage.[11] Donald Trump, in contrast, is well known for having managed (and he was far from being alone in this) to avoid serving in the Vietnam War, his generation's equivalent to Jackson's War of 1812.[12]

Not only this, but he earned for himself a mountain of notoriety in mid-July 2015 by mocking someone who genuinely *was* a war hero and who was, in many ways, a Jacksonian icon. The target of scorn was, of

[10] On the Trump base, see Walter Russell Mead, "The Jacksonian Revolt: American Populism and the Liberal World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 96 (March/April 2017): 2–7; J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016).

[11] See John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *The Rise of Andrew Jackson: Myth, Manipulation, and the Making of Modern Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

[12] Although some of Trump's harshest critics like to consider him a "draft-dodger," he managed quite legally to avoid being sent to Vietnam, initially by availing himself of a student deferment from conscription (the famous "2-S" category) and upon its expiry, apparently managing to secure a "1-Y" medical assessment from his draft board, because of bone spurs in the heel of one foot. This condition, while exempting him from conscription for overseas service, would have placed him in a call-up category should, for instance, the Viet Cong have stormed the beaches of Long Island.

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course, Senator John McCain, whose imprisonment and torture at the hands of his North Vietnamese captors discommended him in the eyes of then-candidate Trump, who professed not to regard POWs as heroes![13] This is why some observers have been wont to conclude that to the extent the 45th president could be labeled "Jacksonian" because of any character traits he might possess, it has more to do with his resemblance to the personal quirkiness of fellow entertainer *Michael* Jackson than any of the steadfast martial qualities of his distant predecessor in the executive office, Andrew Jackson.

But to remark that Trump may bear less resemblance to Andrew Jackson than he and others like to pretend is not necessarily to establish that Mead's Wilsonian ideal type makes a better fit for the current chief executive. Indeed, many who regard with a certain fondness America's 28th president would be very puzzled, if they were not so outraged, by the mere hint that Trump and Wilson could have *anything* in common, given that the latter is usually associated with "liberal internationalism" and the former with its diametric opposite of "illiberal nationalism," to such an extent that he can routinely be taken to be the "anti-Wilsonian."[14]

Trump as "Wilsonian"? How do I dare, in this section, to suggest the relevance of a Wilsonian motif, and how might this be considered helpful in understanding the current crisis in transatlantic relations? There are a pair of personal qualities that suggest a basis for comparability between the 28th and 45th presidents, but they do not necessarily have any discernible bearing upon transatlantic security relations, so they will only be mentioned here in passing. One of these personal qualities concerns the issue of racism. Whether or not Donald Trump *is* the "racist" many of his harshest critics insist he must be, there can be no question that no other president besides Woodrow Wilson has *ever*, in the past century, been caught up in discussions of racism to anything like the extent of Donald Trump. He may not be the racist Wilson is widely considered to

[13] According to Trump, the only reason McCain was considered by some war hero is because he was captured; but as far as he himself was concerned, McCain "is not a war hero.… I like people who weren't captured." See "Donald Trump: John McCain 'Is a War Hero Because He Was Captured'," *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 2015, https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-donald-trump-john-mccain-20150718-story.html.

[14] Steven Metz, "How Trump's Anti-Wilsonian Streak May Revolutionize U.S. Strategy," *World Politics Review*, April 21, 2017, https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/21914/how-trump-s-anti-wilsonian-streak-may-revolutionize-u-s-strategy.

have been, but he certainly has a knack for making many people think he is.[15]

Yet another Wilson comparison, similarly unflattering to either president, comes easily to mind. In the case of each leader, critics have not been shy to highlight what are to be taken to be defects of personality that can render their decision-making less "rational" than would normally be desired or assumed in a president. As with the issue of racism, so too is it with that of postulated psychological dysfunctionality. Wilson was seen by critics as being, among other things, possessed of a God-given conviction that he and only he could set the world to rights, once he opted to take America into the First World War in 1917.[16] For his part, Trump is often adjudged to be suffering from some psychological affliction(s) primarily

[15] Wilson has longtime been considered by many scholars to have been the most frankly representative example of a racist president since before the Civil War. See Kathleen L. Wolgemuth, "Woodrow Wilson and Federal Segregation," *Journal of Negro History* 44 (April 1959): 158–173; Nancy J. Weiss, "The Negro and the New Freedom: Fighting Wilsonian Segregation," *Political Science Quarterly* 84 (March 1969): 61–79; Morton Sosna, "The South in the Saddle: Racial Politics During the Wilson Years," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 54 (Autumn 1970): 30–49; and Richard M. Abrams, "Woodrow Wilson and the Southern Congressmen, 1913–1916," *Journal of Southern History* 22 (November 1956): 417–437.

[16] See for this psychoanalytical critique, Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullitt, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson, Twenty-Eighth President of the United States: A Psychological Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), as well as the somewhat less vitriolic but still harsh assessments of Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study* (New York: John Day, 1956); and Bernard Brodie, "A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Woodrow Wilson," *World Politics* 9 (April 1957): 413–422. Other writers have located what they took to be the problem not in Wilson's psychological condition but in his neurological one; for examples, see Edwin A. Weinstein, "Woodrow Wilson's Neurological Illness," *Journal of American History* 57 (September 1970): 324–351; as well as Weinstein, James William Anderson, and Arthur S. Link, "Woodrow Wilson's Political Personality: A Reappraisal," *Political Science Quarterly* 93 (Winter 1978–1979): 585–598. A judicious summary of the contending camps—the psychoanalytical versus the neurological—is found in Dorothy Ross, "Woodrow Wilson and the Case for Psychohistory," *Journal of American History* 69 (December 1982): 659–668. Finally, it should not be imagined Wilson has lacked for defenders against the charge that he was wrong in the head, with his most notable defender remarking wryly that for "a mentally unbalanced person, Wilson had a remarkable career. Somehow, he managed to make distinguished contributions to the four separate fields of scholarship, higher education, domestic politics, and diplomacy." Arthur S. Link, "The Case for Woodrow Wilson," *Harper's Magazine* 234 (April 1967): 85–93, quote at p. 93.

manifested through narcissistic impulses, though hardly of any God-given provenance, since unlike Wilson, Trump is not much of a church-goer.[17]

There is a third, and much more relevant, reason for daring to suggest a Wilsonian analogy for Trump, a reason relating more to policy than to personality. Although no one seems to remember this, it is important nonetheless: Woodrow Wilson happened to be the first president to extol publicly the virtues of "America First"—employing those exact words in a June 1916 address in Philadelphia to implore his countrymen to put America *first* in their affections. To the president, America First meant the "duty of every American to exalt the national consciousness by pacifying his own motives and exhibiting his own devotion."[18] In short, they should forget about their ancestral homelands locked in a struggle in the European civil war that broke out two years earlier, and give all of their affection to their new country, America.

Trump's borrowing of America First phraseology is usually thought to draw inspiration not from its earliest, Wilsonian, instantiation, but from its second appearance in foreign policy debates, during the early stage of the Second World War, in the year prior to the Pearl Harbor attack. We regard this second iteration of the catchphrase to have been a recipe for disaster, given how tightly associated have been, in historical memory as well as in fact, the America First Committee, whose star attraction was the aviator Charles A. Lindbergh, and the persistence of America's continued aloofness from the European balance of power until 1941.[19] This is why, each time that Trump intones the two words, they are taken as proof positive that he is an isolationist bent on withdrawing America from the world.

Despite their being arrayed on decidedly different ends of the "internationalism-isolationism" continuum, there is one way in which both Wilson and Trump can be considered similar. Neither has had a

[17] Illustratively, see Brandy Lee, et al., *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 Psychiatrists and Mental Health Experts Discuss a President* (New York: St. Martin's, 2017).

[18] Quoted in A. Scott Berg, *Wilson* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2013), p. 397.

[19] For useful assessments of the impact of America First at the time, see in particular two books by Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940–1941* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953); *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974). Also see Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966).

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very soft spot in his heart for multilateral alliances. Wilson was convinced that alliances were a leading cause of war in general, and certainly of the most recent one specifically. What he wanted was hardly to perpetuate the continuation, after the fighting in Europe ended in 1918, of the de facto but real wartime alliance between the USA, the UK, and France. Instead, he wanted to overthrow the age-old balance of power mechanism in its entirety, replacing it with a novel vision of "collective security" that by its very nature stood as the negation of collective-defense structures such as alliances.[20] This may not have made him an isolationist; but by the same token it would be next to impossible to construe him as being a champion of multilateral alliances.[21]

Nor would anyone wish to defend the proposition that Donald Trump is a big fan of such alliances. This is not the same, however, as saying that the current president is an isolationist. He may take a dim view of multilateralism and institutionalism, but there are, to him, other ways for America to have a continued presence in the world. The principal such way, for Trump, is bilateralism. To understand his preference for bilateralism as well as his thinly disguised disregard for the transatlantic alliance as a multilateral entity, we need now to turn to the second set of extra-constitutional constraints upon the president. This is the set of endogenous constraints stemming from the 1980s, Trump's formative decade.

Pitkin Not Wordsworth: The Ongoing Significance of the 1980s for Donald Trump

The poet William Wordsworth may have been on to something when he generalized about the child being father to the man; but in the particular case of Donald Trump's operational code, it would be hard to

[20] On collective security as the "essence" of Wilsonianism, see John A. Thompson, "Wilsonianism: The Dynamics of a Conflicted Concept," *International Affairs* 86 (January 2010): 27–47.

[21] Lloyd E. Ambrosius, "Wilson, the Republicans, and French Security After World War I," *Journal of American History* 59 (September 1972): 341–352. Wilson agreed, only reluctantly, that the tripartite alliance so desired by France should be incorporated into the Versailles treaty, but when the US Senate failed to ratify the latter, the former also became a dead letter. See Louis A. R. Yates, *The United States and French Security, 1917–1921: A Study in American Diplomatic History* (New York: Twayne, 1957); Walter A. McDougall, *France's Rhineland Diplomacy, 1914–1924: The Last Bid for a Balance of Power in Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

improve upon a different cultural idiom, Walter Pitkin's one about life beginning at forty.[22] This section on "endogenous" constraint is going to concentrate upon the 1980s, and to make the claim that in the intellectual development of Donald Trump, the decade in which he turned forty (in 1986) was to have a powerful impact upon his future attitude toward the transatlantic alliance. There are two reasons for the enduring constraint imposed by this particular bit of chronology. The first relates to the publication of a book that provides a remarkable window into the "diplomatic" style of the future president. The second is intimately connected with the debates about a postulated American "decline" that featured so centrally in foreign policy discussions of the Cold War's last decade. For reasons related to constraints of my own (space), I concentrate on the first of these only.[23]

The book, of course, is the part "autobiography," part extended pep talk, he co-authored with Tony Schwartz, published to reasonable fanfare in 1987, under the title, *Trump: The Art of the Deal*.[24] It is unclear how much of the book was actually written by its principal protagonist and anointed hero; Schwartz would later insist that while most of the sentences were of his own doing, the deeds and thoughts recorded in the book were Trump's. Sometimes dismissed as a work of self-adulation and therefore of not much use to serious analysts, the book actually helps us make sense of how the future president would see the world of diplomacy. Its pages are replete with various tales of how Trump managed to come out on top in most of the dramas recounted, almost all involving some aspect of real-estate transactions in the greater New York area (with one foray into the world of sport). One chapter stands out: "Trump Cards: The Elements of the Deal."[25] Somewhat less modestly than the famous Decalogue ghost-written millennia earlier by Moses, the Trump list of

[22] Associated with the American psychologist, Walter B. Pitkin, *Life Begins at Forty* (New York: McGraw Hill/Whittlesey House, 1932). William Wordsworth's 1802 poem, *My Heart Leaps Up*, is the source of the line, "the Child is father of the Man."

[23] Readers interested in a sprightly review of the recurring bouts of "declinism" in America should consult Josef Joffe, *The Myth of America's Decline: Politics, Economics, and a Half Century of False Prophecies* (New York: Liveright, 2014).

[24] Donald J. Trump, with Tony Schwartz, *Trump: The Art of the Deal* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987).

[25] Ibid., 45–63.

commandments actually numbers eleven, and while many of these contribute more to befuddlement than to wisdom, there are some precepts that speak volumes about the future foreign policy orientation of Donald Trump, and are well worth pondering.

Three especially come to mind, Trump's fifth, eighth, and tenth commandments (respectively, "use your leverage," "fight back," and "contain the costs"). The three together can easily be considered generative of a trio of policy implications that, three decades later, would feature so centrally in the Trump administration's "dealings" with transatlantic allies. Using one's leverage, in the case of a superpower such as the United States, corresponds closely to a preference for *bilateral* rather than multilateral dealings, for in the case of the former, vast disparities in power can reasonably be assumed to yield more favorable outcomes than would be anticipated under multilateralism. In particular, the use of leverage bilaterally could be expected to result in the kind of "reciprocity" that this president makes no secret about desiring, expressed colloquially in the idea that "if you do me a solid, I will do you one in return." Bilateralism is not, despite what many critics of it believe, the same as unilateralism; much less is it a synonym for isolationism. But by the same token, its more explicit expectations regarding the working of reciprocity does tend to fly in the face of multilateralism's expectation that reciprocity should be "diffuse" rather than direct, with no requirement that tit be compensated by tat in each and every instance.[26]

The eighth Trumpian commandment, to fight back, has also been said to act as a constraint (albeit not a healthy one) on the president's foreign policy. The argument is that America's relationships with traditional transatlantic allies grow unnecessarily strained because the president simply cannot resist going for the digital jugular in response to real or imagined slights coming from fellow leaders in allied countries. Disagreement on policy matters is nothing new, as between leaders of what has been

[26] Some scholars hold diffuse reciprocity to be one of the three defining characteristics of a multilateral order, with the two other stipulatory elements being indivisibility and nondiscrimination. See Lisa L. Martin, "Interests, Power, and Multilateralism," *International Organization* 46 (Autumn 1992): 765–792; John Gerard Ruggie, "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution," *International Organization* 46 (Summer 1992): 561–598.

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termed the "democratic alliance."[27] Indeed, the saving grace of this kind of alliance, it is held, inheres in attackers and "attackees" understanding the rules of civil disagreement; in short, while they frequently argue, they also realize that their shared political values and, to some, their collective identity, minimize the downside risk of their bickering.[28]

One obvious negative consequence that this particular Trumpian tick from the 1980s has had upon America's relations with its traditional NATO allies has been to stir up anew the old "anti-American" bogey that always seems to sleep with one eye open within the confines of the transatlantic region. On the assumption that America, being so powerful, can easily afford to brush aside the consequences of annoying allies (often, many of them feel, gratuitously so) there need be no lasting harm associated with the current upsurge in anti-Americanism within important parts of the West, what Julia Zweig labeled, a decade or so ago, "friendly-fire" anti-Americanism.[29] But on this important question of whether American diplomacy suffers due to the unpopularity of the country's president in many (not all) allied countries, the scholars remain divided, sometimes divided between what they now think as opposed to what they thought a decade ago. A case in point is provided by two Dartmouth College IR specialists, Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth. Back in 2005, during the second term of George W. Bush, the pair were skeptical that there were any real foreign policy costs associated with what was widely taken to be the administration's "unilateralism." More recently, however these two scholars have expressed concern that ill treatment of the country's security partners might render its alliances less of a force-multiplier for it, especially vis-à-vis China. Even before the election of Donald Trump, they argued that the "country's military superiority is not going anywhere, nor is the globe-spanning alliance structure that constitutes the core of the

[27] The principal source for conceptualizing NATO as the "democratic alliance" par excellence is Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation Among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[28] See Thomas Risse, "'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54 (Winter 2000): 1–39.

[29] Julia E. Sweig, *Friendly Fire: Losing Friends and Making Enemies in the Anti-American Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006). Also see, for that era's wave of criticism of American foreign policy, Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

existing liberal international order (unless Washington unwisely decides to throw it away)."[30]

Since the onset of the Trump administration, public opinion globally (insofar as that can reliably be discerned through survey techniques), testifies to a profound souring in respect of American leadership, almost entirely associated with the plummeting favorability ratings of the president.[31] Starkly illustrative of the current tarnishing in an American brand dragged down by perceptions of Trump is evidence from polling done in America's most reliable ally, and traditional "best friend," Canada. An opinion poll published in early May 2019 sampled Canadians' relative images of a selected group of countries, including the USA, China, Mexico, the UK, France, and Germany. The results were telling, if not surprising, such has been the Trump effect north of Canada–US border: higher favorability scores were recorded for the UK (86% rating it "positively"), Germany (82%), France (77%) and even Mexico (65%) than for the United States itself (44%). Fortunately for what remains of the American image as a good neighbor, China managed to rack up a more dismal score, of only 23%.[32]

Then there is the Trumpian tenth commandment: contain the costs. Because of the unstated implication of this injunction to reduce one's own "skin in the game," it is not difficult to see how this vestige of 1980s' Trump philosophy can and does have a bearing upon relations with the transatlantic allies. The connection shows up in high relief under the policy rubric of "burden sharing." Now, Donald Trump did not invent the American grievance over burden sharing within NATO. This is a grievance with a lengthy pedigree, demonstrated by Democratic as well as Republican presidents dating back almost to the very origins of the Atlantic alliance. The first public staging of the burden-sharing drama occurred with NATO's Lisbon summit in 1952, when the Truman administration

[30] Stephen G. Brooks, and William C. Wohlforth, "International Relations Theory and the Case Against Unilateralism," *Perspectives on Politics* 3 (September 2005): 509–524; and Idem, "The Once and Future Superpower: Why China Won't Overtake the United States," *Foreign Affairs* 95 (May/June 2016): 91–104, quote at p. 91.

[31] For one such assessment, see Richard Wike et al., "Trump's International Ratings Remain Low, Especially Among Key Allies," Pew Research Center, October 2018.

[32] The survey was conducted by pollster Nik Nanos in the last week of April 2019; see Michelle Zilio, "Canadians More Positive About Ties with Europe Than with the U.S., China: Poll," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), May 3, 2019: A6.

called on the allies to so step up their contributions to the conventional defenses of the alliance as to be able, within the span of two years, to field 98 divisions and 7000 combat aircraft for the European theater![33] Needless to say, the allies showed themselves incapable of meeting this ambitious conventional-force goal. Withal, the alliance survived, in the short run thanks to a decision by the Eisenhower administration to prioritize nuclear rather conventional deterrence with its "New Look" strategy, and in the long run because of the fortuitous ending of the Cold War, followed by the demise of the Soviet Union itself.[34]

But while the stage props might have been shifted around, the drama continued with a new cast reading from a familiar script. NATO's halting assumption of security obligations outside of its traditional "area," starting in the Balkans in the 1990s and continuing in the Middle East in the early twenty-first century, witnessed a revival of the traditional refrain, whereby American presidents, no matter their names, implored allies to do more, with the metric for assessing "more" typically being the percentage of GDP allocated to their respective defense budgets. In the event, 2% has come to be the magic figure that attests to an ally's doing "enough" to carry its share of the burden, but it has not been a metric that flatters most alliance members. Americans do not fail to notice this.

Conclusion

Prior to Donald Trump, presidential finger-wagging was just that; few "underspenders" (i.e., the majority of the membership) really sensed there to be any real danger in their choosing to allocate public finances to other budgetary envelopes. But Trump has injected a new element in their calculations, predicated upon their worry that perhaps he means it when he warns that unless they spend more, the United States itself might decamp from NATO. Although no ally has ever seriously entertained the option of invoking article 13 of the Washington treaty and leaving the alliance—not even France in 1966, when Charles de Gaulle kicked the alliance's headquarters out of the country and pulled France's forces out of NATO's integrated command structures—with Donald Trump there is a lurking

[33] Luca Ratti, *A Not-So-Special Relationship: The US, the UK and German Unification, 1945–1990* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p. 52.

[34] See David N. Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1983).

suspicion that America's commitment to the alliance it created can no longer be taken for granted.[35]

This is what "transactionalism" has meant, to date, for the transatlantic alliance. How should the allies respond to the Trump phenomenon? First, they should realize that America under its current president almost certainly will not exercise article 13 and decamp; nevertheless, they should use the slight risk of this happening as a means of "goading" themselves to act more coherently and credibly in the realm of European security. Second, they should refrain from lecturing this administration about the perils of straying from the path of multilateral cooperation, and abandoning the liberal-democratic international order that many European leaders never tire of repeating, was built and nourished by America itself. The Trump team realizes how much of the heavy lifting America has done over the decades—and that is the problem, given how this transactional president senses that the lifting has been inadequately compensated. Third, the European allies should stimulate their *own* transactional juices, availing themselves of bilateral opportunities to work toward a common aim, somewhat along the lines of the reasonably successful cooperation France and the United States have effected in combatting terrorism in western Africa and elsewhere.[36] Finally, they should remember that nothing lasts forever, and in the context of American presidencies, another election is always just around the corner.

After all, the United States and other allies managed to put up tolerably well with Charles de Gaulle, and he was in power for the first ten years of the Fifth Republic's existence. Europe should be able to wait out the American Gaullist currently sitting in the White House, whether for another year or another five years. However, even were this president to fail in his re-election bid in November 2020, no one should ever imagine that a Democratic administration would automatically choose a return to

[35] Article 13 of NATO's founding treaty stipulates that "[a]fter the Treaty has been in force for twenty years [viz., after 1969], any Party may cease to be a Party one year after its notice of denunciation has been given to the Government of the United States of America, which will inform the Governments of the other Parties of the deposit of each notice of denunciation." "The North Atlantic Treaty," in *The NATO Handbook: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1998), p. 399.

[36] As is argued by David G. Haglund and Maud Quessard-Salvaing, "How the West Was One: France, America, and the 'Huntingtonian Reversal'," *Orbis* 62 (Fall 2018): 557–581.

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multilateralism as the preferred default setting for its "grand strategy."[37] Whether it is Donald Trump in the White House or not, a certain element of "transactionalism" can be guaranteed to continue to inflect America's relationship with its transatlantic allies in new and challenging ways.

Nevertheless, China's ballyhooed "rise" of recent years may turn out to provide a tonic for US–European ties, strange as the thought might otherwise seem on first encounter. This is because of two trends. The first is that, in the United States, China is one of the few issues in foreign policy (it may be the only one) capable of engendering a semblance of bipartisanship. Loathed as this president may be by his Democratic adversaries, his policy of "getting tough" with China is one that elicits their approval.

And this gets us to the second trend, which concerns the impact China's growing power (and appetite for geopolitical influence) might have upon European members of the alliance in coming years. It used to be argued by some European policy intellectuals that, unlike the United States, "Europe doesn't do China."[38] Recently, however, there is evidence that Europeans themselves are growing aware that if they do not "do" China, then China will "do" them. And if this does not have to imply Europe's joining together with America in a new cold war intended to contain China's growing power, it does at least suggest that Washington, even under a re-elected Donald Trump, might continue to place value in having allies. Thus, ironically, China might contribute to frustrating the anti-alliance "Wilsonianism" of Donald Trump (or any successor) by making it obvious to Americans that allies can be useful to have.[39]

[37] See Rebecca Friedman Lissner and Mira Rapp-Hooper, "The Day After Trump: American Strategy for a New International Order," *Washington Quarterly* 41 (Spring 2018): 7–25.

[38] Alex Danchev, "Shared Values in the Transatlantic Relationship," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 7 (August 2005): 429–436, quote on p. 433.

[39] See the "transactionalist" assessment of John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43 (Spring 2019): 7–50, quoting from pp. 48–49: "Most of the countries in Europe, especially the major powers, are likely to become part of the U.S.-led bounded order, although they are unlikely to play a serious military role in containing China. They do not have the capability to project substantial military power into East Asia, and they have little reason to acquire it, because China does not directly threaten Europe, and because it makes more sense for Europe to pass the buck to the United States and its Asian allies. U.S. policymakers, however, will want the Europeans inside their bounded order for strategically related economic reasons. In particular, the United States will want to keep European countries

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from selling dual-use technologies to China and to help put economic pressure on Beijing when necessary. In return, U.S. military forces will remain in Europe, keeping NATO alive and continuing to serve as the pacifier in that region. Given that virtually every European leader would like to see that happen, the threat of leaving should give the United States significant leverage in getting the Europeans to cooperate on the economic front against China."

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