

TRENDS Report

The Changing International Order

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The Changing International Order: Introduction

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With the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the USA it has become common to hear that the international order, as we know it, is over and something else is either here, or on the way. This message was prominent during the US presidential campaign and it builds upon a wide range of other circumstances pressing upon the international system in recent years. The UK's referendum decision to leave the EU has been seen as another monumental situation that changes how we understand the world. We can add to this the growth of China, including the creation of the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank, as further evidence that we need to reconsider our understanding of the international system. Russia has been continually speaking of the evolution of multi polar order whereby one state cannot dictate or determine the direction of the system, again pointing to the need to rethink how international order is understood.

This has led to uncertainty about the current and future direction of the international system, along with many questions as to how this system will be ordered. Will the old ways of doing things continue? What will happen to the structures and processes that have guided global affairs since World War II? Are we going to see a completely new international system in some way? Will this involve a widescale rejection of the existing order (or how that order is understood), or is it about restructuring priorities and focal points? Or could it be simply, the USA will not be a leading force in the conduct of international relations and other states and ideas will begin to determine direction and priorities?

Since taking office, President Trump has shown that the nature of diplomacy, interactions between states and governments, the role of existing institutional practices are all being brought into question. But, it appears, that Trump alone is not the source of the changes we are experiencing. Many of key trends in the world today – an emphasis on self-interest by states, the rejection or marginalization of multilateralism and international organisations, the use of force over diplomacy, pre-date Trump taking office, and are part of a general backlash against globalization.

At the same time we are seeing a continuation of trends in the international system as multilateral institutions continue to operate and other states in the system are stepping up to take leadership in global affairs. The international system, and how it is ordered, is in a constant dynamic. There is a tendency to look at the end of the Cold War and the 1990s with a touch of nostalgia, and as emblematic of the world we wish to have. The USA was the only superpower, it was willing to take on the role of global leadership, diplomacy was favoured over confrontation (for the most part), and international institutions from the UN, to the International Criminal Court, to the World Trade Organisation, were seen as necessary component parts of the system, bringing positive benefits to states, societies and the system as a whole.

Undoubtedly, the dynamics of today have raised serious questions and concerns as to how the international system works, as well as how we understand the changing international order. To address this, TRENDS invited its researchers and Non-Resident Fellows to give their assessment of the changes in the international system in first few months of Trump's Presidency. The experts make clear that the international system is changing, but how exactly it is changing, remains to be seen.

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The Rising Powers and the Liberal World Order: The GCC in a 'post-Western' Environment

Richard Woodward, Non Resident Fellow in International Economics

The inauguration of Donald Trump as 45th President of the United States has reignited the debate about the future of the liberal international order. Some bullish assessments¹ aside, most prognoses are gloomy. In many respects, this is nothing new. Anguished accounts foretelling the demise of the liberal order, the loose array of rules, norms, principles and institutions championed by the United States since the 1940s, are almost as old as the order itself.² Uniting these narratives was a belief that the international order would be toppled by the passing of American pre-eminence and rising powers exploiting their newfound muscle to advocate alternative ideas and agendas. For a long time, Russia (in the 1950s and 1960s) and Japan (in the 1970s and 1980s)³ were the main bogeymen. Since the turn of the century, however, most observers believe that the biggest challenge to the status quo emanates from the rising powers of the Global South. Although most attention is usually lavished on the BRICS countries, especially China, during this

...the mercurial nature of the President's rhetoric it is abundantly clear...

period the GCC members have also assumed more prominent positions on a host of global governance issues.

Donald Trump's arrival in the Oval Office has altered the terms of this debate. Rather than withering from without, the US inspired international order suddenly looks to be withering from within. Despite the mercurial nature of the President's rhetoric it is abundantly clear that the foreign policy of his administration will depart sharply from that of its post-war predecessors. This is typified by the administration's ambivalence towards long-standing alliances such as NATO, its repudiation of free trade and intent to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement. The US government is also re-evaluating the terms of its engagement across a host of less celebrated, but nevertheless crucial, multilateral institutions such as those responsible for global financial stability.⁴ The incoming administration is signalling its intent to abdicate its traditional leadership role triggering concerns that the world will regress⁵ into the kind of chaos and disorder that characterised previous periods without a global hegemon. Amidst these worries some

¹ Fontaine, Richard, "How Trump Can Save the Liberal Order", *Foreign Affairs*, 30 November, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2016-11-30/how-trump-can-save-liberal-order>.

² Joffe, Josef, "Declinism's Fifth Wave", *The National Interest*, Volume 7, Number 3, 9 December, 2011.

³ Fukada, Takahiro, "Looking back at 'Japan as No. 1'", *Japan Times*, 11 November, 2010, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2010/11/11/national/looking-back-at-japan-as-no-1/#.WSLGO4VOJPZ>.

⁴ See letter from Patrick McHenry, Chief Deputy Whip, Member of Congress, 10th District, North Carolina addressed to the Honourable Janet L. Yellen, Chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System on 31 January, 2017, <https://ftalphaville-cdn.ft.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/02104940/McHenry-letter-to-Yellen.pdf>.

⁵ Wolf, Martin, "The long and painful journey to world disorder", *Financial Times*, 5 January, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/ef13e61a-cccec-11e6-b8ce-b9c03770f8b1>.

commentators have rehabilitated the 21st century's rising powers as potential saviours⁶ of the liberal order. These hopes are likely to be dashed.

That the rising powers are being touted as potential protectors of the liberal international order is not as bizarre as it initially appears. As John Ikenberry has argued, the farsighted architects of the liberal international order set out to ensure that its benefits were widely shared.⁷ This helped to recruit states to the system and also ensured

...the liberal international order rests upon a simple calculation: that the benefits of belonging to the system exceed the costs.

their loyalty to it. Nothing illustrates this better than the BRICS, whose astonishing advance owe much to the open and rules-based nature of the contemporary global economy. Instead of using their burgeoning power to overthrow the liberal order, the rising powers have sought accommodation within it. Throughout the last decade the contribution of rising powers, including GCC members, in global governance has unquestionably deepened. Outward signs of these changes include Group of 20 (G20) superseding the Group of 8 as the 'premier forum for international

economic cooperation'⁸ or the recalibration of voting shares at the International Monetary Fund. Less conspicuously the rising powers have made important contributions to a host of norms. The GCC countries, for instance, have perceptibly expanded their involvement in areas including reforms to the international financial architecture, energy governance and climate change. Even in cases where rising powers appear to be treading a more independent path, for instance China's creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a closer examination⁹ reveals that they mimic the norms and principles of existing multilateral institutions.

Recent statements from Beijing have amplified optimism that the rising powers might fill the void left by America's retreat. In his keynote address¹⁰ to the World Economic Forum in January 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping affirmed China's commitment to globalisation, denigrated protectionism, defended the Paris climate agreement and called for stronger international cooperation. Shortly afterwards Zhang Jun, head of the Chinese Foreign Ministry's Office of International Economic Affairs averred that "if it's necessary for China to play the role of leader, then China must take on this responsibility."¹¹ It finally

⁶ Acharya, Amitav, "Emerging powers can be saviours of the global liberal order", *Financial Times*, 18 January, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/f175b378-dd79-11e6-86ac-f253db7791c6>.

⁷ Ikenberry, John G., "The Rise of China and the Future of the West", *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2008 Issue.

⁸ The G20 Pittsburgh Summit Commitments provided by the G20 Research Group, *Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto*, 25 September, 2009, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/analysis/commitments-09-pittsburgh.html>.

⁹ Woodward, Richard, "Signing up not routing round: The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the global economic order", *TRENDS Research and Advisory*, 28 April, 2015,

<http://trendsinstitution.org/signing-up-not-routing-round-the-asian-infrastructure-investment-bank-and-the-global-economic-order/>.

¹⁰ Di Domenico, Valeriano, "President Xi's speech to Davos in full", *World Economic Forum*, 17 January, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/full-text-of-xi-jinping-keynote-at-the-world-economic-forum>.

¹¹ Chin, Josh, "China Says Prepared to Lead Global Economy if Necessary", *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 January, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china->

looked as though China was jettisoning its traditional timidity in foreign affairs in favour of a bolder posture.

This Panglossian view of China's recent pronouncements discounts the pitiless truths of global politics. The rising power's support

The rising powers are hardly standard bearers for liberalism.

for the liberal international order rests upon a simple calculation: that the benefits of belonging to the system exceed the costs. The problem is that this is precisely what angers President Trump and what his policies are determined to change. Starting with the benefits, the abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership¹² has motioned the willingness of the Trump administration to abandon multilateral deals that it perceives allow other countries to profit at America's expense. Whether Trump follows through on his threats to withdraw some of the leading multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organisation remains to be seen. Irrespective, reforms to these institutions that ensure the US captures more of the benefits may damage the rising powers' commitment to them. Simultaneously, sustaining the liberal order would also entail additional costs for the rising powers. They would be required to make substantial contributions to the supply of global public goods including providing international security, maintaining

freedom of the seas, protecting the environment, ensuring global financial stability and acting as a market of last resort for distress goods.

Regardless of whether the rising powers would be willing to shoulder these burdens, doubts must be cast on their ability to do so. The military spending and capabilities of the rising powers lag far behind those of the US.¹³ It is inconceivable that they could substitute for the global security role played by the United States. Likewise, for all their financial firepower it would be absurd to suggest that any of their currencies could usurp the dollar's position as the international reserve currency. The economic development of these countries has also outpaced political and institutional developments. For instance, India's ability to play a leading role is hampered by having a diplomatic corps equivalent in size to New Zealand.¹⁴ From this perspective, the emerging states pose a danger to the liberal international order not because they are too powerful but because they are not powerful enough.

The fantasy of a liberal order led by the rising powers also encounters, to borrow a contemporary euphemism, "alternative facts." The rising powers are hardly standard bearers for liberalism. Widespread state ownership, the exclusion of foreign

[says-prepared-to-lead-global-economy-if-necessary-1485178890](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/23/presidential-memorandum-regarding-withdrawal-united-states-trans-pacific).

¹² Press release from the White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Presidential Memorandum Regarding Withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Negotiations and Agreement", *The White House*, 23 January, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/23/presidential-memorandum-regarding-withdrawal-united-states-trans-pacific>.

¹³ Taylor, Adam and Karklis, Laris, "This remarkable chart shows how U.S. defense spending dwarfs the

rest of the world", *The Washington Post*, 9 February, 2016,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/02/09/this-remarkable-chart-shows-how-u-s-defense-spending-dwarfs-the-rest-of-the-world/?utm_term=.582beacbb5d9.

¹⁴ "Asia will gain from India finally taking foreign policy seriously", *The Economist*, 30 August, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21614139-asia-will-gain-india-finally-taking-foreign-policy-seriously-eastern-promises>.

investment from many sectors, strict capital controls and the protection of strategic industries by mountainous trade barriers speak of economic models considerably at variance to that advocated by the Washington Consensus. China's development banks, which now disburse more loans than the six biggest multilateral development banks put together, make no pretence of promoting free societies or good governance. In addition to maintaining authoritarian systems at home, China and Russia have gone to considerable lengths to deter and roll back the development of liberal and democratic regimes in their sphere of influence. Any international order dominated by non-Western powers is unlikely to possess a liberal hue.

What does all this mean for the GCC? Given how profoundly the worldview of the Trump administration differs from its forebears it does not seem plausible to argue that the relationship between the US and the GCC "is anchored in mutual interests and stable institutions, and is likely to remain so indefinitely."¹⁵ Clearly there are aspects of the liberal international order that are of enormous benefit to the GCC countries. Upheld by America's forward military deployments, norms of sovereignty and free navigation have guaranteed the territorial integrity of GCC countries and the safe passage of their oil exports helping the region to enjoy a level of peace and prosperity that is unsurpassed in the Arab world. With the value of trade exceeding 100% of GDP¹⁶ in three GCC countries (Saudi Arabia at 72% is

the lowest), the region would have much to lose from deterioration in global trade rules. As a region, likely to become an area of future strategic competition between the US and the rising powers (and amongst the rising powers themselves), the present international order reduces the risk that GCC countries will, literally or figuratively, find themselves in the crossfire.

While many would mourn the passing of the liberal international order, a multipolar world may provide openings for the GCC to influence global governance. The rising powers are likely to be more sympathetic to some of the GCC's concerns and ideas, for instance reinforcing norms surrounding non-intervention in sovereign affairs. The AIIB may be China's first major foray into multilateral institution building, but it is unlikely to be the last. Participation in these ventures affords the GCC an opportunity to shape and disseminate the norms of the post-hegemonic world.

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¹⁵ Anthony, Dr. John Duke and Nazer, Fahad, "GCC-US relations under a Trump administration", *Al Arabiya Network*, 20 December, 2016, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2016/12/20/GCC-US-relations-under-a-Trump-administration.html>.

¹⁶ Trade (% of GDP) information retrieved from the World Bank national accounts data and OECD national accounts data files from 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.TRD.GNFS.ZS?view=map>.

Trump, Celebrity Culture and the Populist Turn in US Foreign Policy

Paul B Rich, Non-Resident Fellow in Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

The first few months of the Trump administration have proved extraordinary by any standard, and for many observers it represents a remarkable break with the normal pattern of presidential accessions. During the election campaign, Trump presented himself as a Washington outsider though his credentials as an authentic

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populist in a long American political tradition stretching back to the nineteenth century remain very questionable.

Certainly, his election campaign had some of the features of a right-wing populist movement and a grassroots backlash against progressive movements seeking the empowerment of women and ethnic and religious minorities.¹

In the end, Trump was not so much a long-standing populist as a celebrity figure advancing late in life onto the political scene. He thus came into politics not as an unknown outsider, but a familiar personality who had hosted the reality TV show, *The Apprentice*. This media image was reinforced by another media-fed narrative of a successful New York property tycoon. Both media images helped galvanise support among sections of the white middle class fearing progressive impoverishment as well as blue collar

communities that had felt ignored by the political establishment in Washington for decades. Constantly tweeting in simplistic, flawed English, Trump managed to shock many in the political mainstream while also delighting his core supporters, who felt he was speaking up for them and hitting back against a political elite widely seen as remote and uninterested in their predicament.

It was Hillary Clinton's fate to be closely linked with the Washington establishment that preferred to speak a language of middle class feminism rather than empowering working class communities. Trump campaigned to "drain the swamp" in the city and articulated widespread doubts over the inherent virtues of globalization and trade agreements such as TPP and NAFTA. The momentum of this populist-style presidential campaign in 2016 has spilled over into the first few months of his presidency, with some indications that it has impacted on the formulation of foreign policy. This area of government, normally seen to be outside the hurly burly of day-to-day politics, is now central given the way that Trump's protectionist campaign linked the survival of many industrial jobs to trade agreements, such as TPP and NAFTA, agreements which he committed himself to revoking.

By the time of Trump's inauguration, there was considerable debate over how foreign policy would turn out under such as neophyte president. Some analysts such as Robert Kaplan doubted whether a Trump administration could ever be seriously realist in the conventional foreign policy understanding of this term.² By contrast, the realist scholar John Mearsheimer,

¹ Berlet, Chip and Lyons, Matthew N., *Right-Wing Populism in America*. New York and London: The Guildford Press, 2000, 5.

² Kaplan, Robert D., "On foreign policy, Donald Trump is no realist," *The Washington Post*, November 11, 2016.

traditionally hostile to the idea of trying to promote democracy, argued that the fundamental nationalism of Trump's political

It is important here to shift the focus away from the day-to-day theatrics of the Trump administration and look at the changing status of the US in the functioning of the global economic order.

agenda and hostility to liberal hegemony in global politics was always going to impel it in a classically realist foreign policy direction to promote perceived US

national interests.³

A third group of analysts pointed to the actual realities of power and diplomatic statecraft which they see as tempering the administration's rhetoric into more conventional forms of policy making. The prospect of Middle Eastern or Korean Peninsula crises escalating, this group has argued, will encourage the administration to calm down and become increasingly routinized into patterns that can ensure support from America's closest allies. Danielle Pletka wrote in *The Washington Post* that Trump's foreign policy is now starting to look surprisingly "normal" as it moves away from the angry rhetoric of the election, following a well-trodden path of many previous US presidents.⁴

Nevertheless, US foreign policy is undergoing some long-term transformation, the outcome of which remains uncertain. Trump's foreign policy operates outside many of the norms of conventional

Washington statecraft. Part of Trump's for "Draining the swamp" included his intention to undermine and neuter the State Department; located in the former swamp at "Foggy Bottom." State has been the one arm of government that has been most visibly affected by the transfer of power from Obama. Immediately after attaining office, Trump ordered a raft of senior figures at State to resign, leaving the Department without its entire senior management team.⁵ The departure of many of State's regional experts leaves the administration reliant upon vague guess work and dangerous leaps in the dark that recall the expulsion of China and Asia experts in the early 1950s during the McCarthyite anti-communist witch-hunt in Washington.

The cutbacks accompany a more personalized approach to diplomacy, mirroring, to some degree, authoritarian states such as Russia and Turkey, even though the vaunted new close relationship between Trump and Putin during the election has turned out to be short-lived. This presidential imprint on foreign policy is by no means without precedent over the last century or more, since various US presidents have exerted a major role in foreign policy-making: Woodrow Wilson at the Versailles Peace conference in 1919, for example, or Franklin Roosevelt at the Tehran and Yalta conferences during World War Two. The fact that Trump is imprinting such an approach jars with many liberal critics, who have become used to policy being formulated in a much more bureaucratic context of think

³ Mearsheimer, John, "Donald Trump should Embrace a Realist Foreign Policy," *The National Interest*, 27 November, 2016.

⁴ Pletka, Danielle, "On foreign policy, Trump has become – gasp – a normal president," *The Washington Post*, 26 April, 2017; Carafano, James

Jay, "Trump has a foreign policy strategy," 21 April, 2017, *The Heritage Foundation*, www.heritage.org.

⁵ *US News*, 26 January, 2017; Khassel, Whitney and Schulman, Loren Dejonge "Donald Trump's Great Patriotic Purge," *Foreign Policy*, 26 April, 2017.

tanks along with the Washington policy elite aided, on occasions, by more cerebral presidents such as John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

By these standards, it appears doubtful if Trump can produce the kinds of considered and nuanced responses that modern global crises require. Rushing into print in the form of twitter feeds may well be counter-productive in terms of sending the wrong signals or raising expectations that cannot easily be fulfilled. Trump's idiosyncratic approach to foreign policy has confirmed fears among some analysts that he would seek to take the US into a markedly different political trajectory to the conventional superpower role forged during the Cold War around deterrence and containment. It is still too early to say whether a completely new approach to foreign relations is emerging in Washington, but there are certainly several indications to suggest that foreign policy will be formulated in accordance with a rather different view of the US in the global order compared to the decades after 1945 when the US achieved superpower status in the Cold War.

It is important here to shift the focus away from the day-to-day theatrics of the Trump administration and look at the changing status of the US in the functioning of the global economic order. This was often thought to be largely a product of the interaction between states in the international system. This is because the original global economic system forged at Bretton Woods at the end of World War Two was a result of a series of bargains between various key

national actors, leading to the creation of institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO that still survive. For decades, scholars tended to look at these organizations and the politics surrounding them in a rather arcane manner, reflective of the way economic debate was impelled by an elitist cult of expertise.

Much of this has been transformed by the rise in recent years of populist movements across a variety of western states. This has not occurred in any uniform way and some of the movements are on the left while other, such as in the US, are on the far right. This populism has put immense pressure on existing political elites and ensured that foreign policy is now becoming increasingly driven by domestic pressures markedly different to the post-1945 era, ensuring the gradual demise of the old liberal class, though not necessarily the political tradition of social democracy which is, in some countries at least, undergoing some moral rejuvenation and a possible long-term counter to the populist trend.⁶

There is a visible disconnection between the tough talking of Trump and actual policy outcomes...

The populist turn in US politics challenges, to some degree, conventional ideas of US exceptionalism and global leadership, a key concept embedded in the foreign policy consensus forged after 1945 by Democrats and Republicans. This consensus underpinned a strong sense of US national mission in global affairs centred on the idea that the country had a distinctive leadership

⁶ Colgan, Jeff D. and Keohane, Robert O., "The Liberal Order is Rigged: Fix it Now or Let it Wither," *Foreign Affairs*, May-June, 2017; Hedges, Chris, *Death of the Liberal Class*, New York: Nation

Books, 2010; Barbieri, Pierpaolo, "The Death and Life of Social Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, 25 April, 2017.

role of the western alliance, embodied in alliance systems such as NATO, ASEAN and the 1951 Anzus Treaty with Australia and New Zealand. This consensus dominated the contours of political debate from the late 1940s to the 1990s and marginalized most serious critics to the political extremes. In the 1960s and 1970s, these came mainly from the left in the context of war in South East Asia, though the temporary ability of the left and the anti-war movement to dominate debate tended to disguise the fact that many critics of the war also came from the right, including foreign policy realists such as Hans Morgenthau, and some even further to the right.⁷

From early in the twentieth century there had always been a neo-isolationist tradition on the US right that opposed foreign involvements.

This became strongly associated with the historical “revisionism” of Charles A. Beard. During

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the Cold War, some liberal free traders such as Lawrence Dennis opposed foreign military involvements on lines not so different to the free trade opponents of imperialism in mid-Victorian Britain. Fighting in Korea, Dennis argued in the early 1950s, simply meant propping up the corrupt regime of Syngman Rhee in Seoul as well as preventing a closer accord with Mao Zedong’s China, which was not the simple stooge of the Soviet Union that Cold War hawks liked to maintain.⁸

⁷ Williams, Michael C., *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*. Oxford: OUP, 2008.

Of course, it is hard to detect any easy links between this tradition and the rhetoric of the Trump administration, though ideas and approaches to foreign policy formulated by intellectuals do permeate society in various forms, in some cases being taken up at a much later date in muddled forms. As a political outsider, Trump has been quite an astute surfer of popular discourse, picking up and championing apparently popular ideas among his own home base of political support and seeking, wherever possible, to demonstrate his apparent ability to “solve” a list of apparently surmountable problems that have continually eluded his so-called weak and compromised predecessors. He has also shown himself willing to listen to close advisors, though not apparently in any sort of consistent or uniform manner.

But what sort of political trajectory emerges from such a personalized approach to foreign policy? There is a visible disconnection between the tough talking of Trump and actual policy outcomes, suggesting that at least some of the fears surrounding the new administration’s foreign policy may be misplaced. There is unlikely to be any rapid emergence of a distinctive “Trump doctrine” since this is an administration that tends to vaunt its unpredictability, mirroring, in some respects, Putin’s Russia. By doing so, Trump stands accused of displaying the sort of foreign policy normally associated with weaker powers that lack the vast military capacity of the US as well as its wide-ranging network of allies. Boasting his unpredictability, Trump recalls the rather desperate efforts of Richard Nixon in the early 1970s to present himself as a possible “madman” to persuade the leaders of the

⁸ Radosh, Ronald, *Prophets on the Right: Profiles of Conservative Critics of American Globalism*. Christchurch (NZ), Cyberditions, (2001), 234-235.

Soviet Union and North Vietnam to negotiate seriously on the ending of the Vietnam War. Nixon's "madman theory" never really worked since his opponents doubted his willingness to resort to nuclear weapons to secure a deal on the departure of US forces from South Vietnam.⁹

Likewise, Trump's unpredictability now suggests an inability or unwillingness of the administration to forge a coherent grand strategy that meets the current strategic needs of the US. On Syria, for instance, the administration has sent out mixed signals on whether it supports Assad in any possible peace settlement for the region or removing him, given the massive evidence detailing the regime's war crimes. Rex Tillerson, Trump's Secretary of State, has implied that the administration can work with Assad, at least in the short term, while the US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, has called for regime change in Damascus if the civil war is to be brought to some sort of end. One observer, Spencer Ackerman, has detected no less than five different policies emerging in Washington on Syria in the space of two weeks following the raid on the Shayrat air base in response to the chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhoun on April 4, 2017. These policy positions were 1) Assad should stay 2) Assad should go 3) the issue is chemical weapons rather than Assad per se 4) Defeat ISIS first and then decide whether Assad should stay or go and 5) the US will respond to the use of barrel bombs by the Assad regime.¹⁰

Some of this confusion doubtless arises from key individuals in the administration, such as

Rex Tillerson, failing to coordinate what they say or rallying behind any commonly agreed upon policy. This is an administration of various egos led by one super ego, with doubts, at some points, over whether it can seriously produce a coherent policy agenda. However, there are now strong signs of a steep learning curve occurring in the administration's conduct of affairs as fences have been mended with the Chinese after the Trump's initial telephone call to the president of Taiwan, while NATO countries too have been reassured of continuing US support for the alliance, albeit with some strings attached. This are in terms of greater pressure being exerted on some members to raise their defence spending closer to the agreed norm of 2% of GDP (while the US spends 3.6% on defence, Britain spends around 2%, Germany spends 1.2% and Spain and Italy only 1%).¹¹

It is becoming clear that the Trump administration has begun to recognize the costs of any sort of haphazard approach to foreign policy, even if Trump himself remains attached to the form of transactional bargaining he expounded in his book, *The Art of the Deal*. It was very likely that the Russians were testing the resolve of the Trump administration by engaging in another chemical attack on civilians though they were also doubtlessly surprised by the speed of the US response in the form of the destruction of the Shayrat air base with 59 cruise missiles. The response, at one level, indicated that Trump had accepted the "red line" imposed

There is a huge risk here for an escalating war of words spinning out of control.

⁹ Kaplan, Fred, "Return of the Madman Theory," *Slate*, 13 April, 2017.

¹⁰ Ackerman, Spencer, "What's Trump's plan for Syria? Five different policies in two weeks," *The Guardian*, 11 April, 2017.

¹¹ *The Economist*, 16 February, 2017.

on this issue by the previous Obama administration although he never properly followed through on it. But it was also impelled by a macho desire by Trump to assert a personal presence in foreign policy, in a manner that risks rapid escalation unless there are control mechanisms brought to bear. Great power brinkmanship is almost always a poor alternative to a more coherent strategy of coercive diplomacy that is understood by all the relevant actors involved.¹² This is a lesson from Syria that might lead to calmer and more considered policy in other arenas, especially North Korea.

If Putin's policies are shaped by a skilled chess player anxious to play as strong a hand as possible, overcoming modern Russia's evident limitations as a global military power, the profile for Trump is considerably more verbose as his stream of consciousness speeches and tweets show. He has a career record of high profile activity to secure the eventual business "deal" and talking may be part of the approach. This is an area where

The heightened role of key individuals in Washington linked to Trump's use of members of his own family also resonates well with many authoritarian and nepotistic regimes...

many liberal analysts have had some difficulty interpreting Trump, given the way his up-front racism and sexism jar with all the core

values of modern metropolitan liberalism rooted in the gains made by women, blacks and ethnic minorities in the decades since the civil rights battles of the 1960s. Some of Trump's core supporters seem determined to

try and reverse many of these gains and it might be easy to conclude that the administration's foreign policy is also anchored in a quixotic desire to return to the age of the 1940s or 1950s, when most of politics in the US was still dominated by white Anglo Saxons, with men largely steering the ship of state while most women stayed at home bringing up children.

This pessimistic view has not, so far at least, been really borne out by events, though much will depend on what will happen over the next year and a half, certainly before the Congressional mid-terms in 2018. Trump appears to be relatively uninterested in the minutiae of foreign policy, relishing his role as president more as a celebrity than as a serious political figure orchestrating a coherent foreign policy like his predecessor. Meetings with foreign heads of state and set piece visits like the one planned for London in June, 2017 in a carriage with the queen are thus clearly of great appeal; but making overseas tours to crises regions seem unpopular, so far at least.

To be fair, Trump has indicated that he is looking for Chinese involvement in bringing pressure to bear on North Korea, suggesting that this is not going to be an isolationist administration reminiscent of the Republican administrations of Harding and Coolidge in the 1920s. But the clumsy way that the North Korean issue has been handled has led to widespread concern that the administration might well fumble its way into war despite its overall intentions. Barbara Tuchman in a classic study, *The March of Folly*, outlined four major components that societies can suffer from "misgovernment": tyranny,

¹² Nedal, Dani and Nixon, Daniel, "Trump's 'Madman Theory' isn't strategic unpredictability, It's just crazy," *Foreign Policy*, 18 April, 2017.

excessive ambition, incompetence and folly.¹³ All four possibly apply to the Trump administration, though it will be difficult for it to create any sort of tyranny in the immediate future, despite constant worries in this regard by liberals and libertarians. Ambition, too, may not easily apply to a man now seventy years of age, though we can assume that Trump seeks to transform American government and leave his imprint on American history as the “Trump era,” rather like the previous era of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. It is more likely that the administration will succumb to both incompetence and folly, especially the latter. Tuchman defined folly as “the pursuit of policy contrary to the self-interest of the constituency or state involved” – a considerable irony given that Trump presented himself as the quintessential nationalist concerned with “America first.”

This is starkly exemplified by the North Korean issue, which Trump has inherited like all other American presidents since the Korean War in the early 1950s. Unlike the rather more recent US engagement in Iraq and Syria, North Korea is an unresolved legacy of the Cold War that has not come to an end uniformly and still defines the basic contours of politics in North East Asia. Previous US administrations have preferred – as far as possible – to avoid escalating conflict in favour of various forms of diplomatic pressure, backed up by a raft of sanctions imposed in the wake of the first round of North Korean nuclear tests in 2006. These have not worked on a regime that appears at first sight to be impervious to diplomatic compromise and an apparent totalitarian throw-back to an earlier historical

era, systematically brain washing its 24 million citizens and defiantly threatening to launch a pre-emptive nuclear attack. Even worse, it is led by an apparently irrational third generation leader of a family dynasty that has ruled the state since its original formation after World War Two.

There is a huge risk here for an escalating war of words spinning out of control. The North Korean state is not nearly as closed as it is often imagined to be, and a slow process of modernization and opening to the outside is occurring, though on terms, for the moment at least, that are imposed by a regime apparently bent on staying in power whatever the cost. As the analyst, Hazel Smith, has pointed out, the central problem is as much the unresolved conflict between North and South Korea as the personality of Kim Jong Un, much though the global media like to play up his individual foibles.¹⁴ Kim Jong Un can also be perceived as rational in the sense that he seeks to sustain the current regime in power, though how far he is prepared to go in this venture is unknown.

There is thus an internal dynamic being worked out within North Korea that is moving the society into an increasingly outward direction despite the best efforts of the ruling regime to socialise and “brainwash” its subject population to think otherwise. This dynamic is, however, tardy and protracted. It fails to work in tandem with another dynamic of nuclearization by the regime in apparently desperate efforts to resist external attempts to overthrow it such as those in Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011.

¹³ Tuchman, Barbara, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*. London: Abacus, (1984), 3.

¹⁴ Smith, Hazel, “Dangerous, isolated and primed for war? North Korean clichés debunked”, *The Guardian*, 27 April, 2015.

North Korea is an unstable state that has suffered a major loss of political legitimacy in the last two or more decades. It has failed to raise the living standards of most of the population outside the confines of a narrow political elite, sometimes estimated to be little more than 5,000 people. Any protracted conventional conflict risks not only huge destruction in both North and South Korea, but also escalating political defections and desertions from the army, very probably leading to a messy and bloody regime collapse. Such an event is likely to lead to some sort of Chinese military intervention, if only to prevent the state moving totally into the orbit of South Korea and the West like the former East Germany at the end of the Cold War. Containing Korea with the help of regional powers such as China and Japan seems a rather wiser policy to adopt to avoid a military catastrophe, though this stands increasingly subject to the charge, made by Trump among others, that this has simply been an abdication of responsibility in favour of the softer option of attempted containment that ends up having no apparent influence on North Korean behaviour.

We see here the dangers of any sort of populist-inclined foreign policy in Washington. There are signs that the administration is retreating from this earlier foreign policy populism, exemplified by the increasingly cautious and pragmatic language used by Trump and Tillerson towards North Korea. Tillerson suggesting, at the time of writing, the need for face-to-face talks with North Korean leaders, though also emphasising that this cannot lead to

another agreement that the North Koreans feel they can ignore.¹⁵

There are several theoretical approaches to the study of foreign policy and crisis diplomacy that can only be itemised in this sort of situation: the rational choice model; the bureaucratic model, useful for studying earlier crises such as the 1962 Cuba Missile Crisis; adversarial interaction models, sometimes employing game theory; systemic theories based on the structural realist features of the anarchic society of states; deterministic theories based on Marxist ideas of the functioning of the global economy; social constructivist ideas based on the role of the media and states in constructing crises; and lastly, psychological theories based on psychology of the leaders involved in diplomatic negotiations.

All cast some light on the current Korean crisis, with the psychological approach being of especial interest given the interesting and highly exposed psychologies of the current leaders of North Korea and the US. We are not exactly back in the nineteenth century world of great power politics where states' policies were strongly defined by the personalities of figures such as Disraeli, Gladstone and Bismarck, but certainly individual heads of state matter far more than might have been imagined even twenty years ago.

The heightened role of key individuals in Washington linked to Trump's use of members of his own family also resonates well with many authoritarian and nepotistic regimes in the developing world even while it might embarrass some conventional

¹⁵ Gearan, Anne, "In an apparent shift, Tillerson says U.S. willing to hold direct talks with N. Korea", *Washington Post*, 27 April, 2017.

western allies. The Chinese leadership in Beijing are used to dealing with similar sorts of regimes in Central Asia such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and already appear to recognize that close family members such as Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner, special advisers to the president with undefined roles, can be used as a back channel to Trump. They have given provisional approval for three new brand trademarks, ensuring that there is a monopoly in the “Ivanka” brand of jewellery, bags and spa services.¹⁶

This apparent nepotism may possibly come to blow back hard against the administration, especially if Republicans in Congress decide to ‘cut and run’ if there is a dramatic loss of electoral support by the 2018 mid-terms. But there is a long history of family and personal interests underpinning diplomatic negotiations and many observers might well ask whether in the end it is outcomes that matter rather than diplomatic protocol. In the short term, the US might experience some loss of status as it embarks on such a form of personalized diplomatic statecraft. But whether it will adversely affect it in the inner longer term depends upon the administration’s ability to demonstrate its capacity to resolve or least attenuate one major international crisis.

To this extent, the Trump administration could end up hoist to its own petard, in the sense that it has set itself ambitious targets that its supporters expect it at least partially to meet. Failure for any sort of political populist can always command a high price. The Trump presidency might thus mark a major shift in US foreign policy away from

the consensual norms of the post war period. As the media finds itself increasingly marginalised, the administration appears to be keen on trying to forge a new sort of consensus of its own based on the Republican majority in Congress. Trump’s secret consultation with all hundred members of the Senate on North Korea suggests a new style of foreign policymaking, pivoted around the personality of the president: though the whole exercise has been written off by some commentators as a simple political stunt to get the senators to come to the president, who apparently revealed nothing substantially new in the briefing.¹⁷

This is thus a foreign policy of a celebrity-type personality bent on massaging public opinion and moving outside the normal confines of the Washington elite. Like most populist systems of government, it contains unpredictable features: if the Republican majority in Congress fire; if this opinion becomes disillusioned; if promises are not kept; or, policies poorly explained. To this extent, rifts emerging within the Republican Party circles can be especially damaging if policies are not debated and supported by the wider political elite. This is a mode of foreign policymaking, therefore, that has its own attendant risks, especially in terms of diminishing political credibility on the part of the president.

...rifts emerging within the Republican Party circles can be especially damaging if policies are not debated and supported by the wider political elite.

¹⁶ Connor, Neil, “Ivanka Trump ‘won China trademarks as she dined with President Xi Jinping”, *The Telegraph*, 19 April, 2017.

¹⁷ Rozsa, Matthew, “Donald Trump’s North Korea briefing was a political stunt to get senators to come to him”, *Salon*, 27 April, 2017.

On a Downward Trajectory: The Trump Presidency and Shifts in the International System

Christian Koch, Non-Resident Fellow in Gulf Security

German Chancellor Angela Merkel caused a stir when she stated on May 28, 2017: “The times in which we can fully rely on others – they are somewhat over. This is what I experienced over the past few days. We have to know that we must fight for our future on our own, for our destiny as Europeans. I can only say that we Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands - of course in friendship with the United States of America, in friendship with Great Britain and as good neighbors wherever that is possible also with other countries, even with Russia.”¹

...suggestions that the current international order as it has existed for the past seventy years is coming to an end, need to be put in perspective.

Her comments came after the NATO and G7 summit meetings that took place in Brussels and Sicily in which US President

Donald Trump participated on his first foreign trip. Chancellor Merkel’s assessment reflected a deep disappointment with the positions voiced by the US President and continued anxiety over the course that the United States could take in terms of its international relations. Her remarks were quickly followed by comments from other German politicians including Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel who went a step further and criticized President Trump for

“weakening” the West and standing “against the interests of the European Union.”²

These statements are a reflection of the reality that is now dawning on Europe, in particular for those who had hoped that President Trump would moderate his campaign rhetoric once in office and start to act in a more reasonable and presidential manner, especially when it comes to overall US global leadership. This includes recognizing the value of the existing Western alliance and the important role of the US in maintaining and defending the international institutional order that has been in place since the end of the Second World War.

What President Trump’s first foreign trip instead underlined is that he clearly has no interest whatsoever in upholding the current rules-based liberal order. On the one hand, his overall contempt for issues such as the freedom of the press, prohibition of torture, and support for democracies and human rights worldwide undermine many parts of the foundation on which a stable political system is based. On the other hand, his “America First” policy suggests his readiness to discard with existing institutions of international order in exchange for short-term arrangements that have as their sole purpose the perceived maximization of profits and benefits for the United States. In that sense, President Trump has adopted Zygmunt Bauman’s concept of liquid modernity, in which there is a constant shift from one position to another in a fluid

¹ “Merkel, after discordant G-7 meeting, is looking past Trump,” *The New York Times*, 28 May, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/28/world/europe/angela-merkel-trump-alliances-g7-leaders.html>.

² “Trump's actions have 'weakened' the West, German foreign minister says”, *CNN*, 30 May, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/29/europe/angela-merkel-uk-amber-rudd/>.

manner, to international relations.³ Yet, while Trump prides himself in his unpredictability, the comments by Chancellor Merkel cited at the outset clearly indicate that such an approach contributes to undermining established formats of international diplomacy and order.

Given that the Trump administration has only been in office for a few months, it is too early to tell whether a Trump presidency can in fact, through its policies, turn the international order further on its head. After all, given his domestic troubles, it is unclear at this stage whether President Trump will survive his full term in office. As such, the current criticism of the Trump administration's policies, and the suggestions that the current international order as it has existed for the past seventy years is coming to an end, need to be put in perspective. It would certainly be premature to interpret Chancellor Merkel's distancing from American policies as representing the beginning of a complete break of ties between Germany and the US or overall transatlantic ties for that matter. One should remember that only fifteen years ago, the French and German "No" to the US-led Iraq campaign and the proposition that the two countries "had to oppose the war for strategic reasons and that they had to do it in public and as forcefully as possible" was characterized as a traumatic shock for transatlantic relations with far-reaching consequences.⁴ Nevertheless, the Western alliance recovered and persisted although one

could argue that the doubts that were first created by US unilateralism under the George W. Bush administration have never been fully erased from memory since then.

Yet, the fact that US-Europe relations have been subject to greater degrees of volatility over the past decades also suggest that something more fundamental is at play when it comes to the current international system. As Richard Haass recently wrote, "the trend is one of declining order." He argues that developments over the past quarter century (since the end of the Cold War) have revealed "a far more complex reality, one of much less international consensus on what constitutes legitimacy in principles, policies and not much in the way of a balance of power in practice ... the cold reality is that no such broad and deep consensus exists as to what is to be done, who is to do it, and how to decide. There is a substantial gap between what is desirable when it comes to meeting the challenges of globalization and what has proven possible. This gap is one of the

³ Bauman, Zygmunt, *Liquid Modernity* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2000). The concept has also recently been applied to the Middle East. See Eduard Soler i Lecha, "Liquid Alliances in the Middle East," Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), Notes Internacionales 169, March 2017, <https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publicati>

[on_series/notes_internacionales/n1_169/liquid_alliances_in_the_middle_east.](https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publicati)

⁴ Dettke, Dieter, *Germany Says No: The Iraq War and the Future of German Foreign and Security Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. 164.

principal reasons for the disarray that exists in the world.”⁵

The forces and factors that are bringing about change in the international system today therefore go beyond the policies being pursued by the Trump administration. The fact remains that the laws and institutions that have supported the international system and the relationships that have governed the state system are being dismantled. As such, it can be argued that President Trump inherited what was already a crumbling international order.⁶ The US has, in fact, been searching for a new organizing principle in the international system since the end of the Cold War and the crumbling of the Iron Curtain. In the speech to a joint session of Congress in September 1990, in the wake of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq’s Saddam Hussein, President George H.W. Bush spoke of the objective of a “new world order” based on a new partnership of nations.⁷ When it proved that such a new world order was far too elusive, President George W. Bush followed this with a policy of democracy promotion through widespread American interventionism primarily in the Middle East. However, the limits of American power in this regard were quickly exposed following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 with the result that the era of US unilateralism ended before it even had a change to take off. Moreover, the events of September 11 highlighted the fact that the threats to a

country were no longer confined to state-based threats alone. In this case, the non-state actor, al-Qaeda inflicted on the US the largest casualties it has experienced since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

The policies of “strategic patience” as advocated by the Obama

administration did little to improve the US position in world affairs or to act as a new organizing principle around which some semblance of world order could be re-established. Instead, Russia and China have taken advantage of existing strategic vacuums to further curtail US influence. While Moscow flexes its muscles, despite a fairly weak economic and military position, in Eastern Europe (Ukraine and the Balkans), Afghanistan and the Middle East, Beijing has steadily increased its influence through concerted action in the South China Sea and is solidifying its economic influence through initiatives such as the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) policy and the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank.⁸ To such power shifts, the West does not appear to have an appropriate answer.

President Trump’s policies so far appear to be based more on simply rejecting the policies of the previous administration rather than trying to deal with the new challenges, forces and actors...

⁵ Haass, Richard, *The World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order*, New York: Penguin Press, (2017), pp. 5, 105 and 150.

⁶ Kroenig, Matthew, “The Case for Trump’s Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2017-04-17/case-trump-s-foreign-policy>.

⁷ For the text of the speech, see https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Address_Before_a_Joint_Session_of_the_Congress_on_the_Persian_Gulf

[Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit](#). See also George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, New York: Alfred Knopf, (1998), especially pp. 362-64 and 370.

⁸ See de Luce, Dan and Keith Johnson, “In the South China Sea, the U.S. is struggling to halt Beijing’s advance,” *Foreign Policy*, 25 May, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/25/in-the-south-china-sea-the-u-s-is-struggling-to-halt-beijings-advance/>.

Far from displaying strategic foresight, President Trump's policies so far appear to be based more on simply rejecting the policies of the previous administration rather than trying to deal with the new challenges, forces and actors and seeing how the US could maneuver in order to regain a degree of influence over international developments. President Trump is thus not changing the world - rather the world has already been undergoing some fundamental changes by itself. Three key trends can be highlighted in this regard with all being somewhat related to

...violent non-state actors have steadily increased their influence over the past two decades at the expense of the existing state system.

each other: globalization, the growing weakness of national and international institutions, and the weakness of the state leading to the rise of a variety of non-state actors including violent ones.

Globalization

Globalization has spread so rapidly that governments are overwhelmed by the effort to manage its consequences. On the one hand, globalization has led to a diffusion of power, from the state to the non-state actor level, in addition to questioning concepts such as sovereignty that have been at the heart of the existing state order since the Westphalian peace of 1648. Not only is power distributed more widely than at any time in history, but it is also increasingly difficult to translate the power one has into actual influence on the ground. The result is that nation-states find it increasingly difficult to produce well-

coordinated, constructive policies to current challenges given the many competing visions that exist about how such policies should be put forward. Globalization is indeed producing the G-zero world suggested by Ian Bremmer.⁹

On the other hand, globalization has paradoxically shifted the attention inward and led to an increase in domestic anxiety over issues such as free trade, unemployment and immigration. The exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union is an example of such existing anxiety. Overall, the emphasis on domestic issues has exposed the weakness of states and highlighted the fact that present-day institutions seem to lack the capacity to provide adequate answers to many of the problems faces by the people. While one has witnessed an increase in interdependence of international governance given the fact that many global challenges can no longer be solved solely at the local nation-state level, such interdependence no longer serves as a bulwark against conflict as had been hoped for in the literature of international relations. The forces of change have been too rapid for the world to catch up.

Weakness of international institutions

With the increased stress witnessed by national institutions in their bid to deliver solutions, international arrangements and organizations too have come under similar pressure. To be sure, the United States has been losing interest in international institutions for quite some time. In particular from the Republican side of the aisle in the US, criticism of organizations like the United Nations or the World Bank has been a regular

⁹ Bremmer, Ian, *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World*, New York: Penguin Books, (2012).

feature for many decades. With the US as the leader and primary defender of those institutions in the post-World War II era, its increased lackluster defense of those same institutions necessarily undermines their effectiveness in terms of providing policy solutions and conflict mitigation. President Trump's initial statement on NATO being "obsolete" and his failure during the recent attendance at the NATO summit to affirm Article 5 on collective defense has in turn increased doubts among European allies whether NATO can in effect honor its security guarantees.¹⁰ And while some will argue that the wake-up call for European countries to think more seriously about their own defense is a necessary and positive development, it is also the case that once allies begin to chart their own independent course in terms of their own security, it becomes difficult to return to previous arrangements. Thus, while President Trump may only wish to gain a more equitable arrangement, his action could in fact lead to the unraveling of the institution itself. The same goes for every other international organization out there.

The rise of the violent non-state actor

As stated previously, globalization has led to the state as the key organizing principle around which the modern international order has been constructed losing much of its relevance. But instead of power simply being more widely distributed and dispersed, the

weakness of the state has also led to the emergence of a different sort of actor whose explicit objective is to accelerate overall institutional decay. This development can be witnessed most prominently in the Middle East where violent non-state actors have steadily increased their influence over the past two decades at the expense of the existing state system.¹¹ At the moment, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen all represent failed states, and there is little to indicate that the previous system can be reinstated

Instead of introducing changes into the international system, what President Trump has done is accelerate the present-day disintegration through introducing a heightened degree of unpredictability...

at any time in the near future given that no concerted international efforts to reverse current trends in the region exists.¹² How detrimental the role of such groups is for wider stability and security can be seen by the example of Lebanon. As a non-state actor, Hezbollah currently has a larger military arsenal than some smaller NATO member countries, while at the same time no decision within Lebanon can be taken without the consent of this group. For two years, the country operated without a President while Hezbollah in effect paralyzed state institutions. All of this also has regional ramifications as the one country that has

¹⁰ See Stelzenmüller, Constanze, "Trump's abandonment of NATO in Brussels," *Brookings Institution*, 29 May, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/05/29/trumps-abandonment-of-nato-in-brussels/>.

¹¹ Eric Herring, for example, argues that armed groups in Iraq are both responding and contributing to the fragmentation and globalization of the Iraqi

state. See, Herring, Eric, "Armed Groups and Fragmentation and Globalization in Iraq," in Klejda Mulaj, ed., *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, London: Hurst & Company, (2010), pp. 181-206.

¹² Spyer, Jonathan, "Syria has effectively ceased to exist," *Foreign Policy*, 19 May, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/19/syria-has-ceased-to-exist-rebels-airstrikes-isis-russia-iran/>.

benefitted from this development is Iran which has used the breakdown of the state to spread its influence throughout the Middle East. However, this has led to an intensification of Iran's rivalry with Saudi Arabia which, in turn, has contributed to the turmoil that the Middle East currently confronts. A key question that exists at the moment is how violent non-state actors can be reined in or whether their current proliferation is a harbinger of things to come.

Instead of introducing changes into the international system, what President Trump has done is accelerate the present-day disintegration through introducing a heightened degree of unpredictability and disarray in terms of the orientation and current practice of current US foreign policy. One is likely to see a continued decline in international organizing principles with diverse centers of power and vacuums appearing that cannot be immediately filled by order and stability. President Trump did not create the conditions that have brought about this situation but his quick withdrawal from various aspects of remaining international norms have contributed to the worsening of the disorder being currently witnessed. Instead of re-establishing arrangements for global order, countries like the United States, Russia, China, India, Europe, Japan, Australia, Brazil, and South Korea will largely be confined to handling issues in their immediate neighborhood. Russia, China, Europe and the US will certainly try to project their influence beyond their immediate neighborhoods, but without being able to consolidate their status as permanent. Regions like the Middle East, which has long been considered one of the

most externally penetrated regions,¹³ will find itself consumed by continued turmoil brought about by the inability of external powers such as the United States to re-establish regional order and by the same inability of other powers such as Russia and China to fill the vacuum; by regional states trying to fill the void without having the necessary capacities; and by the decay of the state and its replacement by various non-state actors, mostly of the violent kind. It is not a pretty picture indeed.

¹³ Brown, L. Carl, *International Politics and the Middle East: Old Rules, Dangerous Game*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, (1984).

Early Skirmishes in a Twilight Struggle: Trump Administration Foreign Policy at 100 Days

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We live in an era of hot-takes and instant analysis that seeks to explain it all to us, with absolute conviction, and preferably in 142 characters. So, it is with commentary on the 100th day in office of the new Trump administration. Some pundits who recently prophesized the end of civilization with the swearing in of the 45th US President, now

Careful, deliberate policies can have toxic consequences.

either seek to tell us how disastrous those first three months have been, or how they have not been disastrous because the Trump administration has abandoned every supposed policy or conviction it had expressed during the 2016 election campaign. Reality is to be found, as is so often the case, in the messy, muddled middle. It is my contention that the new American administration has done much that is right in foreign affairs. What it seeks is perfectly reasonable and a much needed restoration of priorities within the international order. At the same time, it is fully recognized that there is no possible way of predicting what Trump's foreign policy legacy will be. Neither success nor failure is foreordained.

Certain Beginnings, Uncertain Ends

One need only look at 2009 and a new American President praised for being so different than his predecessor. In 2009, Barack Obama would give a highly praised speech – at the time – in Cairo on a positive course in US relations with the Muslim world and would be awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize for not being George W. Bush. He would give still another speech presaging a “pivot to Asia” (meaning Asia outside the Middle East) and his high-profile Secretary of State would rollout a “reset with Russia.” Yet by 2016, all those issues would ring hollow. There was no new positive course with the Muslim world. The US continued to be involved in several wars in the Middle East, there was no pivot to Asia and certainly no reset with Russia. The Obama foreign policy legacy, if there is one to tout rather than to lament, has very little to do with those early, much publicized milestones.

Despite the grandiose dreams of many American administrations, unexpected events and crises have a way of shaping their political legacies in ways undreamed of. Careful, deliberate policies can have toxic consequences. The Obama administration's supposed clever and well-thought out grand strategy left a Middle East where all of America's adversaries – Russia, Iran, Salafi-Jihadist groups like the Islamic State – were empowered.¹ Some of the same that saw foresight in Obama foreign policy see this Trump unpredictability as an “Incompetence Doctrine.”²

¹ Brands, Hal, “Breaking Down Obama's Grand Strategy”, *The National Interest*, 23 June, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/breaking-down-obamas-grand-strategy-10719>.

² Brands, Hal, “The Incompetence Doctrine”, *War on the Rocks*, 2 May, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/05/the-incompetence-doctrine/>.

We Didn't Start the Fire

President Trump inherited a world on fire. This is a global scene featuring a seemingly unravelling, rather than just changing, international order. While much attention has been rightly given to crises in the Middle East with the shaking of authority typified by the Arab Spring and the disruptions caused by ISIS and Iranian adventurism, the problems go far beyond that turbulent region.

President Trump's apparent immediate concerns are very much within the context of traditional US foreign policy formulations and clearly connected with upholding the established international order. The top of a prioritized notional list would be a possible military confrontation with North Korea and this is only the latest phase in a decades-long struggle with that dangerous rogue state. Second, is the completion of the destruction of the Islamic State as a major threat in the Middle East. This is both something begun by the previous administration (which was also blindsided by the rise of ISIS) and the fulfilment of a campaign promise. A third item on that list could be curbing unbridled Iranian aggression in the Middle East, still another long-standing problem that worsened appreciably under the previous administration.

None of these challenges were of this administration's making and as far as one can tell, they are being handled in very traditional ways, with varying compositions of military power, diplomacy and alliances. Some of the language and the formulations may differ considerably from the Obama administration, but they are well within the context of the

Republican Party mainstream as seen in past GOP administrations.

Enhancing Stability in an Inherently Unstable Region

Leaving aside North Korea, on ISIS, the real challenge the administration faces is one that has bedevilled past administrations: the ability of pro-American and/or anti-ISIS forces to hold and keep territory recovered from terrorists. Even more than just holding ground, the challenge for these mostly fragile or non-existent governments is whether in Iraq or Syria or Yemen or Libya is to be able to provide the minimum acceptable level of governance to ensure their security forces can prohibit another terrorist insurgency.

On Syria, the administration's early discussion of safe zones, most likely in Eastern Syria, at least tantalizingly held out the possibility of an option offering some sort of tangible relief for suffering Syrian refugees and IDPs. The devil is in the details, but this is at least an attempt at achieving something beyond what the previous administration dared.³ Such zones could give some Syrians a chance to reconstruct lives inside their own country outside the iron fisted rule of Salafi-Jihadists and presumably Assad's barrel bombs and sarin gas. They could also resemble open air prisons, supposed "de-escalation zones" that facilitate regime ethnic cleansing or that could quickly escalate into kill zones.

On Iran, the administration has trod carefully, sending a tougher message on ballistic missiles and regional interference while

³ "Regional powers agree on Syria 'de-escalation zones'", *Al Jazeera*, 5 May, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/regional->

[powers-agree-syria-de-escalation-zones-170504121509588.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/regional-powers-agree-syria-de-escalation-zones-170504121509588.html).

leaving the controversial JCPOA intact. One could say that both the Tomahawk missile strike against an Assad airbase and the use of a GBU-43 (the so-called MOAB) in Afghanistan were concrete messages sent to both Iran and North Korea that this is an administration unafraid to use force if needed and will do so with very little warning. Liberal angst about ambiguity on trade or walls aside this seems to be a US government that intends to be quite clear about the use of force. But if the administration cannot confront Iran in Syria because of the changed circumstances achieved by Russian arms in 2015-2016, where can it choose to blunt Iranian ambitions? Aside from achieving success in Yemen, additional sanctions targeting Iranian support for terrorism, ballistic missile research and singling out the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) are real options, but are those alone enough to curb regime behavior? One way to do so is indeed to separate Russia from Iran in the Middle East. The US can offer Moscow a “better price” in return for some sort of regional rapprochement, but the cost may be too high in both domestic and foreign political terms for the White House. Many knowledgeable scholars see this effort as a fool’s errand doomed to failure.⁴

But even more significant, than those airstrikes, has been a concerted and ongoing effort by the administration to shore up

...the Trump administration has so far refrained from designating the MB as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), it is at least mulling over.

relations with our traditional Arab allies, Egypt, GCC states, and Jordan, and with Israel in the wake of a disastrous falling out between them and the previous American administration. This is a reasonable gamble as it entails, once again, embracing some authoritarian regimes as key partners, but again, despite the criticism, this is not straying very much from the mainstream of U.S. foreign policy.

One of the great disconnects of Western punditry was not understanding how disliked Obama was in the region and that polemical issues like a visa ban or talking about radical Islam were marginal to the concerns of most regional governments. At least, much more marginal than weightier questions of US-Iranian relations or the Obama administration’s relations with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).

An Unexplored Ideological Dimension

While the Trump administration has so far refrained from designating the MB as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), it is at least mulling over. Congress is looking into what possible steps could be taken to increase the pressure on this entity. Supposedly, some regional governments advised the administration against an FTO designation for the MB. What is still possible is conceiving new foreign policy tools to at least “name and shame” individuals and sub-groups connected to the MB who engage in types of hate speech that help amplify and strengthen the narrative of groups like ISIS and al-Qa’ida. Such an Incitement Index would at least be a step in the right direction

⁴ Berman, Ilan, “Why Russia Won’t Help Trump On Iran”, *Foreign Affairs*, 10 February, 2017,

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-02-10/why-russia-wont-help-trump-iran>.

– assuming it could successfully run the gauntlet of State Department or Department of Justice lawyers – that falls short of an outright, blanket FTO designation, but shines a bright light on MB statements and actions. Certainly, when MB supporters use the same language and justifications as ISIS does to defame and target vulnerable religious minorities, they are providing a real service

...the Trump approach would be “unpredictable,” flexible, “not rigid” and that it also would look askance at too readily using the US military to affect regime change.

to the Islamic State by normalizing a blood libel.

Independent of a focus on the *Ikhwan*, but certainly in the same neighborhood, is a realization by the new administration

that there is an ideological dimension to the struggle with terrorist and authoritarian bad actors. They see that the “war of ideas” is a struggle that never really went away. Whether in the lively and continued revolutionary appeal of Salafi-Jihadism or the revival of Far-Left on university campuses and big cities will be effective is unknown, but recognizing or naming the problem is the first step in a long campaign. At the very least, this new-found focus would be welcomed by US allies in Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which are also ramping up their efforts.⁵

Defining what America and the West are for, not just what it is against is today a heavy lift. The reality of ideological warfare is that it

⁵ “The Ideological Warfare Center (IWC) launches a global project to counter the ideology of extremism”, *Riyadh Daily*, 1 May, 2017, <http://sites.alriyadh.com/en/article/1158606/The-Ideological-Warfare-Center-IWC-launches-a-global-project-to-counter-the-ideology-of-extremism>.

can seem (and be) so important, but it is easy to do poorly.⁶ The administration will have to decide whether a fully-fledged ideas game is worth the candle. If so, it will have to develop new tools or refocus existing authorities and entities on an ideological task that will have to go against the current given the political environment.

This new administration also faces a challenge the previous one faced and that is the resurgence of al-Qa’ida, practicing a more nuanced form of terror, while so much focus has been given to ISIS. Certainly, the promotion of Islamist and Jihadist notions into the body politic of *Dar al-Islam* and the Muslim diaspora was the patient work of decades. Does this or any other American administration have the clarity of purpose and patience to pursue such a goal in reversing that broad and diverse ideological movement that is political Islam in its various toxic manifestations?

Doubling Down on America and a Minimalist Approach Elsewhere?

It should be underscored that none of these steps or concepts described above clash with a foreign policy focused on “putting American interests first.” White House official Michael Anton made this abundantly clear in an April 2017 interview when he noted that steps taken are consistent with Trump’s campaign promises:

“There’s an approach to the use of force, there’s an approach to putting American interests first, an approach

⁶ Fernandez, Alberto M., “Renewing a Convincing American Global Engagement”, *Providence Journal* (online), 7 September, 2016, <https://providencemag.com/2016/09/renewing-convincing-american-global-engagement/>.

to putting especially the interest of American workers and the American economy first in trade negotiations.”⁷

While mentioning that the specific outlines of a national security strategy will emerge in writing later in 2017, Anton noted that the Trump approach would be “unpredictable,” flexible, “not rigid” and that it also would look askance at too readily using the US military to affect regime change. This is an administration which will not shy away from responsibilities and challenges but will avoid new open-ended, vague and expensive foreign misadventures. It will use the traditional multilateral tools to promote core interests but refashion them when they cannot, in a way that can be “disruptive but not doctrinaire.”⁸

Such a strategy by the new American administration, even in its vaguest, broad-brush strokes, is not so much revolutionary but realistic, seeking to restore the imbalance caused by decades of over-investment in a constantly expanding activist global agenda that seeks to subvert and subsume the power of nation states, and particularly the American nation state, into a pricey, unending and quixotic quest for utopia. The US has been, even at its lowest, far less down this path than say, the European Union, but the overreach by much of our political and cultural elite to remake America and the world into something different remains. This

is the paradigm shift bitterly described by French philosopher Pierre Manent as:

“The only humanly significant realities, the only ones which are entitled to incontestable rights, are the individual on the one hand and humanity on the other; between these two, strictly speaking, there is nothing of worth. This doctrine applies in different areas: in economic terms, against any form of protectionism; in political terms, against any form of national sovereignty; in moral terms, against any intermediary group whose legitimacy might contradict the rights of the individual or of humanity. It is ultimately a religious doctrine since it concerns our relationship with the Whole or the ‘world’.”⁹

Manent is, of course, describing the extreme subsuming of national agendas and identities to multilateral or global ones seen particularly by the EU but common, to a greater or lesser extent, to the desires of a globalizing elite elsewhere pursuing their goals with a crusading zeal. And it is that long embedded and entitled elite, not Trump nor assorted foreign populists, who have shaken the liberal world order to its roots over the past few years.¹⁰ Today, many Americans are concerned not about a world order, but a national one that seems increasingly fraught and dysfunctional. An

⁷ Glasser, Susan B., “Michael Anton: The Full Transcript”, *Politico*, 17 April, 2017, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/michael-anton-the-full-transcript-215029>.

⁸ Rozen, Laura, “White House sees wild-card nature as asset in Trump’s first foreign trip”, *Al-Monitor News*, 4 May, 2017, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/05/trump-trip-saudi-arabia-israel-rome-rally-intolerance.html#ixzz4g9erR18V>.

⁹ Manent, Pierre, “Populist Demagoguery and the Fanaticism of the Center”, *American Affairs Journal*, Vol.1, No.2 (Summer 2017), 9-18.

¹⁰ Kirchick, James, “Who Killed the Liberal World Order?”, *The American Interest*, 3 May, 2017, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/05/03/who-killed-the-liberal-world-order/>.

internally broken and divided America, overwhelmed with internal challenges, will be of little use in righting international wrongs.

Despite the apparent occasional bombast (and the over the top hysteria from the critics), there is a word that never seems to go

...one cannot expect that it will seek to remake or hold together in its entirety an increasingly brittle and costly international order that carries within itself the seeds of its own instability.

with a Trump administration, or specifically with its foreign policy, but perhaps should and that is humility. I am not going to dwell on regions far beyond my area of interest, but a Trump Middle East strategy that prioritizes American interests, eschews regime change and nation building,

focuses on traditional allies and adversaries, tries to show flexibility, is an approach that acknowledges that we live in a world of limits. Past ambitious policies have often backfired and we must cultivate our own gardens. It is an attempt at triage, to be humble in a realist world and minimalist, however inchoate it may seem.

There is much that can and may go wrong. Such is the nature of statecraft. The administration does need to staff up at precisely the same time it seeks to remake, refocus and trim the foreign policy establishment.¹¹ In the Middle East at least, there are relatively clear outlines of a nascent

policy that can be reasonable and practical in the short run, realizing that the region is experiencing unprecedented upheaval that has local roots, which will run their course – at times disastrously – with or without the US. But there is much good that the US can and should do. The administration can look to common sense, low-cost creativity to help shore up the region while restoring frayed relationships with old allies, but one cannot expect that it will seek to remake or hold together in its entirety an increasingly brittle and costly international order that carries within itself the seeds of its own instability.¹²

¹¹ Jeffrey, James F., “To Save the State Department, Rex Tillerson May Have to Break It”, *Foreign Policy*, 3 March, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/03/massive-change-is-coming-to-the-state-department-rex-tillerson-bad-habits-diplomacy-focus/>.

¹² Amstutz, Mark, “The Renewal of Global Order”, *Providence Journal*, 4 May, 2017, <https://providencemag.com/2017/05/the-renewal-of-global-order/>.

Will President Trump Bring about Major Changes to the International Order?

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Before embarking on a quest to investigate whether the early days of Donald Trump's presidency have carried the signs of upsetting the functioning of the international system, it is worth reminding ourselves that the system has already been malfunctioning to an alarming degree in recent decades. It failed to deal adequately with many of the world's

...we have entered a post-unipolar era where the old order is challenged, and the formula or shape of the replacement is unclear.

issues and challenges including, but not limited to, climate change, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the obsolete and prejudiced structure of the UN Security Council.¹ To be sure, following the ill-

advised 2003 United States invasion of Iraq, the 2011 revolutions dubbed the "Arab Spring" which left the Middle East facing a highly complex set of security threats, the rise of the so-called "Islamic State," a resurgent and aggressive Russia, an emboldened and hostile Iran even after the nuclear deal, and eight years of President Barak Obama's arguably disastrous foreign policy, the status and prospect of the international order seems bleak.² The

question to ask then is: Can President Trump make the situation even bleaker?

Surely, there is always room for situations to deteriorate. However, when it comes to the Middle East, a region that continuously highlights and demonstrates the failures of the international system,³ it is hard to imagine a worse situation. A war-criminal dictator, supported by Iranian-backed terrorist Shi'a militias and the Russian air force, has been committing atrocities against his own people leading to one of the worst humanitarian situations in history with an unprecedented impact on European stability. Civil/proxy wars rage in Syria, Libya, and Yemen, and a terrorist organization that fashions itself as an "Islamic State" rules over large swaths of territory in both Syria and Iraq. Iranian-backed minority-group rebels seized Sana'a, Yemen's capital, prompting a Saudi-led Arab coalition to intervene and start a war that continues more than two years on, in an effort to defend and reinstate the legitimate Yemeni government.

In general, the post-Cold War version of the international order established, promulgated, and proclaimed as universal by the West, promising that democracy and free markets would bring peace and justice to the world, is under a lot of strain.⁴ A wave of nationalism seems to be sweeping across the West, evident from the victory of the "America first" president, the UK's Brexit vote, and the rise of populist anti-immigrant movements

¹Nick Bisley, *Great Powers in the Changing International Order*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2012), p. 145; Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), pp. 336-341.

²Stephen M. Walt, "Barack Obama was a Foreign-Policy Failure," *Foreign Policy*, January 18, 2017; Shadi Hamid, "Obama and the Limits of 'Fact-based Foreign Policy,'" *The Atlantic*, January 18, 2017; Nauman Sadiq, "Obama's Legacy of Failure in the

Middle East," *Foreign Policy Journal*, August 20, 2016.

³Fergal Keane, "International System Has Failed Syria," *BBC*, December 21, 2015.

⁴Bruce Jones et al., "The State of the International Order," *Brookings Policy Paper* 33, February 2014; Stephen M. Walt, "The Collapse of the Liberal World Order," *Foreign Policy*, June 26, 2016.

across the economically-stagnant European Union, which once seemed like a bold and promising project.⁵ The phenomenon of “failed states” can be seen in several parts of the world. The threat of terrorism has intensified and spread to new countries.⁶ Almost wherever you look in the Middle East today, you find a region riddled by economic and political instability, sectarianism, and wars. Thus, it is safe to argue that we have entered a post-unipolar era where the old order is challenged, and the formula or shape of the replacement is unclear. Bearing in mind this context that predates Trump’s presidency, let us assess the impact of his first 100 days on an international order that is already in flux.

As a presidential candidate, Trump made several unsettling vows that had the potential to exacerbate an already fraying world order, especially given the United States’ position and stature in the world. As Stewart Patrick correctly observed, “[I]n foreign policy and economics, he has made clear that the pursuit of narrow national advantage will guide his policies—apparently regardless of the impact on the liberal world order that the United States has championed since 1945.”⁷ However, actions speak louder than words, and some of Trump’s actions during the early days of his presidency have already contradicted his earlier rhetoric and signaled a possibly new approach to NATO, the EU,

Russia, China, North Korea, Syria, climate policy, and other targets, but not Iran.

In terms of geopolitics, candidate Trump disparaged the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), describing its “mission and structure” as “outdated” and “obsolete.”⁸ However, less than three months after assuming office, the President, who was elected on a wave of American nationalism, reversed course by officially describing the organization as a “bulwark of international peace and security” and declaring it to be “no longer obsolete.”⁹ Trump’s comments before assuming office regarding the European Union (EU) were no less worrying. He labelled the Union a “vehicle for Germany,” welcomed Brexit, and believed others would follow Britain.¹⁰ Such comments caused much concern among the United States’ European allies, prompting some European analysts to argue that Trump’s inauguration “heralds the arrival of a new world order.”¹¹ Nonetheless, Trump’s remarks as president a month later, signalling his support for the EU and calling it “wonderful,” contrasted sharply with his earlier ones and soothed some of his allies’ fears and worries.¹²

⁵ John Lanchester, “The Failure of the Euro,” *The New Yorker*, October 24, 2016.

⁶ Kara Fox and Dave Gilbert, “Terror Attacks in Developed World Surge 650% in One Year,” *CNN*, November 16, 2016.

⁷ Stewart M. Patrick, “Trump and World Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2017.

⁸ Jenna Johnson, “I Will Give You Everything.” Here are 282 of Donald Trump’s Campaign Promises,” *The Washington Post*, November 28, 2016.

⁹ Ali Vitali, “Trump Reverses on NATO: ‘It Is No Longer Obsolete,’” *NBC News*, April 13, 2017.

¹⁰ Henry Mance et al., “Donald Trump Takes Swipe at EU as ‘Vehicle for Germany,’” *Financial Times*, January 15, 2017.

¹¹ Christian Esch et al., “Donald Trump and the New World Order,” *Spiegel*, January 20, 2017.

¹² Alastair Macdonald, “EU Relieved but Wary after Trump Endorses It as ‘Wonderful,’” *Reuters*, February 24, 2017.

On Russia, Trump's early soft approach and kind gestures to Moscow, which fuelled perceptions of a collusion between his campaign and the Kremlin, were strongly reversed, in response to developments in Syria and especially the latest chemical weapons attack, giving way to a harder stance consistent with traditional United States' foreign policy. While during the campaign Trump thought that it would be great to work with Russia to solve pressing problems and wipe out shared enemies,¹³ he told a press conference in April 2017:

“Right now, we are not getting along with Russia at all. We may be at an all-time low in terms of a relationship with Russia [...] Russia is a strong country. We are a very, very strong country. We are going to see how that all works out.”¹⁴

The exact opposite happened with China. While he had repeatedly accused it of being a currency manipulator, vowing to stop its “raping” of the US economy,¹⁵ he recently extended an olive branch, hailed its President Xi Jinping as a “very special man” with whom he has a “great chemistry,” and backed away from labelling it a currency manipulator.¹⁶ Similarly, during the campaign Trump signalled that he would

have no problem communicating with North Korea's Kim Jong Un about his nuclear program, which would be a break from traditional US policy towards the isolated nation.¹⁷ However, tensions have escalated in the region after North Korea's huge display of missiles and its failed missile test in mid-April 2017. The following day, the

A blend of tough talk and targeted sanctions on Iran characterize both Trump's campaign trail and the first 100 days of his administration.

US Vice President Mike Pence warned from South Korea that the era of “strategic patience” with North Korea is over:

“Just in the past two weeks, the world witnessed the strength and resolve of our new president in actions taken in Syria and Afghanistan [...] North Korea would do well not to test his resolve or the strength of the armed forces of the United States in this region.”¹⁸

With regards to Syria, while candidate Trump wanted to stay out of the Syrian civil war, insinuating that rebels backed by the US

¹³ Philip Bump, “Donald Trump's Falsehood-laden Press Conference, Annotated,” *Washington Post*, July 27, 2016; Tyler Pager, “Trump to Look at Recognizing Crimea as Russian Territory, Lifting Sanctions,” *Politico*, July 27, 2016.

¹⁴ “Joint Press Conference of President Trump and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg,” *The White House*, April 12, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/12/joint-press-conference-president-trump-and-nato-secretary-general>.

¹⁵ Jeremy Diamond, “Trump: ‘We Can't Continue to Allow China to Rape our Country’,” *CNN*, May 2, 2016.

¹⁶ David Lawder, “Trump Backs Away from Labelling China a Currency Manipulator,” *Reuters*, April 13, 2017; Tom Phillips, “‘Great Chemistry’: Trump Abandons China Criticism as Russia Ties Suffer,” *The Guardian*, April 13, 2017; Josh Lederman, “Trump's U-turn on Russia, China Realigns Policy with Obama's,” *Portland Press Herald*, April 16, 2017.

¹⁷ Steve Holland and Emily Flitter, “Exclusive: Trump Would Talk to North Korea's Kim, Wants to Renegotiate Climate Accord,” *Reuters*, May 18, 2016.

¹⁸ Roberta Rampton and Ju-min Park, “Pence Warns North Korea of U.S. Resolve Shown in Syria, Afghan Strikes,” *Reuters*, April 17, 2017.

may actually be worse than Assad,¹⁹ President Trump changed course, with his first major military operation hitting the Syrian airbase from which Assad's planes launched the Khan Sheikhoun chemical attack. Trump's enforced the "red line" that his predecessor drew, but failed to apply, was the first sign that the "America first" president can in fact act forcefully and responsibly, as the world's reigning superpower, and restore some of America's badly-damaged credibility and ability to project strength on the world stage.²⁰

One of the few foreign policy areas on which Trump's early rhetoric somewhat matches his messages and actions as President is Iran.²¹ A blend of tough talk and targeted sanctions on Iran characterize both Trump's campaign trail and the first 100 days of his administration.²² Despite Obama's rapprochement and conciliatory efforts, along with long-standing sanctions, Iran remains, as Trump's Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said, "the world's leading sponsor of terrorism"²³ and has never ceased its destabilizing activities and meddling in the internal affairs of its regional neighbors. Therefore, the Trump administration's tough stance is most certainly a stark and positive departure from Obama's "share the

neighborhood" attitude to power politics in the Middle East.

One thing has proved to be certain. In a region where reliable, responsible, and traditionally peaceful allies (the Arab Gulf states) exist alongside a hostile and ambitious rival (Iran), it is destabilizing to the regional and ultimately international order. To see the traditional guarantor of stability, the US, withdraw and take a neutral position, creating a vacuum and implicitly call for a new military equilibrium in the region was contrasted to Trump's forceful, assuring declaration that the United States was putting Iran "on notice".²⁴

While candidate and President-elect Trump promised a break with traditional American foreign policy, causing a great deal of anxiety among friends and allies, President Trump has reversed course on most of the controversial issues and been working hard to reassure allies of American friendship and backing, while sending strong messages to foes and adversaries. That is certainly a

...playing a responsible role in the evolution of a twenty-first century international order needs effective leadership rather than withdrawal and isolationism.

¹⁹ Ben Jacobs, "The Donald Trump Doctrine: 'Assad Is Bad' but US Must Stop 'Nation-building'," *The Guardian*, October 13, 2015.

²⁰ Demetri Sevastopulo et al., "Trump's Syria Shift Confounds Foreign Policy Experts," *Financial Times*, April 7, 2017; David A. Graham, "What Is Trump's Syria Policy," *The Atlantic*, April 11, 2017.

²¹ It should be noted, however, that during his campaign, Trump promised to tear up the Iran nuclear deal and renegotiate the whole thing. Nothing of the sort has happened yet, and it is unlikely that a complete tear up of the deal would ensue, although he warned on April 20, 2017, that his administration will have "something to say about it [the deal] in the

not-too-distant future." See Kelsey Sutton, "Trump: Iran 'Not Living up to the Spirit' of the Nuclear Deal," *Politico*, April 20, 2017.

²² Louis Nelson and Nahal Toosi, "Trump Slaps New Sanctions on Iran after Missile Test," *Politico*, February 3, 2017; Margaret Brennan, "Trump Administration Planning New Iran Sanctions," *CBS News*, March 24, 2017.

²³ Elise Labott and Nicole Gaouette, "Trump Administration Talks Tougher on Iran but Sticks with Deal—for Now," *CNN*, April 20, 2017.

²⁴ Julian Borger, "Trump Administration 'Officially Putting Iran on Notice', Says Michael Flynn," *The Guardian*, February 2, 2017.

positive development that should be welcomed not criticized, as it shows that the president in fact listens to the advice and opinions of his experienced team of advisors and the cabinet. However, it is Trump's unpredictability that most worrying to friends and foes alike.²⁵ It remains to be seen whether such unpredictability, and at times contradictory statements coming out from his team, is a conscious tactic akin to President Nixon's "Madman Strategy,"²⁶ or a product of his personal temperament.

Just 100 days into his presidency, it is hard to piece together his foreign policy strategy and views on the international order. While he seems to disagree with the foreign policy choices and strategy pursued by his predecessor, he has yet to come up with a clear and coherent alternative strategy. This ambiguity has led some to label him "an isolationist interventionist."²⁷ However, what has transpired in the past few months is that Trump's administration has been coordinating closely with its regional allies in the Gulf and the Middle East to counter terrorism and search for a formula that can prove conducive to the re-establishment of regional order.²⁸ If such focus and cooperation continues for the long run, results can be very beneficial and conducive to the international order.

It is always good for the world's superpower to be more engaged and lead from the front, especially if it wants to affect the outcome of

the new international order that is in the making. However, ratcheting up rhetoric and threats has its dangers as well. As Jeffery Goldberg wrote recently:

"Obama may have been paralyzed by a phobic reaction to the threat posed by the slippery slope. Donald Trump now finds himself dancing at the edge of the slippery slope his predecessor so assiduously avoided."²⁹

To sum up, major changes in the international order were underway prior to Donald Trump's presidency. Despite contradictory statements and the nationalist sentiments and promises of his campaign, his first 100 days in office indicate an inclination towards hard-power and active involvement on the world stage. How exactly will that affect the international order is of course still murky. However, playing a responsible role in the evolution of a twenty-first century international order needs effective leadership rather than withdrawal and isolationism. The United States needs to assume its responsibility as a leader and guarantor of security in many regions around the world, project strength and stand firm alongside its allies. However, needless to say, the projection of power is not the same as the use of power. While the former is always required, the latter should be carefully and rigorously calculated so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

²⁵Michael H. Fuchs, "Donald Trump's Doctrine of Unpredictability Has the World on Edge," *The Guardian*, February 13, 2017.

²⁶William Burr and Jeffrey P. Kimball, "Nixon, Kissinger, and the Madman Strategy during Vietnam War," *The National Security Archive*, May 29, 2015, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb517-Nixon-Kissinger-and-the-Madman-Strategy-during-Vietnam-War/>.

²⁷Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine, R.I.P.," *The Atlantic*, April 7, 2017.

²⁸"In Call, Trump, Saudi King Pledge to Step up Counter-Terrorism Push: Source," *Reuters*, January 30, 2017; Kristian C. Ulrichsen, "U.S. Policies in the Middle East under the Trump Presidency," *Orient XXI*, April 18, 2017.

²⁹Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine, R.I.P."

Trump's National Security Establishment and U.S. Foreign Policy: Five Emerging Trends

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With Donald Trump having passed his first one hundred days milestone in office, the president's national security team has begun to settle into place. How that team operates will have a profound effect on U.S. national security in coming years. Indeed, several trends are already emerging. If these trends continue, by the end of Donald Trump's first term in office, U.S. foreign relations will be transformed. The landscape of the international arena may also be forever altered.

Assessing President Trump's National Security Team

Four figures are key to Trump's national security team:

The first is Secretary of Defense James Mattis, who is a recently retired Marine general. Mattis' appointment has been widely praised across the political spectrum in the U.S.³⁰ He is perceived as bringing

sobriety, experience³¹ and deep knowledge of international affairs to the new and untested administration. His world view and foreign policy perspective also are familiar in Washington. They appear to hew closely to the hawkish, internationalist wing of the Republican Party. Like many establishment Republicans, for example, Mattis exhibits deeply-held suspicions of Russia and favors a strong U.S. commitment to NATO.³²

As the former head of U.S. Central Command (which oversees U.S. military operations in the Middle East), Mattis also has had deep experience in the region. He previously advocated a more aggressive strategy to challenge ISIS/Daesh in Iraq and Syria. As Secretary, he has already overseen an increased U.S. military commitment to those conflicts.³³ Mattis also remains deeply suspicious of Iran's regional ambitions. As he recently put it, "Everywhere you look, if there is trouble in the region, you find Iran."³⁴ Soon after becoming Secretary of Defense, Mattis met with Saudi officials in an effort to consolidate cooperation on countering Iran and other security issues.

³⁰ Carl, Jeremy, "General Mattis Is a Great Man – and a Good One", *National Review*, 2 December 2016,

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/442673/getting-know-general-general-mattis-great-man-and-more-importantly-good-one>.

³¹ Lamothe, Dan, "James Mattis is sworn in as defense secretary, pledges to build alliances", *The Washington Post*, 20 January, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/01/20/senate-confirms-retired-gen-james-mattis-as-defense-secretary-breaking-with-decades-of-precedent/?utm_term=.24729112cbc1.

³² Gardiner, Harris, "Jim Mattis, in Lithuania, Reaffirms U.S. Commitment to NATO", *The New York Times*, 10 May, 2017,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/10/world/europe/jim-mattis-nato-us-lithuania.html>.

³³ A news transcript from the Department of Defense Press Briefing by Secretary Mattis, General Dunford and Special Envoy McGurk on the Campaign to Defeat ISIS in the Pentagon Press Briefing Room, 19 May, 2017,

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1188225/department-of-defense-press-briefing-by-secretary-mattis-general-dunford-and-sp/>.

³⁴ Babb, Carla, "US, Saudi Arabia Affirm Cooperation in Countering 'Iran's Mischief'", *VOA News*, 19 April, 2017, <http://www.voanews.com/a/us-saudi-arabia-affirm-cooperation-in-countering-iran-mischief/3816816.html>.

Thus far, the president has delegated broad responsibility to Mattis in overseeing the country's political-military strategies—most notably in the conflicts in the Middle East. Mattis, by many accounts, remains a pivotal figure in the administration and a stabilizing force in its defense policy. Still, it is too early to tell how much influence Mattis might have on issues in which Trump has a major stake as president, such as those that might affect the support of his Republican base of voters—or when, and if, he might misstep and fall out of favor with the president.

A second key player on Trump's national security team is Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. Before being tapped as secretary, Tillerson was chief executive of the global energy company ExxonMobil and in that capacity had extensive contacts with leaders across the globe. Yet, he lacks experience as a diplomat and is reported to have said that he neither sought nor wanted the job when asked to take it.³⁵ Early in Tillerson's tenure there were reports of morale plummeting at the State Department.³⁶ He also raised eyebrows for his seeming disengagement and exclusion of the press on a major trip to Asia.³⁷ A recent speech to State Department employees appears to have been favorably received.³⁸ Yet, there is still considerable

uncertainty about whether he has the skill or inclination to embrace the role of the country's chief diplomat and provide essential leadership to the State Department. Notably, Tillerson has not pushed back publicly on the president's proposed 30% cut to the department's budget and is proceeding with a major reorganization while leaving many positions unfilled.³⁹

Unlike most Secretaries of State, Tillerson also does not appear to bring a clear ideological world view or vision to his role.

Unlike most Secretaries of State, Tillerson also does not appear to bring a clear ideological world view or vision to his role. In public statements, he generally describes his role as realizing the president's priorities and developing policies that help promote security and economic interests consistent with Trump's "America First" vision. He is a regular visitor to the White House, but by his own admission must work to "win the president's confidence every day."⁴⁰ How much of an independent voice he will have on foreign policy remains to be seen.

³⁵ Borger, Julian, "Rex Tillerson: 'I didn't want this job...my wife told me I'm supposed to do this'", *The Guardian*, 22 March, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/mar/22/rex-tillerson-i-didnt-want-this-job>.

³⁶ Ioffe, Julia, "The State of Trump's State Department", *The Atlantic*, 1 March, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/state-department-trump/517965/>.

³⁷ Turner, Karen, "Why Rex Tillerson's Choice not to bring a press corps to Asia is unusual- and troubling", *VOX*, 16 March, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/conversations/2017/3/16/14944494/rex-tillerson-trump-asia-japan-state-department>.

³⁸ Kelemen, Michele, "After Maintaining Low Profile, Rex Tillerson Addresses State Department

Staff", *National Public Radio (NPR)*, 3 May, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526779511/after-maintaining-low-profile-rex-tillerson-addresses-state-department-staff>.

³⁹ Jeffrey, James F., "To Save the State Department, Rex Tillerson May Have to Break It", *Foreign Policy*, 3 March, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/03/massive-change-is-coming-to-the-state-department-rex-tillerson-bad-habits-diplomacy-focus/>.

⁴⁰ "Tillerson on Trump: 'I Have To Earn His Confidence Everyday'", *NBC News*, 13 May, 2017, <http://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/video/tillerson-on-trump-i-have-to-earn-his-confidence-every-day-943316035646>.

A third major figure in the national security team is Trump's National Security Adviser (NSA), Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster. As National Security Adviser McMaster is responsible for overseeing the National Security Council (NSC), which is the president's main body for managing foreign policy and national security issues. The NSC has a dedicated staff and provides for coordination of the different executive departments (e.g., State, Defense, Energy, Homeland Security). Its "principals committee" brings together Cabinet level and other key officials to consult during crises and on major foreign policy or strategic initiatives. As NSA, McMaster's job is to ensure that the NSC process runs smoothly and to provide his own advice on international issues to the president.

Since taking over from Michael Flynn who was pressed to resign in February 2017, McMaster and other officials have reportedly done a great deal to address flagging morale in the staff and make the NSC process more systematic. His efforts and influence were on display in the administration's deliberations prior to the decision to strike the Assad regime in April 2017 after its most recent use of chemical weapons against Syrian civilians.⁴¹

Like Secretary Mattis, McMaster is well-known and respected in Washington. Also like Mattis, McMaster has deep experience in the Middle East. He is known for his innovations in counterinsurgency doctrine during the 2003 Iraq War, experiences that appear to color his views of current U.S. military operations in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.⁴² Like Mattis, McMaster could have a substantial impact on the U.S. role in those wars.⁴³ McMaster's authority, however, is reportedly limited by some NSC staffers previously chosen by Michael Flynn and by others; although this could change if some planned staffing changes materialize.⁴⁴ More broadly, outsiders like McMaster may face obstacles in penetrating the president's inner circle of family members and close advisors. The general nonetheless remains a figure to watch, in part because his impact on policy could be a barometer of the relative influence of professionals and those of his worldview within the White House.⁴⁵

⁴¹ See Remarks With National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster on US Department of State website, 6 April, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/04/269543.htm>.

⁴² Ayers, Rick, "Understanding H.R. McMaster- The Mind Of The War-Maker", *Huffington Post*, 7 April, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/understanding-hr-mcmaster-the-mind-of-the-war-maker_us_58e64f49e4b02c1f72345a90.

⁴³ Tucker, Patrick, "How McMaster Could Change the Way the US Goes to War", *Defense One*, 20

February 2017,

<http://www.defenseone.com/politics/2017/02/how-mcmaster-could-change-way-us-goes-war/135571/>.

⁴⁴ Brannen, Kate, "The Knives Are Out for Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster", *Foreign Policy*, 9 May, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/09/the-knives-are-out-for-hr-mcmaster-trump-bannon-ns/>.

⁴⁵ Miles, Richard G., "Time for McMaster to Choose", *Foreign Policy*, 18 May, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/18/time-for-mcmaster-to-choose-dereliction-of-duty-trump/>.

A fourth important figure on the national security team is Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary James Kelly, who (like Mattis) is a retired four-star Marine general who served in the 2003 Iraq war. Kelly also formerly headed U.S. Southern Command, which is the combatant command that oversees U.S. military operations in South America. As DHS Secretary, Kelly oversees immigration and domestic counterterrorism in the U.S. He seems to be closely aligned with the president's hard-line views on both issues.⁴⁶ In July 2014, he attracted attention for calling the combination of failing states, drug cartels and drug use in the U.S. “an existential threat”⁴⁷ to the country's national security. Notably, he has singled out the activities of Hezbollah, the Iranian backed Shia group, in Latin America as an important component of the “crime-terror” nexus facing the U.S. —a factor that suggests he may align with Mattis and others in the White House on the need to check Iranian influence in the Middle East.

Research shows that when presidents are inexperienced leaders, their advisers often exercise disproportionate influence over their foreign policies.

The President's Inner Circle

In addition to these administration officials, Trump maintains an inner circle of family

members and close advisers on whom he relies for regular advice. Reports suggest that there are persistent divisions or competing power centers in this inner circle.⁴⁸ One is associated with his daughter, Ivanka Trump, and son in-law, Jared Kushner, who are believed to be sympathetic to the more moderate, globalist, business oriented officials in the Cabinet.

An alternative faction is headed by the president's controversial chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, who remains suspicious of unmitigated U.S. engagement in the world (evident in Trump's “America First” agenda). According to insiders, for example, he has emerged as a fierce opponent to proposals advanced by McMaster for sending additional troops to Afghanistan, calling it “McMaster's war.”⁴⁹

Trump's decision to grant Bannon a permanent position on the National Security Council's principals committee drew headlines when it was announced in January, 2017. Bannon has since been removed from that position. Still, he is an astute competitor in the internecine politics of the administration. He has a deep strategic appreciation of how to neutralize Trump's political opponents and mobilize the Republican base in support of Trump. The president would likely lose domestic support if he did attempt to side line Bannon. For now, Bannon remains influential in the

⁴⁶ “Home and Away: DHS and the Threats to America, Remarks delivered by Secretary Kelly at George Washington University Center for Cyber and Homeland Security”, *US Department for Homeland Security*, 18 April, 2017, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/04/18/home-and-away-dhs-and-threats-america>.

⁴⁷ O'Toole, Molly, “Top General Says Mexico Border Security Now ‘Existential’ Threat to U.S.”, *Defense One*, 5 July, 2014, <http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2014/07/top->

[general-says-mexico-border-security-now-existential-threat-us/87958/](http://www.businessinsider.com/general-says-mexico-border-security-now-existential-threat-us/87958/).

⁴⁸ Engel, Pamela, “War breaks out between the Steve Bannon and Jared Kushner factions in the White House”, *Business Insider*, 6 April, 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/steve-bannon-jared-kushner-clashing-2017-4>.

⁴⁹ Ryan, Missy and Jaffe, Greg, “U.S. poised to expand military effort against Taliban in Afghanistan”, *The Washington Post*, 8 May, 2017, <http://wapo.st/2qEYKDU>.

administration.⁵⁰ Indeed, Trump seems content to allow these factions to co-exist within his inner circle.

Five Trends in U.S. Foreign Policy and International Relations

Examining Trump's national security team exposes several emerging trends in how the president manages U.S. foreign policy and international relations.

Unpredictability

The first is that U.S. national security strategy and foreign policy under the Trump administration will continue to be unpredictable. While McMaster has brought order to the NSC process, there are serious cross-pressures that threaten to undermine systematic deliberation and strategic assessment within the administration.

President Trump's inexperience in government is one complicating factor. Research shows that when presidents are inexperienced leaders, their advisers often exercise disproportionate influence over their

foreign policies.⁵¹ This is important in light of the competing factions in Trump's White House and basic incongruity in worldviews of some top administration officials. One possible consequence of these dynamics is that the president's positions may shift by issue area and with whose voice and arguments prevail within White House debates. Further fuelling this trend is the president's character and leadership style. Regardless of what his national security professionals advise, Trump professes to keep his own counsel and trust his own instincts, a factor that adds to the uncertainty about future U.S. policy.⁵²

To be sure, Trump's unpredictability and leadership style may have some benefits for U.S. national security.⁵³ He may be willing to try unorthodox solutions to international problems. He may be able to make "deals" with allies or adversaries whose authoritarian practices might have stymied negotiations with other presidents.⁵⁴ His impulsiveness may also bolster his bargaining leverage with some opponents.⁵⁵ The latter may make concessions or otherwise tread lightly out of fear that he may follow through on threats,

⁵⁰ Buncombe, Andrew, "Steve Bannon 'removed from National Security Council' but remains Donald Trump's chief strategist", *Independent*, 5, April, 2017,

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/steve-bannon-national-security-council-remove-donald-trump-chief-strategist-white-house-a7668676.html>.

⁵¹ Saunders, Elizabeth N., "What a President Trump means for foreign policy", *The Washington Post*, 9 November, 2016, <http://wapo.st/2rjCUaT>.

⁵² McCaskill, Nolan D., "Trump: 'I call my own shots... and everyone knows it'", *Politico*, 6 February, 2017, <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/trump-steve-bannon-i-call-my-own-shots-234680>.

⁵³ Gallo, William, "Trump Embraces Unpredictability as Foreign Policy Strategy", *VOA News*, 25 November, 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/a/trump-foreign-policy-unpredictability/3610582.html>;

Thrush, Glenn and Landler, Mark, "Bold, Unpredictable Foreign Policy Lifts Trump, but Has Risks", *The New York Times*, 20 April, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/20/us/politics/trump-foreign-policy.html> ; Friedman, Thomas L., "Trump: Crazy Like a Fox, or Just Crazy?", *The New York Times*, 3 May, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/03/opinion/trump-crazy-like-a-fox-or-just-crazy.html>.

⁵⁴ Korte, George, "Analysis: In willingness to meet with dictators, a Trump doctrine emerges", *USA Today*, 1 May, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/05/01/willingness-meet-dictators-trump-doctrine-emerges/101173014/>.

⁵⁵ Kaplan, Fred, "Return of the Madman Theory", *Slate*, 13 April, 2017, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2017/04/trump_is_inadvertently_putting_nixon_s_madman_theory_to_the_test.html.

ignore risks, or react strongly to perceived slights or provocations. Indeed, Trump has stated that he purposely relies on ultimatums and unpredictability to bolster his bargaining positions, lessons learned from his years as a real estate executive.⁵⁶ Potential benefits aside, there are also risks inherent in Trump's approach. Threatening adversaries with harsh repercussions if they do not fall in line on one issue may make it difficult to win their cooperation on other vital issues. Allies may come to discount his threats, writing them off as mere bluster and posturing.

Administration policies can also sometimes seem like a moving target.⁵⁷ For example, Secretary Tillerson has stated that the U.S. is pursuing what he terms a "pressure strategy" on North Korea. Yet, past inconsistencies in his comments have sometimes created confusion among U.S. allies in Asia about the administration's strategy.⁵⁸ Similarly, it remains unclear where the U.S. stands on vital issues essential to resolving the Syrian civil war, such as whether Assad must leave office as part of any resolution to the war. U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley has been outspoken in opposing Assad's remaining in power in Syria.⁵⁹ In recent discussions with

UN ambassadors, however, Trump reportedly said that Assad's staying power was "not a deal breaker."⁶⁰ Some allies already expressed concern about the incoherent foreign policy stances Trump's unpredictability sometimes generates.⁶¹

The administration's shifting positions could also compromise the ability to negotiate agreements and peacefully settle international disputes. Trump has created significant uncertainty, for example, about whether he intends to pull the United States out of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or renegotiate its terms. Ambiguities of this kind may create doubts among both adversaries and allies about Trump's sincerity and willingness to abide by the commitments he makes. The loss of credibility of the President's threats and promises is a serious potential downside

The loss of credibility of the President's threats and promises is a serious potential downside to this approach to managing international relations.

⁵⁶ Phone interview transcript between President Trump and Haberman, Maggie and Sanger, David E. of The New York Times, "Donald Trump Expounds on His Foreign Policy Views", *The New York Times*, 26 March, 2017,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/us/politics/donald-trump-transcript.html>.

⁵⁷ Toosi, Nahal, "The Trump Doctrine is made of mixed messages", *Politico*, 29 April, 2017, <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/29/trump-doctrine-mixed-messages-foreign-policy-237783>.

⁵⁸ Sanger, David E. and Landler, Mark, "Rex Tillerson's Reticence on North Korea Leaves Allies Confused", *The New York Times*, 5 April, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/us/politics/rex-tillersons-reticence-on-north-korea-leaves-allies-confused.html>.

⁵⁹ Phillip, Abby, and Debonis, Mike, "Tillerson, Haley issue differing statements on future of Assad in

Syria", *The Washington Post*, 9 April, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/04/09/tillerson-haley-issue-differing-statements-on-future-of-assad-in-syria/>.

⁶⁰ "Trump says Assad's future is 'not a deal breaker' on Syria war", *Al Arabiya*, 26 April, 2017, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2017/04/26/Trump-says-Assad-s-future-is-not-a-deal-breaker-on-Syria.html>.

⁶¹ Sullivan, Kevin and Tumulty, Karen, "Trump promised an 'unpredictable' foreign policy. To allies, it looks incoherent", *The Washington Post*, 11 April, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-promised-an-unpredictable-foreign-policy-to-allies-it-looks-incoherent/2017/04/11/21acde5e-1a3d-11e7-9887-1a5314b56a08_story.html?utm_term=.1799fee8264f.

to this approach to managing international relations.

Leaders, not Publics

A second trend is that foreign leaders, not their publics, will be the primary audience for Trump’s foreign policy initiatives. President Trump, for example, has evinced an unusual willingness to take calls from foreign leaders and to dispense with diplomatic protocols in the process. Part of this reflects his background. He appears comfortable in the company of elites (the wealth and stature of

The president has questioned the value and costs of international institutions and multilateral alliances.

his Cabinet members are a case in point) with whom he can deal. In contrast, previous U.S. presidents have often been attentive

to public audiences in other countries, or incorporated concerns about the impact of U.S. policy on those populations, into their strategic calculus.⁶²

Although Trump has not yet articulated a foreign policy doctrine, his focus on leaders and transactional approach are consistent themes in how he manages international relations. Overall, the president maintains a highly instrumental view of how to manage allies and address disputes with adversaries.

⁶² Landler, Mark and Baker, Peter, “Saudi Arabia and Israel Will Be on Itinerary of Trump’s First Foreign Trip”, *The New York Times*, 4 May, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/04/us/politics/trump-to-visit-saudi-arabia-and-israel-in-first-foreign-trip.html>.

⁶³ Beauchamp, Scott, “America Doesn’t Need to Lead the Free World”, *The Atlantic*, 14 November, 2014, [https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/20](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/11/posen-grand-strategy-restraint-isis-russia/382730/)

Means or process matter less than expeditiously delivering on goals.

Realpolitik Impulses (For Now)

Under Trump, U.S. foreign policy may likely exhibit some realpolitik elements. A *realpolitik* or “realist” worldview encompasses several core principles: a belief that protecting material interests and safeguarding against threats to Americans’ physical security, or the territory and economy of the U.S are the country’s priorities. Realists also believe that grand strategies organized around the pursuit of democratic values, regime change or advancing global human rights will at best fail and at worst prove counterproductive to U.S. national security. They emphasize restraint in overseas commitments and are reticent to employ military power unless core interests are under threat.⁶³

Elements of a realist worldview resonate with aspects of Trump’s “America First” platform.⁶⁴ The president has often forcefully argued that the U.S must avoid unnecessary military interventions overseas. This has been a strong and important message to his domestic political supporters. When, for example, Trump ordered the April 2017 missile against Syria to punish the regime for using chemical weapons, the action was strongly criticized by his voting base.⁶⁵ Secretary Tillerson’s pragmatic assessment

[14/11/posen-grand-strategy-restraint-isis-russia/382730/](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/07/us/politics/john-mccain-chuck-schumer-support-airstrikes-syria.html).

⁶⁴ “America First Foreign Policy”, *The White House*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/america-first-foreign-policy>.

⁶⁵ Haberman, Maggie, “Trump’s Syria Strike Has Some Critics Cheering and Some Fans Booming”, *The New York Times*, 7 April, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/07/us/politics/john-mccain-chuck-schumer-support-airstrikes-syria.html>.

of the state of U.S.-Russian relations is also evocative of realist currents in the administration.⁶⁶ Tillerson has stated that the U.S. will no longer condition its relations with other states on U.S. values, such as the protection of human rights and democracy abroad—a position Trump has recently reiterated.⁶⁷

Still, whether Trump will follow through on these *realpolitik* impulses—and develop national security strategies consistent with them, seems increasingly in question. There are powerful forces in both the Republican and Democratic parties that support a grand strategy of “primacy”⁶⁸ and the global military presence and internationalist foreign policy it entails. There also has been pronounced criticism of his positions on human rights.⁶⁹ Indeed, such positions put Trump sharply at odds with many in the Republican establishment.⁷⁰

Regardless of his stated principles, Trump’s policies could also unintentionally result in greater military commitments at odds with *realpolitik* currents. His stated policy positions contain several difficult to resolve

contradictions.⁷¹ For example, his views on combating international terrorism could generate support for military escalation overseas, as we have already seen in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.⁷²

Hard Power, not Soft Power

Under Trump, the U.S. is likely to favor instruments of statecraft that draw on material power—economic and military—versus those that depend on normative pressures, or persuasion and leadership. There are, once again, several forces pushing the administration in this direction. First is the president’s own preference for pressure tactics and hard bargaining. Both President Trump and Secretary Tillerson do not appear to put much stock in maximizing soft power and eliciting cooperation through leadership and principled action.⁷³

A second factor is the downsizing of the role and influence of the State Department in the administration. In addition to his apparent support for proposed budget cuts, Secretary Tillerson has yet to publicly articulate a strong case for the importance of diplomacy

⁶⁶ “Transcript: NPR Interviews Secretary of State Rex Tillerson”, *National Public Radio (NPR)*, 28 April, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2017/04/28/525766904/transcript-npr-interviews-secretary-of-state-rex-tillerson>.

⁶⁷ Lederman, Josh and Daly, Matthew, “Tillerson: U.S. will no longer insist nations adopt U.S. values, rights”, *PBS*, 3 May, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/tillerson-says-almost-no-trust-u-s-russia/>.

⁶⁸ Friedman, Benjamin H. and Logan, Justin, “Why Washington Doesn’t Debate Grand Strategy”, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Winter, 2016.

⁶⁹ Bradshaw, John, “Trump, Tillerson must keep US on the human rights high ground”, *The Hill*, 14 March, 2017, <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/the-administration/323758-trump-tillerson-must-keep-the-human-rights-high-ground>.

⁷⁰ McCain, John, “John McCain: Why We Must Support Human Rights”, *The New York Times*, 8

May, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/08/opinion/john-mccain-rex-tillerson-human-rights.html>.

⁷¹ Roberts, Dan, “Ten inconsistencies in Donald Trump’s big foreign policy address”, *The Guardian*, 28 April, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/apr/27/trump-inconsistencies-foreign-policy>.

⁷² Schmitt, Eric, “Mattis Says Escalation Against ISIS Doesn’t Imperil More Civilians”, *The New York Times*, 19 May, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/19/world/middleeast/mattis-military-isis-trump.html>.

⁷³ Cobbs, Elizabeth A., “How Donald Trump has already shaken U.S. relations with friends and foes”, *Reuters*, 30 March 2016, <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2016/03/29/how-donald-trump-has-already-shaken-u-s-relations-with-friends-a-foes/>.

as a component of U.S. foreign policy. Rather, he claims that the State Department has been over extended and engaged in activities abroad that are beyond the core interests of the U.S.—something he plans to change.⁷⁴

Another force that may magnify the role of hard power in U.S. national security is Trump's decision to delegate substantial operational control to military commanders on the ground in war zones and armed conflicts. Consequently, decisions that might merit broader strategic and political consideration by the White House may not always receive full consideration. Some also worry that the retired and current generals in his administration will gravitate to military solutions and tools.⁷⁵

Reconfigured Alliances

Finally, tectonic shifts in the global pattern of international alignments and interests may be occurring in the next four years. The president has questioned the value and costs of international institutions and multilateral alliances.⁷⁶ He seems, so far, little inclined to continue the U.S.' leadership of the world order. Herein lays the most far-reaching impact Trump could have on the international

area. If the U.S. no longer pursues its interests through the liberal world order, others may choose to go it alone as well. The cumulative effect of shifts in national interests and reconfigurations of alignments could over time reshape the landscape of international relations across the globe.

These dynamics may result in the emergence of a new center of leadership for the global world order or a transformation in the liberal basis of that world order.⁷⁷ China has sought to step into the void in Asia, seeming to ramp up its efforts to magnify its soft power and legitimize its leadership in the world order. Similarly, Europe is already engaged in a recalibration and reorientation away from the American-European axis.⁷⁸ Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron are already seen by some to be stepping into the roles as leaders of the world order.⁷⁹ Even long time U.S. allies like Australia are beginning to re-think their security alignments.⁸⁰ In the course of four years, we may see subtle, but perhaps irreversible, changes of this kind as leaders consider their fates in a newly unpredictable global environment.

⁷⁴ Harris, Gardiner, "Tillerson: It's Time to Restore 'Balance' With Other Countries", *The New York Times*, 3 May, 2017,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/03/us/rex-tillerson-state-department.html>.

⁷⁵ Friend, Alice Hunt, "Mattis Is Outstanding, So What's The Problem?", *War On The Rocks*, 7 December, 2016,

<https://warontherocks.com/2016/12/mattis-is-outstanding-so-whats-the-problem/>.

⁷⁶ Diamond, Jeremy, "Trump scolds NATO allies over defense spending", *CNN*, 27 May, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/25/politics/trump-nato-financial-payments/>.

⁷⁷ Kuo, Mercy A., "The End of American World Order", *The Diplomat*, 10 November 2016,

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/11/the-end-of-american-world-order/>.

⁷⁸ Friedman, Uri, "European Leaders Are Now Describing Trump as a Threat", *The Atlantic*, 31 January, 2017,

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/tusk-europe-trump/515154/>.

⁷⁹ Smale, Alison and Steven Erlanger, "Merkel After Discordant G-7 Meeting, Is Looking Past Trump," *New York Times*, 28 May 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/28/world/europe/angela-merkel-trump-alliances-g7-leaders.html>

⁸⁰ Cave, Damien, "Trump's Volatility in Asia Distresses a Longtime U.S. Ally: Australia", *The New York Times*, 1 May, 2017,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/01/world/australia/trump-north-korea-us-china.html>.

The Trump presidency in a post-American Middle East

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Four months into office, the administration of President Donald J. Trump has shed a degree of the populist fervor that came so prominently to the surface during the presidential campaign and manifested itself in the volatile opening weeks of the presidency. While the President has yet to deliver a clear message of his approach to the Middle East, it is increasingly clear that his administration will not upend any form of order in the region; rather the opposite. In his inauguration speech on January 20, 2017, President Trump pledged to ‘eradicate’ radical Islamic terrorism ‘completely from the face of the earth.’ This suggested a redoubling of the US-led coalition against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and closer and more public cooperation with US partners in the Middle East in the Gulf-led war in Yemen, and events since January have reinforced that early view.

Freed from the strain of their difficult relationship with the Obama administration, regional leaders largely view President Trump as a man they can do business with on a case-by-case basis shorn of normative concerns for issues such as human rights, political reform, or the condition of migrant labor. The rancor stemming from then-candidate Trump’s controversial remarks about banning Muslims from the United States (US) has been superseded by a regional commitment to re-setting ties with the US after the tensions that came to mark the Obama years, especially during Obama’s second term. Moreover, while Trump has a

record of voicing unconventional opinions on the costs of protecting US partners in the Gulf, for example, both as a private citizen on Twitter and as a presidential candidate, his key Cabinet appointments indicate in reality a far more conventional approach to Middle East policy.

As such, US partners and allies in the Middle East, both regionally-based and international, are likely to find that the Trump presidency continues its evolution into rather more of a ‘conventional’ Republican administration than they might

...the leeway for President Trump to take unpredictable action is constrained by his appointees to senior foreign policy related positions...

have expected twelve or even six months ago. It remains the case that some of the more populist ‘America First’ voices within the administration retain sway within the administration, but their influence largely is concentrated on matters of domestic rather than foreign policy. It also remains true that the President himself has more leeway in foreign affairs than in domestic policy, and stalwart US allies such as Australia and Germany already have felt a frisson of volatility as a result. However, in both cases, the leeway for President Trump to take unpredictable action is constrained by his appointees to senior foreign policy related positions and in particular, to the phalanx of retired military personnel who influence policymaking as it relates to the Middle East.

Over the decade and a half since the September 11, 2001 atrocities, successive US presidents have engaged with the Middle East through a range of hard and soft power tools, but without ever finding an optimal combination. President George W. Bush's application of direct military force in Iraq gave way to a more indirect use of American power by President Obama through the expansion of drone warfare and special operations in multiple theaters. Meanwhile the national security response to the Arab Spring upheaval of 2011 complicated the projection of softer forms of US influence as states across the Middle East clamped down on support for civil society and non-governmental organizations and closed regional branches of groups such as the National Democratic Institute.

...the primary difference in US policies will be more of style than substance, and will not amount to any upending of (or challenge to) regional order...

Early pronouncements suggest that the Trump administration will recalibrate its regional policies around security and defense rather than more contested issues such as governance or reform. The February, 2017 announcement that the US government will seek to boost defense spending by \$54 billion and cut the budget of the State Department by up to 28 percent indicates an instinctive preference for hard power over soft power in pursuing U.S. interests abroad. Large increases in the proposed budgets for defense procurement and combat operations signal also that the US military footprint – which already has become more visible in the Middle East since January – will grow further. The ‘finger wagging’ at partners that Trump administration officials believe has held back American commercial interests

will be replaced by talk of how initiatives such as ‘America First’ and ‘Saudi 2030’ can tie together. The fact that Trump's first foreign visit as President will be to Saudi Arabia, rather than to Canada as it was for four of his five immediate predecessors, going back to Ronald Reagan, is thus as practical as it is symbolic.

Indications of the directions of US policymaking in the Middle East become apparent from the appointments made to relevant positions within the defense and security establishment in Washington, DC. As Laura Rozen has documented, senior officials on the National Security Council include Derek Harvey (head of the Middle East team at the NSC and the White House Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa), Joel Rayburn (responsible for Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria), and Michael Bell (responsible for Gulf affairs). All three are serving or retired colonels in the US Army and bring a wealth of expertise to their new positions; Harvey was heavily involved in the US response to the insurgency in Iraq after 2003, Rayburn authored the official account of the Iraq war for the US military and subsequently wrote a book entitled *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance* and Bell served in the Gulf War in 1991. More recently, he was lead writer for Kuwait's National Security and Defense Strategy as well as the National Military Strategy of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces.

On another burning regional issue, Mike Pompeo, the new Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), was previously a co-sponsor as member of the House of Representatives for the 4th Congressional

district in Kansas of the Muslim Brotherhood Terrorist Designation Act of 2015 (H.R.3892). Pompeo's record is likely to go down well in the United Arab Emirates, which has spearheaded a relentless campaign to intervene in regional affairs and roll back Brotherhood influence across the Middle East and North Africa since 2011. This has led to Emirati military involvement in the war in Yemen and in the civil conflict in Libya in a show of force that UAE policymakers are likely to emphasize in their meetings with US counterparts. Indeed, *Politico* has reported that the UAE's Ambassador in Washington, Yousef al-Otaiba, has spoken frequently about Middle Eastern issues to Jared Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law and closest confidante.¹

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who has himself for years done business with policy elites throughout the Middle East and elsewhere during his long career at ExxonMobil, articulated the mantra that will guide a slimmed-down State Department when he suggested that 'values' in US foreign policy might, in certain circumstances, create 'obstacles to advance our national security interests, our economic interests.'² Tillerson came in for criticism for apparently portending an 'abandonment' of US values, such as support for human rights and labor rights, as well as an emphasis on commerce and investment consistent with an 'America First' approach to foreign policy. His words, nevertheless, were not that far different from comments made by Hillary Clinton in November 2011 when, as

Secretary of State, she was asked about US policies in the Middle East during the Arab Spring, and acknowledged that 'Our choices also reflect other interests in the region with a real impact on Americans' lives – including our fight against al Qaeda, defense of our allies, and a secure supply of energy ... there will be times when not all of our interests align. We work to align them, but that is just reality.'³

Russian willingness to engage directly with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, deemed terrorist organizations in the US and the European Union, contrasts sharply with the US position toward these groups.

It appears, therefore, that the primary difference in US policies will be more of style than substance, and will not amount to any upending of (or challenge to) regional order in the Middle East. This shift in style indicates that the Trump administration will prioritize its relationships with Saudi Arabia and the UAE and work closely with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi on security and defense issues. Oman, by contrast, appears to be frozen out of this arrangement as Sultan Qaboos is the only GCC leader who President Trump did not speak with during his first 100 days. One possible suggestion is that the Trump presidency associates Oman (and Sultan Qaboos) with President Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, and their signature Iran agreement. The marginalization of Oman's intermediary role

¹ Annie, Karni, "Jared Kushner's Mission Impossible", *Politico*, 11 February, 2017, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/02/jared-kushners-mission-impossible-214770>.

² "Tillerson: America First means separating US policy, values", *ABC News*, 3 May, 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/amp/Politics/wireStory/>

[tillerson-america-means-separating-us-policy-values-47209697](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/02/jared-kushners-mission-impossible-214770).

³ "Clinton: US interests sometimes clash with Mideast reform", *Reuters* 7 November, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-clinton-democracy-idUSN1E7A626E20111108>.

would deprive the administration of back-channels to adversaries (such as Iran and the Houthi rebels in Yemen), and it remains unclear who could replace Sultan Qaboos as the 'go-to' partner for regional diplomacy efforts.

There are two important caveats to the assumption that the Trump presidency will evolve into a 'routine' Republican administration, at least in its conduct of foreign policy in the Middle East. The first is the Trump administration faces a Middle East that is more unpredictable and volatile than has faced any other US president in modern times. The speed and scale of the protest movements that toppled longstanding rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen in 2011 and 2012 exposed the fragility of the social contract between states and their peoples and the disruptive effect of economic distress fused with political anger. With the only partial exception of Tunisia, none of the new leaderships have succeeded in addressing the deep-rooted economic and political inequalities that triggered the initial uprisings, and dangerous security vacuums have opened up in Libya, Yemen, and parts of Egypt such as the Sinai Peninsula. These lawless zones have provided space for the regional expansion of ISIS and also Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most operationally dangerous of Al Qaeda's regional 'franchises' with a record both of intent and of capability in attacking regional and international targets.

Developments since the November 8, 2016 US election illustrate the decline in relative US influence in the Middle East as other states have moved proactively to prioritize and secure their own objectives and interests in the region. The recapture of Aleppo in mid-December 2016 by Syrian regime forces

backed by Iran and Russia was a resounding setback to the longstanding US, Saudi, and Qatari policy of supporting and arming elements of the Syrian opposition to President Assad and was followed by a ceasefire negotiated by Russia and Turkey with government forces. Moscow and Ankara kept up the initiative on Syria by working with Iran and organizing indirect peace talks that commenced in January in the Kazakh capital, Astana, notably without any formal participation by the US or its partners in the Gulf which are, for the moment, marginal to decisions which may settle the nearly six-year civil war in Syria. Russia and Turkey also carried out joint airstrikes against ISIS targets in northern Syria six days after the two countries signed a memorandum of cooperation on joint action in Syria.

Russia also has been active in recent months in the Palestinian issue after Moscow hosted three days of reconciliation talks between Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other Palestinian factions in an attempt to resolve the decade-long division between the West Bank and Gaza and restore Palestinian unity. The talks resulted in a shaky agreement on January 18, 2017, two days before Trump's inauguration, to create a national unity government, the details of which are still unclear and may yet fail. However, Russia's direct involvement came at the request of Palestinian advocates of a decisively new approach after years of stasis under the Quartet. Russian willingness to engage directly with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, deemed terrorist organizations in the US and the European Union, contrasts sharply with the US position toward these groups. Russia's attractiveness as an emergent counterweight in Middle East diplomacy was illustrated further when Palestinian leaders requested Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergey

Lavrov, to intercede with the Trump administration to block then-President elect Trump's declared intent to move the US Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a move that would have broken decades of diplomatic consensus and which, so far, has not been acted upon.

An added indication that US influence in the Middle East has been ebbing, among friends as well as foes, is the waning deterrent effect of US sanctions both on Russia and on Iran. Whereas the US joined with European partners after Russia's military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 to impose several rounds of sanctions on select Russian individuals and businesses, they were routinely ignored by key US partners in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain all announced major collaborative ventures with the

President Trump's bellicose language toward Iran is unlikely to find a sympathetic hearing in most European capitals apart from London...

Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), a sovereign wealth fund closely linked to President Putin in 2014 and 2015. In December 2016, in the wake of the

allegations of Russian involvement in the hacking of US entities in the run-up to the presidential election and shortly before President Obama announced a fresh wave of retaliatory sanctions on Russia, the Qatar Investment Authority partnered with commodities trader Glencore to take a US\$11.8 billion (19.5 percent) stake in Rosneft, a majority state-owned Russian oil company that was one of the sanctioned entities in 2014 and followed up with a US\$3 billion five-year oil supply agreement in January 2017. Meanwhile, Iranian oil sales to European partners exceed their level of 2012 when the tightening of international

sanctions on Iran compelled Tehran to begin negotiations over its nuclear program. President Trump's bellicose language toward Iran is unlikely to find a sympathetic hearing in most European capitals apart from London and any US attempt to substantively amend the Iran nuclear deal or snap sanctions back into place may only isolate the US rather than Iran.

The second caveat concerns the nature of policymaking in Washington, D.C. in a context where the balance between personalized decision-making and the role of institutions appears to be more blurred than at any point in recent American history. White House Chief Strategist Steven Bannon attracted controversy and concern when he called for the 'deconstruction of the administrative state' in a speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference in February 2017. However, particularly at the State Department, the long delay in appointing the middle layer of management has resulted, intentionally or not, in a significant disconnect between the upper and lower levels of the bureaucracy that, if left unchecked, will sooner or later begin to affect foreign policymaking. Similarly, the clash between the more 'rational' figures in the administration, such as Tillerson, Mattis, and National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster, and the nationalist-populist element clustered around Bannon is likely to generate further unpredictability in policymaking as figures jostle for influence and favor with Trump.

Careful and nuanced engagement with regional partners will be needed as the Trump presidency enters its second 100 days although it remains to be seen whether the administration has the focus and the finesse to do this. However, the early signs are that the outlandish statements made by President

Trump on the campaign trail gradually are mutating into a more soberly realist approach to policymaking toward the Middle East, with changes being more a recalibration of existing policies than anything else. Moreover, the decline of US influence in the Middle East means that a multi-polar regional order has emerged that is rather less susceptible to the unilateral wielding of US power and which instead strengthens the forces of conservatism and status quo in the region.

NATO in the Trump Era: Entrapping an Erratic U.S.

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In the summer of 2016, while campaigning for President of the United States, Donald Trump gave NATO allies a wake-up call. In a well-publicized interview with the *New York Times*, he backed significantly from the typical U.S. steadfast support for the alliance. In response to a question on concerning Russian activism in the Baltics, Trump stated, “[W]e have many NATO members that aren’t paying their bills.” When pressed if the U.S. would support NATO under Article V, he continued, “Have they fulfilled their obligations to us? If they fulfill their obligations to us, the answer is yes.”¹ Days before taking office he continued to reinforce the notion that NATO was obsolete, championed the U.K.’s decision for Brexit, critiqued Germany’s refugee policy, and opined for warmer relations with Russia.² Although President Trump has recently changed his public position on NATO after a meeting with Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, these comments should give NATO countries grave concern on the reliability of the U.S. as the indispensable partner in the alliance.³

In the spring of 2017, the U.S. participated in NATO’s Operation Atlantic Resolve in an effort to demonstrate to NATO allies, and the

Russians, that it would support deterrent and defense efforts in Eastern Europe and the Baltics. However, the slow progress of NATO nations to meet the 2006 goal to dedicate two percent of gross domestic product to defense spending gives reason for the Trump administration to question European dedication to the alliance. At a summit in 2014, NATO reiterated its commitment to the 2% target, with members falling short promising to meet their obligations by 2024. Declining European defense spending from the initial goal in 2006 until today should make one sceptical of these renewed promises. German defense spending has declined to just 1.2% of its GDP while Spain and Italy have cut their military budgets to around 1% during the past decade.⁴ The Trump administration is rightly considering the European commitment to the transatlantic alliance.

The American security umbrella provides an easy defense solution for Europe, but it also left it with limited ability to take autonomous military action. This paper will speculate on a NATO without U.S. leadership and use collective defense theory to show that the U.S. is an indispensable member of the alliance. NATO therefore must take actions to keep U.S. leadership and support to this important organization that has facilitated peace in Europe since the closing days of World War II.

¹Krishnadev Calamur, “NATO Shmato?,” *The Atlantic*, July 21, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2016/07/trump-nato/492341/>.

²Michael R. Gordon and Niraj Chokshi, “Trump Criticizes NATO and Hopes for ‘Good Deals’ With Russia,” *The New York Times*, January 15, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/15/world/europe/donald-trump-nato.html>.

³Peter Baker, “Trump’s Previous View of NATO Is Now Obsolete,” *The New York Times*, April 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/world/europe/nato-trump.html>.

⁴“Military Spending by NATO Members,” *The Economist*, accessed May 7, 2017, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2017/02/daily-chart-11>.

Background

In April 1945 Winston Churchill quipped to Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, “There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them!”⁵ But this advice has its limitations. Glenn Snyder in his seminal work *Alliance Politics*, however, outlines three pathologies of concern for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance. The biggest challenges, from a NATO perspective, are free riding, entrapment and abandonment.

Free riding is the tendency for alliance partners to shift alliance burdens to other partners. President Trump highlighted NATO freeriding in his remarks concerning rich European nations failing to pay their debts, however this attitude has been prevalent in multiple U.S. administrations. U.S. Secretary of Defense under President Obama, Bob Gates, harshly critiqued Europe’s contributions to its own defense. Gates warned of “a dim if not dismal future” unless more member nations scaled up their participation in the alliance’s activities.⁶ Overall, the current U.S. administration has a more transactional view of international institutions and NATO freeriding is likely to remain a central issue.

The second danger of the current NATO arrangement is instituting a sense of shared interest given the danger of entrapment.

Entrapment risks being dragged into a conflict over an ally’s interests that one does not share

Western European governments were concerned with entrapment issues as they determined the nature of support for the U.S. adventure in Iraq.

or only partially shares. According to Snyder, the interests of allies are rarely identical and if similar may be valued to differing degrees.⁷ U.S. requests for NATO support for the 2003 Iraq War and later Iraq training mission represents a classic example of alliance entrapment. In the run-up to the Iraq War, U.S. requests for support caused a split in policy between European capitals with Western Europe fearing entrapment while newly emerging democracies in Eastern Europe more enthusiastically supporting U.S. leadership.⁸ Eventually, the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I) was established in 2004 at the request of the Iraqi interim government under the provisions of UN Security. With Council Resolution 1546 however, the U.S. government put significant pressure on its NATO allies to support the training mission.⁹ Clearly, Western European governments were concerned with entrapment issues as they determined the

⁵ Walter Reid, *Churchill 1940-1945: Fighting with Allies* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2008).

⁶ Thom Shanker, “Defense Secretary Warns NATO of ‘Dim’ Future,” *New York Times*, June 10, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/11/world/europe/1lgates.html?_r=0.

⁷ Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (Jul., 1984): 467.

⁸ Daniel F. Baltrusaitis, *Coalition Politics and the Iraq War: Determinants of Choice* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010); Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy S. Shapiro, *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis Over Iraq* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2004).

⁹ Tyler Marshall, “NATO to Expand Iraq Troop Training,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 2004, <http://articles.latimes.com/2004/dec/10/world/fg-nato10>.

nature of support for the U.S. adventure in Iraq.

Finally, Eastern European NATO allies need to be concerned with abandonment. Clearly, Baltic governments are concerned with the Trump rhetoric concerning NATO support.¹⁰

The political nature of NATO has allowed a high degree of integration and reform of Eastern European militaries, while at the same time increased the divergence of interests in the alliance.

More disconcerting however is the divergence on NATO policy towards Russia. This incoherence highlights the issues of shared interests that Snyder warns about. Current policy regarding Russian expansion into Crimea and Ukraine highlights

the tension between Western and Eastern NATO interests. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said recently that Germany would consider gradually easing sanctions on Russia if there were “substantial” progress on the Ukraine issue.¹¹ Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's National Front (FN) party and then-runoff candidate for President, has called for the lifting of EU sanctions against Russia, arguing that they were “counterproductive.” Additionally, she has previously stated her approval of Russia's annexation of Crimea in contrast to the NATO view of the operation.¹²

¹⁰ John Hudson and Siobhán O'Grady, “Baltic States Come Out Swinging After Trump Says He Might Abandon NATO,” *Foreign Policy*, July 21 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/21/baltic-states-come-out-swinging-after-trump-says-he-might-abandon-nato/>.

¹¹ George Friedman, “Germany Looks to Ease Russian Sanctions,” June 2, 2016, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global->

Many key European countries still resist strong measures to strengthen NATO; France is focused on domestic terrorism and is stretched thin because of its military campaigns in Mali, the Central African Republic and North Africa and Syria, while Italy cut military spending after pledging to increase it two years ago in Wales.¹³ Clearly, not all NATO nations see Russian incursions with the same level of urgency.

The security dangers highlighted by Snyder are exacerbated by the expansion of NATO from the original core into a wider collective security organization. Although one would think that wider participation confers more legitimacy and hence more effectiveness, given NATO decision-making rules, this expansion increases the likelihood for tension amongst the alliance partners. It also increases the chances that the alliance will not effectively be able to counter threats, especially those that are not presented as existential in nature.

Coalition Size, Political Integration, and Legitimacy

In the aftermath of World War II, Communists aided by the Soviet Union threatened elected governments across Europe. Several Western European democracies created the Western Union in 1948 to encourage greater military cooperation and collective defense. The U.S. and Europe agreed that only a truly

[europe/opinion/germany-looks-to-ease-russian-sanctions/](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39375969).

¹² “France’s Marine Le Pen Urges End to Russia Sanctions,” *BBC News*, March 24, 2017, sec. Europe, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39375969>.

¹³ Steven Erlanger, “Tested by Russia, NATO Struggles to Stay Credible,” *New York Times*, May 31, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/01/world/europe/nato-russia.html>.

transatlantic security agreement could deter Soviet aggression while simultaneously preventing the revival of European militarism. The creation of NATO in 1949 laid the groundwork for defense against armed attack, but also eventually provided for political and military integration.¹⁴ The institution was primarily oriented towards collective defense until the demise of the Soviet Union. Afterward, however, NATO was seen not only as a collective defense organization, but also one for political expansion into Eastern Europe. NATO endured without a threatening Soviet Union because of the alliance's two other functions: to deter the rise of militant nationalism while at the same time encouraging democratization and political integration in Europe.¹⁵ Through enlargement, NATO had played a crucial role in consolidating democracy and stability in Europe though at the cost of political cohesion. Western and Eastern Europe have markedly different conceptions of threat and interest, which makes alliance decision-making and support difficult. Today the Baltic States feel a much higher sense of threat and urgency towards a resurgent Russia than partners in the West. The political nature of NATO has allowed a high degree of integration and reform of Eastern European militaries, while at the same time increased the divergence of interests in the alliance.

The political nature of NATO and its large coalition of states, on the other hand, confers a degree of legitimacy in the international system. This legitimacy is important in that it

separates right military action from naked aggression. Concerns about international legitimacy play an integral role in burden sharing decisions for coalition participants. This efficiency advantage was noted by Hans Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations*, "Power exercised with moral or legal authority must be distinguished from naked power... legitimate power has a better chance to influence the will of its objects than equivalent illegitimate power."¹⁶ The Kosovo conflict demonstrates the legitimacy conferred through the alliance structure itself. NATO intervened in Kosovo to stem the Serbian ethnic cleansing and its action was seen as legitimate even though NATO interceded without a Security Council resolution. The deliberation process in a NATO decision conferred an appropriate level of legitimacy to this military intervention.

Legitimacy influences state burden-sharing levels in important and meaningful ways. Internationally sanctioned "legitimate" interventions should require less "arm-twisting" for participation; conversely, costs should be high for the coalition-lead of an unsanctioned action, therefore states seek legitimacy in their security efforts to share burdens and reduce the cost of unilateral action. Typically, UN sanction or multilateral endorsement through consensus of a large group of nations provides legitimacy to an intervention.¹⁷ To illustrate the role of legitimacy gained through multilateralism, the U.S. used force multilaterally in eight out of ten post-Cold

¹⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "A Short History of NATO," available at <http://www.nato.int/history/nato-history.html>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson, *Politics Among Nations*, 6th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985): 32.

¹⁷Inis L. Claude, Jr., "Collective Legitimization as a Political Function of the United Nations," *International Organization* 20, no. 3 (Summer, 1966): 370.

War interventions even though it maintained sufficient force for unilateral intervention.¹⁸

Unfortunately, large alliances have a reputation for ineffectiveness. Napoleon once famously quipped, “If I must make war, I prefer it to be against a coalition” reflecting the difficulties in effectively coordinating coalition action at the operational level.¹⁹ Modern coalition military operations require extraordinary coordination and care at all levels, adapting to and overcoming one’s alliance partners is sometimes more demanding than the operational tasks required against an adversary. Large coalitions make successful action difficult and require extensive coordination from the coalition lead. Moreover, additional partners often have a negative effect on operational effectiveness and can also make strategy ineffective.

Collective Action Theory

Collective action theory, on the other hand, explains why coalition leaders should form the smallest coalitions possible to execute effective strategic action. One must understand that security is a public good where most states have the incentive to free ride hoping that someone else will address the security challenge. In the case of Russian resurgence or ISIS extremism, many states support the ‘public or collective good’ of

reducing the threat from extremist terrorism; however, without direct threat most states are only willing to provide token support towards attaining that good. In his seminal 1954 paper *The Pure Theory of Public Expenditure*, Paul A. Samuelson

Non-coalition [...] have no motivation to pay for the collective good if someone else is willing to pay.

defined public goods as those that are non-rival and non-excludable, meaning they may be consumed by one consumer without preventing simultaneous consumption by others and that it is impossible to exclude individuals from consumption.²⁰ Reducing the threat of extremist terrorism meets this definition since all states benefit from the reduction of the threat and one cannot exclude any state from the benefit.

Due to the non-excludable nature of collective goods, effective burden sharing coalitions are difficult to form.²¹ Non-coalition members know that the benefits of the collective good cannot be denied to them even if they do not participate; therefore, they have no motivation to pay for the collective good if someone else is willing to pay.²² Full participation can be expected from states if the expected value from doing so is larger than that from free riding. Only those states that highly value a public good are expected to contribute significantly towards obtaining that good.²³ Therefore, alliance partners that

¹⁸ Sarah E. Kreps, *Coalitions of Convenience: United States Military Interventions after the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 3-5.

¹⁹ Quoted in David Auerswald and Steve Saideman, “Lessons in Coalition Warfare: Past, Present and Implications for the Future,” *International Politics Reviews* 1, (2013): 78–90.

²⁰ Paul A. Samuelson, “The Pure Theory of Public Expenditure,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 36, no. 4 (1954): 387–389.

²¹ Daniel F. Baltrusaitis, *Coalition Politics and the Iraq War: Determinants of Choice* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009).

²² Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action; Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Harvard Economic Studies, V. 124 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965): 14-16, 21.

²³ Andreas P. Kyriacou, “Intrinsic Motivation and the Logic of Collective Action: The Impact of Selective Incentives,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 69, no. 2 (April, 2010): 823-839.

are not directly threatened, and even those that are, have an incentive to free ride, allowing other partners to maintain the defense.

Political scientist Russell Hardin argues that the smaller the group that is capable of providing the collective good (K-group), and would benefit from doing so, even if no other group member contributed good themselves, determines the likelihood that the good gets provided. A small K-group fosters transparency, reduces coordination problems, and thereby decreases the chances of free riding among K-group members. Conversely, with large K-groups, responsive collective action is hindered as each member waits for the others to act first.²⁴ Therefore, dominant states, measured in economic size and military spending, will pay more to secure the collective good.²⁵

NATO's success as a collective security organization is due to the overwhelming political and material contributions of the U.S. combined with the relatively small size of the initial coalition.²⁶ The overwhelming

NATO allies must not dismiss the frustration of U.S. politicians and population with NATO spending.

contribution of U.S. support has helped dampen policy differences within the alliance, even

today, but a distracted U.S. could be a danger to the alliance. Most of Western Europe does not see threat and the use of force the same way as the U.S. and Eastern Europe. This attitude was reflected in a recent Pew survey²⁷ where at least half of Germans, French and Italians said their countries should *not* use military force to defend a NATO ally if attacked by Russia. However, a median of 68% of people in NATO countries surveyed believed the U.S. would defend allies in such circumstances. Without a large core force like the one provided by the U.S., alliance cohesion and decisive action is unlikely. Although highly capable, Germany, France, and the U.K., simply do not have sufficient military strength to provide the core necessary for an effective alliance and face their own significant political issues at home and abroad.²⁸

Towards a Coalition for Action

The discussion above highlights the dangers for those states threatened by Russian resurgence or the refugee crisis through Southern Europe. Smaller states are likely to bear the burden of these threats if they do not acknowledge the alliance dynamics and build a political strategy to ensure their interests are taken seriously by the alliance.

²⁴Russell Hardin, *Collective Action* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982): 40-48.

²⁵ Hegemonic stability theory also suggests that the dominant power will pay disproportionately more to secure a public good, see Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

²⁶In 1949, there were 12 founding members of the Alliance: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands,

Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

²⁷ Bruce Stokes, "Views of NATO and its role are mixed in U.S., other member nations", *Pew Research Center*, 28 March, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/28/views-of-nato-and-its-role-are-mixed-in-u-s-other-member-nations/>.

²⁸Patrick Savage, "NATO Without America: A Grim Prognosis," *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, March 15, 2017, <http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2017/03/14/nato-without-america-a-grim-prognosis/>.

First, Europe needs to recognize that the U.S. is currently the only alliance partner that can effectively deter the Russians from adventures in the Baltics or Eastern Europe. Given the limitations of European-led collective action capability, Baltic States need to ensure that the Trump administration stays focused on a robust NATO alliance. Effective collective security requires a partner that can bear a large burden and provide the framework for coalition action. Without U.S. leadership, no European state can assume the role currently provided by the U.S. Eastern European nations need to continue political and military support to the U.S. to ensure that the U.S. does not abandon them in their time of need. Support for the NATO coalition effort in Afghanistan demonstrates commitment to the alliance while supporting U.S. interests.

Second, new NATO nations must ensure a robust presence in NATO decision-making bodies so that they can influence the policy and decision-making process. They will have to invest significant political resources to ensure their concerns are heard. The Baltics and Eastern Europe should look for any opportunity to fill NATO headquarters and political bodies with representatives. Small countries bear a large burden supporting these positions, but support in Mons and Brussels can have outsized effects. The goal should be to ensure that the interests of those being threatened are represented at all levels of the alliance structure. Agenda setting is often the work of bureaucrats rather than national-level politicians.

Third, develop sub-NATO regional infrastructure to coordinate concerns within the alliance and to align national policies. The Baltic and Visegrad-blocs can coordinate decision-making much more

effectively if they band together and align interests. Regional blocs, especially from Eastern Europe and the Baltics can be much more effective than if they pursue state interests individually. The treaty establishing the Baltic Defence College is an example of a regional bloc filling a defense need that was left short by the larger alliance. This level of pooling and coordination of assets and policy can provide a road map for larger regional integration and coordination.

Fourth, advocate that large partners such as Germany and France invest in the capabilities necessary for effective NATO operations. NATO partners have long ignored the financial commitment to the organization; they may no longer be assured that U.S. administrations will tolerate this free riding. If the U.S. were to leave, NATO would not collapse immediately, however, the ensuing capability vacuum would threaten its survivability.

Grievances about burden sharing and the U.S. role abroad are real and should not be underestimated. NATO allies must not dismiss the frustration of U.S. politicians and population with NATO spending. U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis' plea to his European counterparts reflects this attitude, "I owe it to you all to give you clarity on the political reality in the United States and to state the fair demand from my country's people in concrete terms, America will meet its responsibilities, but if your nations do not want to see America moderate its commitment to the alliance, each of your capitals needs to show its support for our

common defense.”²⁹ NATO nations can no longer assume that continued free riding will be tolerated.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense College, UAE Armed Forces, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

²⁹Dan Lamothe and Michael Birnbaum, “Defense Secretary Mattis Issues New Ultimatum to NATO Allies on Defense Spending,” *Washington Post*, accessed May 7, 2017,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/02/15/mattis-trumps-defense-secretary-issues-ultimatum-to-nato-allies-on-defense-spending/>.

Defeating “Radical Islamic Terrorists”: How is President Trump doing in his first 100 days in Office?

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During the 2016 campaign and in the early months of his presidency, President Trump made “defeating radical Islamic terrorism” a key part of his counterterrorism strategy.¹ He also pledged to intensify operations against terrorist groups like ISIS/Daesh and al-Qaeda as well as refrain from large-scale military interventions that could put the lives of American soldiers in harm’s way. In his State of the Union address to Congress, President Trump also promised to “make America first,” demanded that U.S. partners and allies shoulder more of the burden in fighting terrorism, and said the U.S. can no longer be the world’s policeman spending American treasure and spilling American blood overseas. During his campaign having already labelled Brussels, hash-tag hellhole, he began his first 100 days in office by reprimanding key European allies and expressing disdain for international organizations such as the U.N. and NATO. Although consistent with much of what he promised on the campaign trail, his decisions represented a more assertive shift in U.S.

foreign policy and to combating terrorism compared to his predecessor, President Obama.

Yet, as the realities of his Presidential duties hit rhetoric, President Trump has been forced to come around to embracing NATO and reaffirm key alliances. He has also acted out his support for upholding international norms against the use of chemical weapons by bombing Syria. Despite complaining about U.S. responsibilities and his calls for more burden-sharing by U.S. allies, he has also sent more U.S. troops to aid in the fight against Daesh in Syria and Iraq. From a counter-terrorism perspective, it appears he has not yet hit the mark in terms of keeping Americans safer or in defeating “radical Islamic terrorists.” In fact, his policies and his “tough guy” stance as the spokesman for the U.S. may be making Americans less safe and fuelling rather than defeating terrorist recruitment.

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While the Obama administration ended the U.S. combat missions in Iraq in 2010 and Afghanistan in 2014, U.S. troops remained in both places, with estimates around 15,000 deployed when President Trump took office.² Currently, under President Trump, their presence is increasing. There are at least 6,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and about 300 to

¹ Holley, P. (March 1, 2017). “‘Radical Islamic Terrorism’: Three words that separate Trump from most of Washington.” *The Washington Post*, Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/02/28/radical-islamic-terrorism-three->

[words-that-separate-trump-from-most-of-washington/?utm_term=.d3731fcf8e9c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/02/28/radical-islamic-terrorism-three-words-that-separate-trump-from-most-of-washington/?utm_term=.d3731fcf8e9c).

² Tilghman, A. (December 26, 2016). “New in 2017: Big decisions for the wars in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.” *Military Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.militarytimes.com/articles/donald-trump-iraq-syria-afghanistan-james-mattis>.

500 in Syria, and more than 8,000 in Afghanistan.³ President Trump is still playing policeman.

The 6,000 U.S. troops currently deployed to Iraq compares to the peak of approximately 166,000 troops during the surge in November 2007,⁴ yet numbers continue to rise, and increasingly U.S. troops are involved in actual combat. Even though orders to U.S. troops in Mosul are to remain behind the forward front lines, military officials acknowledge that this line is constantly shifting while troops clear 200,000 buildings in the city and face IED's and booby traps planted around the area.⁵ Referring to U.S. troops in Iraq at a March 28, 2017 reception for U.S. senators and their spouses, President Trump announced, "Our soldiers are fighting

...we should not, as President Trump may, naïvely expect for Daesh to disappear.

like never before."⁶

According to Air Force Col. John Dorrian,

spokesman for the military coalition fighting Daesh, U.S. troops in Iraq are not simply advisors or trainers anymore. They have come under fire at different times and have returned fire.⁷

Interestingly enough, the Pentagon's record on transparency when it comes to divulging the numbers deployed to Iraq remains poor, a sharp divergence from policies under the Obama administration. Eric Pahon, a Pentagon spokesman cited the following reasons for this failure to inform the American public: "In order to maintain tactical surprise, ensure operational security and force protection, the coalition will not routinely announce or confirm information about the capabilities, force numbers, locations, or movement of forces in or out of Iraq and Syria."⁸ This policy, however, leaves the American people in the dark. It also reflects how deeply and committed the new administration is to troop deployment in Iraq, and now Syria as well.

Military attacks in Yemen, taking place shortly after President Trump took office in January 2017, resulted in the death of a U.S. Navy SEAL Chief Petty Officer, William "Ryan" Owens. President Trump used this event to his advantage during his State of the Union Address by inviting and paying tribute to the SEAL's widow, Carryn Owens. However, some argued that the Yemen raid was poorly planned and executed and that it unnecessarily risked civilian lives, including the lives of American soldiers.⁹ As

³Ibid.

⁴ Liptak, K. (March 29, 2017). "Trump: US troops 'fighting like never before' in Iraq." *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2017/03/28/politics/trump-iraq-troops-comments/>.

⁵ Sisk, R. (January 4, 2017). "US doubles numbers of advisers in Iraq as forces push into Mosul." *Military.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2017/01/04/us-doubles-number-advisers-in-iraq-forces-push-mosul.html>.

⁶ Liptak, K. "Trump: US troops 'fighting like never before' in Iraq."

⁷ Wong, K. (February 22, 2017). "U.S. military official: U.S. troops in Iraq 'absolutely' in combat." *Breitbart*. Retrieved from

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/02/22/us-military-official-us-troops-iraq-absolutely-combat/>.

⁸ Szoldra, P. (March 31, 2017). "The Pentagon is no longer going to tell the public how many troops are in Iraq and Syria." *Business Insider*. Retrieved from (<http://www.businessinsider.com/pentagon-troop-numbers-2017-3>).

⁹ Schmitt, E., & Sanger, E. D. (February 1, 2017). "Raid in Yemen: Risky from the start and costly in the end." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/01/world/middleeast/donald-trump-yemen-commando-raid-questions.html?_r=0; Vinjamuri, L. (February 8, 2017). "Botched Yemen raid shows risks of Trump's approach." *CNN*. Retrieved from

Americans find military deployments shrouded in secrecy and some of their best dying in raids, it brings up the question of how President Trump is refraining from spilling American blood or putting “America first.”

In March 2017, deployments from Fort Bragg of 240 soldiers to Iraq from a Brigade of 2,000 soldiers at the ready for additional deployments reflects the freedom the Trump administration has granted to its commanders to move forces into the battle zone “without lengthy review in Washington.”¹⁰ The U.S. also recently sent Army Rangers and a Marine artillery unit to Syria, with the Rangers “operating in the northern town of Manbij to deter Turkish-backed Syrian fighters from moving into the area” and the Marine artillery unit “providing firepower for the offensive to take the Tabaqa Dam and cut off the western approaches to Raqqa, which is being carried out by Syrian fighters backed by the United States.”¹¹ In March of 2017, an Army platoon was deployed to Iraq to clear away roadside bombs¹²—a danger that will likely increase as Daesh cadres lose territory and increasingly revert to guerrilla warfare and terrorist attacks on civilian targets. Approximately 2,500 U.S. Army paratroopers are also expected to receive orders to deploy to Iraq and Syria.¹³ Deployments continue to rise as the U.S.

build-up of troops in the Middle East mirrors what happened during the Vietnam war; despite President Trump’s claims to put America first and not involve American troops in global conflicts.

Many military analysts and figures agree that the territorial defeat of Daesh in Iraq is nearly complete, especially in light of the success achieved in ousting Daesh from many areas of Mosul in Iraq.¹⁴ In Syria, U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces recently launched an operation to seize the Tabaqa Dam, an area near Raqqa where the Daesh *Emni* (intelligence and external attack operations) had its headquarters.¹⁵ Both operations have been supported by U.S. airstrikes, artillery helicopters and U.S. troops acting as advisors, although also shooting and being shot at even inside Mosul. The numbers of U.S. troops operating in Mosul was doubled in January 2017.¹⁶

<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/08/opinions/trump-yemen-raid-geopolitics-vinjamuri-opinion/>.

¹⁰ Gordon, R. M. (March 27, 2017). “U.S. to send over 200 more soldiers to Iraq to help retake Mosul.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/27/world/middleeast/us-military-iraq-mosul.html>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Brig. Gen. Ali, Ministry of Peshmerga, Interviewed by authors, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq (May 24, 2017).

¹⁵ Almohammad, A., & Speckhard, A. (April 12,

2017). “Abu Luqman – Father of the ISIS Emni: Its organizational structure, current leadership and clues to its inner workings in Syria & Iraq.” Retrieved from The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism: <http://www.icsve.org/researchreports/abu-luqman-father-of-the-isis-emni-its-organizational-structure-current-leadershipand-clues-to-its-inner-workings-in-syria-iraq/>.

¹⁶ Sisk, R. “US doubles numbers of advisers in Iraq as forces push into Mosul.”

While the defeat of Mosul and Raqqa will make it difficult for Daesh to hold territory and have any semblance of a state, we should not, as President Trump may, naïvely expect for Daesh to disappear. In our research interviewing Daesh defectors globally, we have been told the plan is to shave beards and blend into society mounting urban guerrilla warfare and terrorist attacks¹⁷—like the one that occurred while we were in Baghdad in April, 2017. A truck bomb exploded at a checkpoint, igniting three additional tankers that were present to make that sort of conflagration. More attacks of this type are expected in Iraq, as Daesh has cleverly stored explosives in secret locations. In Syria, reports are that Daesh is training female cadres in combat operations, placing sticky bombs and training as suicide operatives.¹⁸ Total defeat of Daesh will not be simple.

We must also keep in mind that the very security violations that gave rise to Daesh in the first place are still rife in both Syria and Iraq. Sunnis in Fallujah, Mosul, and other areas of Anbar raise concerns about serious human rights violations, killings, and disappearances of Sunnis, even women by Shia death squads. Videos shown by a former Sunni resistance fighter in Amman in November 2017 depicting a teenage boy being dragged by Shia militia members to a

tank and run over by it for suspicion of being in Daesh, are circulated in the Sunni parts of Iraq and beyond, creating horror, fear, and sectarian distrust among Iraqis.¹⁹ One press person we interviewed in April 2017, an Iraqi

President Trump now allows counterterrorism airstrikes outside of a conventional war zone, such as Afghanistan, to be ordered without vetting by the White House and other agencies

in Erbil, stated she often video recorded the ongoing battle between Shia forces and Daesh, especially in the Mosul areas, but was never allowed to interview the detained Daesh fighters as they were shot immediately without any trials by the Shia troops. Similarly, others have told of witnessing Shia

forces dragging dead Daesh cadres through the streets of Mosul or letting their bodies rot in place. Such actions are unlikely to create any sense of trust or security among Sunnis for the government of Iraq.²⁰

Daesh, and al-Qaeda before them, have always been adept at using U.S. troop misdeeds and civilian kills as a tool to stir up anger against the West and garner more terrorist recruits. During the first three months of President Trump's presidency, there also has been a "significant uptick in the

¹⁷ Speckhard, A., & Yayla, A. S. (2016). *ISIS defectors: Inside stories of the terrorist caliphate*: Advances Press, LLC; Speckhard, A., & Yayla, A. S. (December 2015). *Eyewitness accounts from recent defectors from Islamic State: Why they joined, what they saw, why they quit. Perspectives on Terrorism*, 9(6), 95-118. Retrieved from <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/475>.

¹⁸ Almohammad, A. & Speckhard, A. (April 22, 2017). "The operational ranks and roles of female ISIS operatives: From assassins and morality policeto spies and suicide bombers." Retrieved from The

International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism:

<http://www.icsve.org/researchreports/the-operational-ranks-and-roles-of-female-isis-operatives-from-assassins-andmorality-police-to-spies-and-suicide-bombers/>.

¹⁹ Mohammed Mahmood Latif, M.M.L. Iraqi former jihadi fighter/ head and of the political office to the groups of the Resistance in Anbar and Iraq, Interviewed by Anne Speckhard, Amman, Jordan (November 13, 2016).

²⁰ Z.A.. Interviewed by Ardian Shajkovci, Erbil, Iraq, and Anne Speckhard (April 2017).

number of airstrikes targeting terrorists in the Middle East, North Africa, and Afghanistan.”²¹ We must hope that civilians are not high among those killed as video footage of civilian victims is exactly what groups like Daesh use to incite hatred against Americans and fuel recruitment into their terrorist cause.

Thus, when a U.S. airstrike killed scores of Iraqi civilians in Mosul on March 17, 2017, it may have been exactly one of those events which the terrorist group can use for recruitment, even while it is losing territory.²² As more and more American troops get embroiled in Syria and Iraq, we must hope the military has ‘upped its game’ regarding a small footprint and for observing human rights. We cannot afford any major scandals like Abu Ghraib or the Marine rape and killings in Haditha that poured fuel on al-Qaeda’s recruitment,²³ though one remains concerned when senior White House officials make claims such as “Theater commanders have been unshackled. Everyone’s been unshackled to do their job,” referring to a lifting of many combat restrictions by the Trump administration over the military that were in place during the Obama administration.²⁴ While that may be good for

U.S. military morale, it creates dangers as well.

President Trump now allows counterterrorism airstrikes outside of a conventional war zone, such as Afghanistan, to be ordered without vetting by the White House and other agencies—also creating the possibilities of over doing it. On April 13, 2017, General John Nicholson ordered the dropping of the largest non-nuclear bomb in the U.S.’ arsenal to root out a complex of tunnels and caves in Afghanistan used by the Daesh affiliate in Afghanistan, Daesh-Khorasan.²⁵ Some journalists reporting on the bomb’s nickname of the “Mother of All Bombs,” or MOAB, were quick to say “This is what freedom looks like” while President Trump praised the general’s decision to drop the MOAB on Daesh, which he and his administration believe sent a cautionary message to all of the U.S.’ adversaries.²⁶ Indeed it did, although whether that message is what he and his administration hope it is, remains another matter. One can imagine Daesh and other terrorist groups playing such news footage with the voice-overs of “this is

²¹<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/02/22/us-military-official-us-troops-iraq-absolutely-combat/>.

²² Arango, T., & Cooper, H. (March 24, 2017). “U.S. investigating Mosul strikes said to have killed up to 200 civilians.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/24/world/middleast/us-iraq-mosul-investigation-airstrike-civilian-deaths.html>.

²³ Greenberg, J. K. (April 28, 2014). “Abu Ghraib: A torture story without a hero or an ending.” *The Nation*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenation.com/article/abu-ghraib-torture-story-without-hero-or-ending/>; Finer, J., & Partlow, J. (July 10, 2016). “Four more GIs charged with rape, murder.” *Washington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/09/AR2006070900178.html)

[dyn/content/article/2006/07/09/AR2006070900178.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/09/AR2006070900178.html).

²⁴ Wong, K. (April 24, 2017). “Trump takes on terrorism in his first hundred days.” *Breitbart*. Retrieved from <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2017/04/24/trump-takes-on-terrorism-in-his-first-hundred-days/>.

²⁵ Rasmussen E. S. (April 15, 2017). “US ‘mother of all bombs’ killed 92 ISIS militants, say Afghan officials.” *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/15/us-mother-of-all-bombs-moab-afghanistan-donald-trump-death-toll>.

²⁶ Szoldra, P. (April 14, 2017). “Fox News host says dropping ‘mother of all bombs’ on ISIS is ‘what freedom looks like.’” *Business Insider*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/fox-host-freedom-looks-like-2017-4>.

what democracy looks like” in their recruiting videos.

In the fight against terrorism, President Trump has mainly engaged in rhetoric that purports to make America safe and to put “America first.” In reality, however, his policies may be doing exactly the opposite. While nearly no one disagrees that Daesh’ ability to hold territory in Syria and Iraq should be seriously degraded, if not altogether destroyed, naïveté about whether that will be an end to Daesh is dangerous. In addition, heavy involvements of U.S. troops, particularly in combat roles, may fuel Daesh

The Daesh brand continues to flourish despite their territorial setbacks, and their franchises operate in at least 30 countries.

recruitment elsewhere. Given that Daesh is instructing its cadres to stay home and attack in place, this may lead to attacks similar to the ones recently witnessed in London, Stockholm, Brussels and Paris where Americans have also been killed. Keeping us safe means we can safely travel through European airports, shop and dine on tourist destinations without fear.²⁷

Equally important, President Trump’s poorly laid out immigration policies that targeted first six predominantly Muslim countries for the visa ban and later cut that to five may have played right into the hands of groups like Daesh. They argue that Islam, Muslim lands, and Muslims are under attack. These are groups who have long sought to create hatred and a divide between Muslims and the West to be able to recruit more Muslims to

their cause. When President Trump speaks about banning access to Syrian refugees—many who are not terrorists, but are fleeing from terrorists—and refers to his fight with terrorism as against “radical Islam,” but fails to speak about the many Muslims who are also victims of terrorism, he is playing right into the hands of groups like Daesh. The same happens when he fails to speak against and pursue the right-wing terrorists who have killed innocent Muslims. He is playing the villain in their black and white view of the world and giving them cause to claim that Americans hate Muslims.

President Trump’s core personality-based leadership traits are often characterized as extreme and unusual for any presidential candidate. To succeed against terrorists, he needs to be able to think beyond himself, to get to the heart of the matter, and put himself in their shoes, such as in the case when he included Iraq in the visa ban. He and his administration failed to consider that Iraqis might retaliate and ban Americans working with NGOs and who, in many cases, are actually directly supporting U.S. military and U.S. combat efforts in Iraq. Iraqis are also a major partner in the fight against Daesh. He cannot often see beyond his own rhetoric, but to succeed, he needs to.

We need carefully thought out policies that do not inflame further tensions with our trusted allies. We also need carefully controlled troop deployments if we want to work effectively against the brand that Daesh is selling—that is, a promise of an alternative world governance which will continue to sell regardless of whether Daesh loses its territory in Syria and Iraq. We have seen upwards of

²⁷ ICSVE research on ISIS accounts on Telegram and other social media channels.

31,000 foreign fighters accept the Daesh dream of their so-called Islamic Caliphate and pour into Syria and Iraq from 86 countries.²⁸ The Daesh brand continues to flourish despite their territorial setbacks, and their franchises operate in at least 30 countries. Unless we get smart and pull together, we will continue to see terrorist groups like Daesh winning in small victories and countless terrorist tragedies continuing to be enacted in our cities and airports and by extension witness larger tragedies involving hundreds of thousands of displaced persons who will continue to seek refuge in our Western countries. President Trump has now put a reasonable, seasoned General in charge of defense and another in charge of National security. Let us hope they advise him well going forward, and he does manage to defeat the current terrorist menace.

²⁸See for example The Soufan Group 2015 report. See http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf. Some data estimate even higher wave of

foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq. http://www.petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?NewsID=237670&lang=2.

President Donald Trump and Terrorism in Europe

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On April 20, 2017, a French police officer was shot and killed in a terrorist attack on the Champs-Élysées in Paris and Daesh quickly claimed responsibility. President Donald Trump responded publicly in his usual fashion, via Twitter. His post read, “Another terrorist attack in Paris. The people of France will not take much more of this. Will have a big effect on presidential election!”¹ There are three distinct messages in this speech. The first phrase, ‘another terrorist attack,’ imparts a sense of inevitability regarding Daesh attacks in Europe, as if the progression of attacks cannot be stopped. The second sentence about the French people indicates that the American President believes that France is currently unstable and that there is a possibility for some sort of popular resistance to the French Government. The third part indicates that he believes the attack will be beneficial for the National Front (FN – *Front National*) presidential candidate Marine Le Pen. President Trump did not exactly endorse Le Pen in an April 21, 2017 interview with the Associated Press, but he suggested that she had an advantage due to the fact that, “she is the strongest on borders, and she’s the strongest on what’s going on in France...Whoever is the toughest on radical

Islamic terrorism and whoever is the toughest on borders will do well in the election.”²

President Trump’s statement is somewhat unusual for an American President because he gave his support to a far-right party in Europe due to its stance on terrorism. As a counter-example, President George W. Bush did not make any open statements regarding Jean-Marie Le Pen’s (Marine Le Pen’s father) move to the second round of the 2002 French elections against Jacques Chirac. This was despite the elder Le Pen’s hard line against terrorism.

Trump is unlike his predecessors in making his opinions public in a regular fashion via Twitter³ and in his support for far-right parties in Europe.⁴

President Trump has singled out France repeatedly for specific criticism that has included not only its response to terrorism but also its immigration policies.

Trump’s approach to relations with the U.S.’ European partners will likely have effects on the responses to the ongoing terrorist campaign in Europe. In his first one hundred days, Trump has been cool toward France and Germany regarding aid against terrorist attacks, while showing more interest in helping the UK and Sweden after the attacks in those countries. There has been, however, significant changes in the President’s policies toward NATO, which could possibly lead to greater counterterrorism cooperation in the

¹ Talev, Margaret, “Trump Says Paris Attack Will Probably Help Le Pen in French Election”, *Bloomberg*, 21 April, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-04-21/trump-predicts-big-effect-from-paris-attack-on-french-election>.

² Ibid.

³ Nye, Joseph S., “Donald Trump’s Dark Art of the Tweet”, *Project Syndicate*, 8 February, 2017,

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/trump-political-communication-skills-by-joseph-s--nye-2017-02>.

⁴ Traub, James, “Donald Trump’s Far-Right Feedback Loop Is Shaking Europe to its Core”, *Foreign Policy*, 1 February 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/01/donald-trumps-far-right-feedback-loop-is-shaking-europe-to-its-core/>.

alliance. This insight will examine what we know about counterterrorism cooperation between the U.S. and Europe during Trump's first one hundred days. The first part will look at Trump's public statements about terrorist attacks in Europe before and after the election. The second part will look at the reality of ongoing operational and institutional counterterrorism cooperation between the U.S. and the European countries.

Trump's Public Statements on Terrorist Attacks in Europe

The statements made by Trump on Twitter and to the Associated Press on April 21, 2017, were critical of the current French approach to counterterrorism. This is largely consistent with Trump's reactions to previous attacks in France prior to his election. After the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015 - in which twelve of the staff of the satirical paper were killed by terrorists from Al Qaeda in Yemen - Trump stated on Twitter, "If the morons who killed all of those people at Charlie Hebdo would have just waited, the magazine would have folded – no money, no success!"⁵ This was in contrast to President Obama's response to the attack, where he wrote 'Vive la France!' in the book

of condolences for the victims at the French Embassy in Washington D.C.⁶

In November 2015, after Daesh gun and bomb attacks killed 130 people in Paris, Trump's response was, as in April 2017, to blame it on what he believed to be the incompetence of the French Government. He claimed the attack happened because Paris had the "toughest gun laws in the world"⁷ and that if more people had had guns, the terrorists would not have been able to kill so many people. He exhibited more solidarity after the July 14, 2016 truck attack in Nice, however, postponing his Vice Presidential announcement. He later, however, chalked up the problem to weakness in the response to counter-terrorism⁸, but did not target the French Government with specific criticism.

The focus of analysis thus far has been on France, as it has been the primary European target for Daesh attacks over the last two years. The analysis needs to be widened, however, for two major reasons. The first reason is that President Trump has singled out France repeatedly for specific criticism that has included not only its response to terrorism but also its immigration policies.⁹ It is unclear why Trump has such an antipathy toward France. The second reason for widening the analysis is that France of

⁵ Griffin, Andrew, "Donald Trump's Mocking Tweets About Charlie Hebdo Resurface After President Criticises Terrorism Coverage", *Independent*, 8 February, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/donald-trump-charlie-hebdo-tweets-twitter-president-terrorism-coverage-islamic-state-a7569586.html>.

⁶ "Attentat a Charlie Hebdo: 'Vive la France!' écrit Obama", *Le Parisien*, 9 January, 2015, <http://www.leparisien.fr/charlie-hebdo/attentat-a-charlie-hebdo-vive-la-france-ecrit-obama-09-01-2015-4431997.php>.

⁷ Diamond, Jeremy, "Trump: Paris massacre would have been 'much different' if people had guns",

CNN, 14 November, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/14/politics/paris-terror-attacks-donald-trump-guns/>.

⁸ Irvine, Chris and Rahman, Khaleda, "'This is war. When will we learn? It is only getting worse': Donald Trump quickly seizes on 'horrific' Nice Bastille Day attack", *Daily Mail*, 15 July, 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3691145/Donald-Trump-quickly-seizes-horrific-Nice-Bastille-Day-attack.html>.

⁹ Fledscher, Kyle, "French president rips Trump for Paris criticism", *Washington Examiner*, 25 February, 2017, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/french-president-rips-trump-for-paris-criticism/article/2615763>.

course has not been the only European target for Daesh terrorists since 2015.

Since President Trump's election in November 2016 until the beginning of May 2017, there have been four high-profile attacks in Europe outside of France. In December 2016, a truck attacked a Christmas market in Germany; in March 2017, a car and

The President's approach is largely bilateral, with a considerable disdain for the European Union.

knife attack near the British Parliament; in April 2017, a bombing in the metro of St. Petersburg; and, a

truck attack in Stockholm. Recognizing that the Trump administration's relations with the Russian government are complex and separate from that of the rest of Europe, the St. Petersburg attack will not be discussed in this contribution. Russia, unlike France, Germany, the UK and Sweden (despite Sweden being outside of NATO), is also not technically an ally of the U.S.

The attack in Germany in December 2016 prompted Trump to call it "an attack on humanity,"¹⁰ which demonstrated more solidarity than with the attacks in France. He used the event, however, to justify his (then-

proposed) ban on citizens of seven dominantly Muslim countries coming into the U.S. The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, did not share the same opinion, however, criticizing Trump's travel ban in January 2017.¹¹ A meeting between Merkel and Trump at the White House did not go well in March 2017 and Trump followed up the meeting by tweeting about Germany's lack of adequate defense spending for NATO.¹² The President's policy toward Germany thus resembles to a certain degree that toward France, which is sustained criticism of both countries' policies. This could possibly complicate counter-terrorism cooperation.

The reaction of the U.S. President to the April 2017 attack in Stockholm was more measured and showed more solidarity with the country, as Trump stated that it was important to "maintain the already close partnership between the United States and Sweden in the global fight against terrorism."¹³ Trump's more moderate response may have been due to Swedish Prime Minister, Stefan Lofven's statement that he would limit immigration in the future, to his country.¹⁴ In that way, Trump has an ally for his approach to limiting immigration as a method of counter-terrorism, which is

¹⁰ Associated Press, "Donald Trump says Berlin attack 'proves him right' about banning Muslim immigrants from America", *The Telegraph*, 22 December, 2016,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/22/donald-trump-says-berlin-attack-proves-right-banning-muslim/>.

¹¹ Worley, Will, "Germany's Angela Merkel attacks Donald Trump for targeting 'people from specific background or faith'", *Independent*, 29 January, 2017,

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/donald-trump-muslim-ban-germany-angela-merkel-immigration-refugee-executive-order-a7551641.html>.

¹² Puzanghera, Jim, "Trump says Merkel meeting was 'great', then blasts Germany for NATO bills",

Los Angeles Times, 18 March, 2017,

<http://www.latimes.com/politics/washington/la-na-essential-washington-updates-trump-says-merkel-meeting-was-great-1489845711-htmlstory.html>.

¹³ Morrongiello, Gabby, "Trump calls Swedish prime minister after Stockholm terror attack", *Washington Examiner*, 10 April, 2017,

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/trump-calls-swedish-prime-minister-after-stockholm-terror-attack/article/2619851>.

¹⁴ Ahlander, Johan and Yosufzai, Mansoor, "Stockholm attack puts a choke-hold on Swedish tolerance", *Reuters*, 12 April, 2017,

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-sweden-attack-immigration-idUSKBN17E1VX>.

less popular in the French (pre-May 7, 2017 elections) and German governments. Trump also may have been embarrassed following a speech in February, 2017 where he appeared to invent a terrorist attack in Sweden that in fact had never happened.¹⁵

Even though it is out of chronological order, it is necessary to look at Trump's response to the attack against the British Parliament last, as it illustrates the fact that Trump views Britain differently. Trump's response to the attack near the British Parliament in March, 2017 was much more cordial than toward other countries. He tweeted on March 23, the day after the attack:

"Spoke to U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May today to offer condolences on the terrorist attack in London. She is strong and doing very well."¹⁶ His Press Secretary, Sean Spicer also offered 'the full support' of the U.S.

...the agreements remain in place, but their efficiency may have been undermined by Trump's decisions on national security intended to protect U.S. territory.

Why the marked sympathy for the UK and Prime Minister May, when Trump criticized France and Germany for insufficient measures against terrorism? It might be easy to claim it is the 'special relationship' at work, but that is inadequate as an explanation. It is clear, however, that there are many similarities in policies between Trump and May, in particular in their hard-liner policy on immigration.¹⁷ Trump is also in favor of Brexit and used the British decision to leave the European Union as another opportunity to criticize Germany in January 2017, saying, "You look at the European Union and it's Germany. Basically, a vehicle for Germany. That's why I thought the UK was so smart in getting out."¹⁸ Trump's affinity for Britain and the policies of its Prime Minister was also clear in the fact that May was the first world leader invited to the White House,¹⁹ and Trump likened the relationship with her to that between Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.²⁰

At least on the surface, Trump has expressed a willingness to work closely on counter-terrorism with European leaders who think the same way he does about immigration and security. The President's approach is largely bilateral, with a considerable disdain for the

¹⁵ Chan, Sewell, "Last Night in Sweden? Trump's Remark Baffles a Nation", *The New York Times*, 19 February, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/19/world/europe/last-night-in-sweden-trumps-remark-baffles-a-nation.html?_r=1.

¹⁶ Knox, Patrick, "She is strong and doing well! Donald Trump praises Theresa May's response to Westminster terror attack after phoning PM", *The Sun*, 23 March, 2017, <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3157933/donald-trump-theresa-may-parliament-terror-twitter/>.

¹⁷ Fox, Kara, "Donald Trump and Theresa May: Another 'special relationship'?", *CNN*, 1 February, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/27/politics/donald-trump-and-theresa-may-special-relationship/>.

¹⁸ Stewart, Heather, Yuhas, Alan and Walker, Peter, "Donald Trump's first UK post-election interview: Brexit a 'great thing'", *The Guardian*, 16 January, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/15/trumps-first-uk-post-election-interview-brexite-a-great-thing>.

¹⁹ Lane, Anthony, "Theresa May's American Adventure", *The New Yorker*, 4 February, 2017, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/theresa-mays-american-adventure>.

²⁰ Hope, Christopher and Riley-Smith, Ben, "Donald Trump to meet Theresa May before any other foreign leader since his inauguration as new deal planned for Britain", *The Telegraph*, 22 January, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/21/donald-trump-plans-new-deal-britain-theresa-may-becomes-first/>.

European Union. The bilateral approach to European allies is not unusual for American presidents, however. Trump's criticisms of France and Germany would indicate that cooperation could be more difficult during his administration. The situation brings to mind Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's criticisms of France and Germany in 2003, when he called them 'old Europe'²¹ after their governments' refusal to intervene in Iraq.

Trump's rhetoric suggests that the U.S. will work with the UK and Sweden against terrorism, but not as much with France and Germany. It would be a mistake, however, to limit the analysis to the tweets and public statements of Trump. There is a considerable institutional system in place for counterterrorism cooperation between the U.S. and the European countries, and the next section will consider how that system has functioned during Trump's first one hundred days.

Counter-Terrorism Cooperation between the U.S. and Europe, January-April 2017

Ashley Deeks, in an article in the *Harvard National Security Journal* in 2015, demonstrated that intelligence communities are forced to work with one another in

operational matters, and that 'peer intelligence communities' can constrain the actions of their partners.²² In other words, this means that the U.S., or even the U.S. and the UK, is not completely independent in its counterterrorism operations. The clearest possible constraint is a refusal to share intelligence with partners.²³ Trump therefore cannot completely cut France and Germany out of the loop (even if he wanted to, which is unlikely, despite his rhetoric to the contrary), as those countries have important sources of information that are essential for the U.S. fight against terrorism.

A European Parliament report from January 2017 suggested that counterterrorism cooperation with the U.S. would not change a great deal 'in the short term.' The report's author, however, expressed concern about the possibility that the Trump administration would push for extralegal counterterrorist measures such as torture.²⁴ European Union cooperation with the U.S. on terrorism has been in place since the European Council called for it after the 9/11 attacks.²⁵ An example of cooperation between the U.S. and the EU is the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program (TFTP), signed in 2010.²⁶ Another example is the sharing of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data, which was agreed upon in 2012.²⁷ PNR sharing is only the exchange

²¹ "Outrage at 'old Europe' remarks", *BBC News*, 23 January, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2687403.stm>.

²² Deeks, Ashley, "Intelligence Communities, Peer Constraints and the Law", *Harvard National Security Journal*, Vol. 7, Issue. 1, (2015).

²³ Burdette, Zachary, "America's Counterterrorism Partners as a Check on Trump", *Lawfare Institute in cooperation with The Brookings Institution*, 1 March, 2017, <https://lawfareblog.com/americas-counterterrorism-partners-check-trump>.

²⁴ Bouchet, Nicolas, "The 2016 Elections in the United States: Effects on the EU-US relationship", European Parliament, Policy Department, Directorate-General for External Policies, Paper,

January, 2017,

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDA_N/2017/578030/EXPO_IDA\(2017\)578030_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDA_N/2017/578030/EXPO_IDA(2017)578030_EN.pdf)

²⁵ "The European Union's Policies on Counterterrorism", European Parliament, Policy Department, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Paper, January, 2017,

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STU_D/2017/583124/IPOL_STU\(2017\)583124_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STU_D/2017/583124/IPOL_STU(2017)583124_EN.pdf).

²⁶ "US-Data and Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP)", *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 195, 27 July, (2010), 5-14.

²⁷ "Agreement between the United States of America and the European Union on the use and transfer of passenger name records to the United States

of information about airline passengers, however, and does not include other forms of transport.

On January 25, 2017, however, Trump issued an Executive Order which instructed Federal agencies to “ensure that their privacy policies exclude persons who are not United States citizens or lawful permanent residents from the protections of the Privacy Act regarding personally identifiable information.”²⁸ A number of analysts claim that this could pose problems for agreements regarding data privacy in intelligence exchanged between the EU and the U.S.²⁹ This could possibly even invalidate the PNR Agreement of 2012.³⁰ For the moment, however, the agreements remain in place, but their efficiency may have been undermined by Trump’s decisions on national security intended to protect U.S. territory.

...the anti-French rhetoric masks ongoing close cooperation between France and the U.S. in counterterrorism.

A House of Representatives Report in February, 2017 suggested that there was some improvement in the fight against terrorism by ‘European nations’ (no mention is made of

the EU), but that “the continent still suffers from major security weaknesses that make European countries more vulnerable to attack and put U.S. interests overseas at risk.”³¹ The statement is interesting in that it echoes Trump’s public statements; saying that at least part of the European terror threat’s resilience can be attributed to incompetence in European governments. That insinuation is not likely to make it easy to continue to carry on close transatlantic cooperation in counterterrorism.

On the other hand, the Trump administration has spent a considerable amount of time developing NATO’s abilities to fight terrorism in Europe. Cooperation via NATO and bilateral agreements, rather than via the EU, continues to be the U.S. preference for its security relationships with its allies. Trump had initially called NATO ‘obsolete,’ but in April, 2017, he seemingly changed his mind to support the organization.³² That change may actually have occurred earlier, as in February, 2017, NATO announced the creation of a center in Naples called the ‘hub,’ which is tasked to observe terrorist activities in North Africa and the Middle East, and to assist countries of the region with capacity building to fight the terrorist threats there.³³ In early May 2017, there was

Department of Homeland Security”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 215, 11 August, (2012), 3.

²⁸ “Executive Order: Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States”, *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 25 January, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/25/presidential-executive-order-enhancing-public-safety-interior-united>.

²⁹ “Are the US-EU data agreements still alive?”, *Diari Politici Italiani*, 8 February, 2017, <http://www.diaripolitici.it/2017/02/08/are-the-us-eu-data-privacy-agreements-still-alive/>.

³⁰ “Trump repudiates agreement with EU on PNR data”, *The Identity Project*, 29 January, 2017, <https://papersplease.org/wp/2017/01/29/trump-repudiates-agreement-with-eu-on-pnr-data/>.

³¹ “The Persistent Terror Threat to the United States”, *Homeland Security Committee* report, February, 2017, <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Terror-Threat-Snapshot-February-2017.pdf>.

³² Baker, Peter, “Trump’s Previous View of NATO Is Now Obsolete”, *The New York Times*, 13 April, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/world/europe/nato-trump.html?_r=0.

³³ Schultz, Teri, “NATO moves closer to Trump priority of fighting terrorism”, *Deutsche Welle*, 16 February, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/nato-moves-closer-to-trump-priority-of-fighting-terrorism/a-37574404>.

discussion among NATO members to appoint a ‘Senior Counterterrorism Coordinator,’ in order to help the organization focus more on terrorism as requested by Trump.³⁴ Seen from this angle, transatlantic counterterrorism cooperation looks less like a bleak prospect, as much of the analysis of the issue has overlooked the internal reorientation in NATO assets in Europe since January, 2017. Shifting NATO’s focus to fighting terrorism is a major change under the Trump administration that will affect a large number of countries.

What about the reality of bilateral counterterrorism cooperation between the U.S. and the UK, and, France and Germany? For the UK, intelligence cooperation with the United States was already close before Trump, due to the Five Eyes network of intelligence sharing, which also includes Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Trump threw a wrench into the works of this alliance in March 2017, however, by claiming that British GCHQ spied on Trump during the presidential campaign.³⁵ The intelligence-sharing relationship may thus not be as close as Trump’s claims would make it seem. Prime Minister May also complained that she was not informed in advance of Trump’s travel ban in early February 2017 and called

it ‘divisive and wrong.’³⁶ Trump and May may not be quite as close in practice as it would seem from their official statements about the recent terrorist attack in the UK.

As for France, the relationship is much more difficult, but Trump did call French President François Hollande soon after the inauguration to state that the U.S. wanted more cooperation with France in security and counterterrorism.³⁷ France remains a key ally for the U.S. in operations against Daesh in Syria and in Iraq as well as for the counterterrorism effort in North Africa. President Hollande praised Trump’s airstrike against a Syrian government-held airfield on April 7, 2017, with Chancellor Merkel following suit.³⁸ This suggests that the anti-French rhetoric masks ongoing close cooperation between France and the U.S. in counterterrorism. The outcome of the French elections on May 7, 2017 will also have an effect on the future partnership between them.

With Germany, Trump has extensively criticized the country’s policy of allowing the entry of large numbers of refugees, but a number of analysts point out that Chancellor Merkel’s priority remains good transatlantic relations, which she will not allow to be disrupted by Trump.³⁹ Germany also

³⁴ Barnes, Julian E., “NATO Considers New Counterterrorism Post Following Trump Demands”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 May, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-considers-new-counterterrorism-post-following-trump-demands-1493638028>.

³⁵ “White House backs down from claim GCHQ spied on Trump”, *Sky News*, 17 March, 2017, <http://news.sky.com/story/white-house-backs-down-from-claim-gchq-spied-on-trump-10804677>.

³⁶ Merrick, Rob, “Theresa May insists Donald Trump gave her no advance warning of his ‘Muslim ban’ on refugees”, *Independent*, 1 February, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/donald-trump-theresa-may-muslim-ban-pmq-s-no-warning->

[advance-notice-executive-order-latest-a7556996.html](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-advance-notice-executive-order-latest-a7556996.html).

³⁷ “The Latest: Trump reaffirms NATO commitment to France”, *Associated Press*, 29 January, 2017, <https://www.apnews.com/42ed804eb2094116a4e194f5d4136e7a>.

³⁸ “France’s 2017 Presidential Election: In Brief”, *Congressional Research Service Report*, (R44815), 13 April, 2017, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R44815.html#_Toc480792294.

³⁹ Stelzenmuller, Constanze, “How Merkel can disarm Trump- and hold the line on Western values”, *The Brookings Institution*, 21 March, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from->

conceded to Trump's demand for more defense spending in January, 2017, but demanded in return a more coherent U.S. policy toward the country and toward NATO, which as mentioned above, appears to be occurring in the latter case.⁴⁰ Germany, like France and Britain, however, publicly rejected Trump's travel ban in January 2017, which indicates that the main European allies did not view it as effective for counterterrorism.⁴¹

Conclusion

As with many aspects of the first one hundred days of President Trump's leadership, it is difficult to paint a coherent picture of the current administration's approach to its European allies in the field of counterterrorism. The public statements of Trump would suggest an open hostility toward France and Germany and a preference for far-right parties in Europe, more generally. Sweden and the UK come out better after the attacks due to their hard-line policy on immigration.

The reality, however, seems to be that counterterrorism cooperation is following roughly the same track as the former Obama administration, with continued close cooperation between the U.S. and its European allies. This may be due to the fact that, as Chancellor Merkel has pointed out, the transatlantic relationship transcends temporary difficulties, notably the election of Trump. The Trump administration for its part

has even begun reorganizing parts of NATO to make it more capable of fighting terrorism.

It is not exactly business as usual, but Trump's election has not called institutional transatlantic counterterrorism cooperation into question. The dispute over the travel ban, however, with most large allies openly condemning the order, could possibly indicate more serious problems to come.

[chaos/2017/03/21/how-merkel-can-disarm-trump-and-hold-the-line-on-western-values/](https://www.reuters.com/chaos/2017/03/21/how-merkel-can-disarm-trump-and-hold-the-line-on-western-values/).

⁴⁰ "Germany says boosting defense spending, demands clear U.S. agenda", *Reuters*, 18 January, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-military-idUSKBN1522UG>.

⁴¹ Ansari, Azadeh, Robertson, Nic and, Dewan, Angela, "World leaders react to Trump's travel ban", *CNN*, 31 January, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/30/politics/trump-travel-ban-world-reaction/>.

President Trump, the Environment and the Changing World Order

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Since World War Two, the US has been a global hegemon and exerted military, economic and ideological dominance, but the post-war liberal world order underpinned by the US is ending and arguably Western supremacy, too. Under the Westphalian system, which has been in place since 1648, states are the primary actors in the international arena, but today this is changing. A number of state functions are increasingly being carried out by a variety of non-state entities such as cities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), armed groups and corporations. Key drivers of the alteration underway relate to structural transformations in the global political economy. To be fair, the US is still the chief global military force. It is also the front-runner when it comes to global economic power in terms of its overall GDP coupled

...the human impact on Earth is now so significant that an entirely distinctive geological epoch has been marked: the Anthropocene.

with the fact that the US dollar remains the global reserve currency.¹ Nevertheless, in the changing world order in

general, the US is less and less capable of directing the global community and informing the agenda of multilateral international institutions it helped create. In

short, US global leadership and the role of the state in international relations have both declined.

In light of these contractions, what does this changing world order mean in the Trump era in the context of global climate change and the President Trump's decision to exit the Paris Agreement? On one hand, as a result of President Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, which illustrates his refusal to treat climate threats seriously, US corporations, cities and states have stated they will act on climate change regardless of what Trump does or does not do. In the wake of President Trump's announcement on the Paris deal, the state of California has doubled down on climate policies² and renewable energy while cities, such as Portland,³ Oregon are also attempting to design their own climate policies. As such, these actors are not only taking on the role of security providers, a domain that used to be strictly the preserve of national governments, they are dislodging pieces of Washington's authority.

On the other hand, their climate action is being counteracted with President Trump's opposing policies (big investment in oil and coal) that consequently mean any reductions in greenhouse gases made will be neutralized by the increase also made as a result of unclean energy such as coal. What the US does matters to the global community at least as much symbolically as in concrete terms. As a result of its unwillingness to make the tough transitions, the US is increasingly isolating itself in the international

¹ Bhuta, Nehal, "The Role International Actors Other Than States can Play in the New World Order", *Realizing Utopia: The Future of International Law*, Antonio Cassese. (2012). Chapter 6: pg. 61-75.

² McPhate, Mike, "California Today: How California Reacted to Trump's Paris Decision," 2 June 2017,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/02/us/california-today-paris-accord-reaction.html? r=0>

³ Light, John, "12 Cities Leading the Way in Sustainability", *Moyers & Company*, 4 January, 2013, <http://billmoyers.com/content/12-cities-leading-the-way-in-sustainability/>.

community. For example, Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, made a statement of being disappointed by the decision of the US federal government to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, but made a distinction between the US federal government and the United States in his official comment.⁴ This distinction of President Trump from the US was made elsewhere too and represents a view of his legitimacy. After President Trump's announcement that the US will withdraw from the Paris Agreement, public statements from many key emitters such as Canada, China, India and the EU – to name just a few – were made affirming commitment to it. Some states publicized their willingness to take on climate leadership roles. This translates into another perspective on the emerging world order – one that sees US global leadership diluted on another front.

Leadership and legitimacy aside, the threats of climate change need to be addressed by all states working together and the US' withdrawal, as a key greenhouse gas emitter, is worsening an already bad problem. Globally, across countries, regions, socio-economic levels, religions and gender, 54% of people on average believe climate change

is *a very serious problem* according to the Pew Research Center.⁵ Indeed, the human impact on Earth is now so significant that an entirely distinctive geological epoch has been marked: the Anthropocene.⁶ The concept of the Anthropocene is very significant⁷ vis-à-vis international security considerations. The change, which began in the 1950s⁸, has accelerated at a disorienting speed. The new epoch is defined by a human imprint so large on the global environment that it rivals some of the great forces⁹ that have altered the Earth's system. The scale of the Anthropocene relates to the fundamentals of atmosphere, oceans, forests, soil, flora, fauna and the mass extinction of animals. Sea level rise, retreating ice sheets, shrinking glaciers, temperature increases, warming and acidification of the ocean and extreme weather events all carry direct threats to the maintenance of the established world order and the predictability of the emerging new one. There is no ambiguity on the threat. NASA states there is agreement among ninety-seven percent of climate scientists that climate-warming trends over the past century are largely attributable to human activities and the majority of foremost scientific organizations globally have publicly

⁴ Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada in response to the United States' decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, 1 June 2017, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/06/01/statement-prime-minister-canada-response-united-states-decision-withdraw-paris>

⁵ Wike, Richard, "What the world thinks about climate change in 7 charts", *Pew Research Center*, 18 April, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/18/what-the-world-thinks-about-climate-change-in-7-charts/>.

⁶ Myers, Joe, "What is the Anthropocene? And why does it matter?", *World Economic Forum*, 31 August, 2016, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/08/what-is-the-anthropocene-and-why-does-it-matter/>.

⁷ "The Age of Humans: Evolutionary Perspectives on the Anthropocene", *Smithsonian Institution*, 13 October, 2016,

<http://humanorigins.si.edu/research/age-humans-evolutionary-perspectives-anthropocene>.

⁸ Water, Colin N. Et al., "The Anthropocene is functionally and stratigraphically distinct from the Holocene", *American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)*, 8 January, 2016, <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/351/6269/aad2622>.

⁹ Hamilton, Clive, "The great climate silence: we are on the edge of the abyss but we ignore it", *The Guardian*, 5 May, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/05/the-great-climate-silence-we-are-on-the-edge-of-the-abyss-but-we-ignore-it>.

endorsed this position and acknowledged it represents a threat.¹⁰

In 2013, The Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change published a stark report that judges the extent to which governments around the world view climate change as a national security issue. It looks at how their militaries and national security communities are starting to plan for the consequences of climate change. The report states roughly 70% of countries unequivocally specified that climate change was a national security concern for them. Of the states that have official military planning, nearly all claimed that humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions would become increasingly critical responsibilities of their armed forces.¹¹ NATO has asserted that climate and environmental factors will more intensively shape security in the future and it too is attempting to prepare.¹² However, as economic disruption (with global repercussions) is also expected to be a key outcome of climate change, it is realistic to view a great deal of humanitarian assistance or disaster relief as optimistic. Unemployment, hardship and deprivation lead to social unrest, and this is likely to be

aggravated by significant human migration patterns according to the World Economic Forum in 2017,¹³ for example, which means that militaries will be preoccupied with their own government's needs in many cases. Besides, in another foreseeable scenario¹⁴ funding for foreign humanitarian or civil emergency missions will become increasingly scarce as food and energy prices soar.¹⁵

The US' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, although considered an error by many Americans, is not without support domestically. In fact, nearly a quarter of Americans do not believe that human-induced climate change is happening¹⁶ and given the evidence that is a large number. US President Trump is one of them. He notoriously tweeted "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."¹⁷ The President himself and people he surrounds himself with such as Scott Pruitt, the new chief of the US

The President himself and people he surrounds himself with [...] are climate change deniers.

¹⁰ "Climate change: How do we know?", NASA, <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>.

¹¹ Holland, Andrew and Vagg, Xander, "The Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change: Preliminary Results", *American Security Project*, 21 March, 2013, <http://www.americansecurityproject.org/the-global-security-defense-index-on-climate-change-%EF%BF%BCpreliminary-results/>.

¹² Lippert, Tyler H., "NATO, Climate Change, and International Security", *RAND Corporation*, October, 2016, http://www.rand.org/pubs/rgs_dissertations/RGSD387.html.

¹³ See Global Risks Report 2016, from the World Economic Forum: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2016/>.

¹⁴ Berardy, Andrew and Chester, Mikhail V., "Climate change vulnerability in the food, energy,

and water nexus: concerns for agricultural production in Arizona and its urban export supply", *Environmental Research Letters*, Volume 12, Number 3, 28 February, 2017.

¹⁵ "Climate Change: The Unseen Force Behind Rising Food Prices?", *Worldwatch Institute*, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5434>.

¹⁶ Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Roser-Renouf, C., Feinberg, G., Rosenthal, S., & Marlon, J. *Climate change in the American mind: Americans' global warming beliefs and attitudes in November, 2013*. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. (2014).

¹⁷ See Donald J. Trump official Twitter page and statement: <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/265895292191248385?lang=en>.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are climate change deniers.¹⁸ The EPA went so far recently to delete climate change data from its website, but the City of Chicago Mayor, Rahm Emanuel, has taken archived EPA data and posted it on his own website – a political act.¹⁹

In May 2017, the Arctic Council, the main forum for international cooperation in the

To be sure, a key threat to the new world order is President Trump's failure to sense a climate threat.

Arctic, met in Fairbanks, Alaska, with one issue looming over the meeting: climate change. US Arctic policy, a key to combatting climate change, will be impacted by the US' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. In general, President Trump seems disinclined to continue the Obama-era emphasis on the importance of combatting climate change and investments in scientific research. The international community has expressed great concern about the US' position and what it means for global collective interests. Yet, Stephen Bannon, President Trump's chief

strategist, encouraged him to fulfil his campaign promise to exit the Paris deal suggesting it may hamstring Washington with legal obligations like Kyoto did,²⁰ despite both outside legal scholars²¹ and those who wrote the original deal²² stating otherwise.

In reality, it does not legally constrain the US or any state, which is why it is more of a normative commitment than a clear strategy to address climate change.²³ Its pliability is also why there were calls inside the US to remain in it from Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, hundreds of corporations and even Ivanka Trump. The reasons why the US could have remained in the Paris Agreement relate to its flexibility, which allows the US to develop its own national approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions the way it prefers. When the US' commitment to the Paris agreement is viewed this way, it sheds light why fossil-fuel companies like Exxon Mobil, which zealously opposed Kyoto is wanting the US to remain in the Paris Agreement saying it is “an effective framework for addressing the risks of climate change.”²⁴ Therefore, if President Trump had

¹⁸ Meyer, Robinson, “Trump's EPA Chief Denies the Basic Science of Climate Change”, *The Atlantic*, 9 March, 2017,

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/03/trumps-epa-chief-rejects-that-carbon-dioxide-emissions-cause-climate-change/519054/>.

¹⁹ Levine, Sam, “EPA Purges Pages That Highlight Climate Change From Its Website”, *Huffington Post*, 29 April, 2017,

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/epa-website-climate-change-us_5904bd23e4b0bb2d086ee483.

Isaac-Dovere, Edward, “Chicago mayor Emanuel posts EPA's deleted climate change page,” 6 May 2017,

<http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/06/chicago-mayor-rahm-emanuel-posts-epa-deleted-climate-change-page-238067>

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ See interview conducted by Hickman, Leo of the Carbon Brief on 19 April, 2017, with Michael

Gerrard, the Andrew Sabin Professor of professional practice at Columbia Law School in New York, where he teaches courses on environmental law, climate change law and energy regulation:

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/carbon-brief-interview-michael-gerrard>.

²² “Legal Issues Related To The Paris Agreement”, *Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES)*, May, 2017, <https://www.c2es.org/docUploads/legal-issues-related-paris-agreement-05-17.pdf>.

²³ “Climate and Environment”, *The New York Times*, 18 May, 2017,

<https://www.nytimes.com/section/climate?inline=nyt-classifier>.

²⁴ Plumer, Brad, “Stay In or Leave the Paris Climate Deal? Lessons From Kyoto”, *The New York Times*, 9 May, 2017,

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/09/climate/paris-climate-agreement-kyoto-protocol.html?_r=0.

opted to stick with the Paris pact, he would still have been able to conduct policies that were not exceedingly climate friendly while also preserving the US' image as a leader, however symbolically. This would have provided some confidence in the global *status quo*, which would have offered states a degree of predictability that the structures of the global system – although changing – were still essentially intact.

This did not happen and US global leadership is increasingly being viewed as a phenomenon of the past. This is threatening because it creates a vacuum and brings about change at a time of increased state fragility globally according to the 2017 Fragile State Index.²⁵ Thus, these destabilizing structural and political factors are converging with climate change induced threats. According to Peter H. Gleick of the Pacific Institute, these climate change-related threats refer to agricultural productivity, the availability and quality of freshwater resources, access to strategic minerals, rising sea level and the corrosive effect disagreement on international climate policy will have upon political relationships.²⁶ Gleick testified to the US Congress Committee on Government Reform as far back as 2006 that these were

serious international security consequences related to climate change. Yet, coupled with the lack of concern among significant population groups in the US, there is also a great silence among US intelligentsia about the international security dimension to the ecological crisis.²⁷ Nevertheless, the emerging world order is going to be affected by the global insecurity emanating from a range of issues as Gleick pointed out, which are all threat multipliers. For instance, the entire EU economy is particularly vulnerable to trans-boundary water problems that impact the supply of agricultural commodities and to the consequent price volatilities related to shortfall in global commodity supply.²⁸

Most governments are unprepared for the types of threats that will develop as a result of climate change, either as a result of limited resources or insufficient planning for the future whether logistical, financial or related to infrastructure.²⁹ When the fresh water predicament arrives,³⁰ which some claim is already here,³¹ will Brexit matter or corruption in South Africa? Trade patterns and political alliances risk taking on a different colour when internationally reverberating threats stemming from a global environmental crisis become front and

²⁵ Fund for Peace, Fragile State Index, 2017,

<http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/>

²⁶ Gleick, Peter H., “The Implications of Global Climatic Changes for International Security”, *Pacific Institute*, 16 May, 2006,

<http://pacinst.org/publication/the-implications-of-global-climatic-changes-for-international-security/>.

²⁷ Hamilton, Clive, “The great climate silence: we are on the edge of the abyss but we ignore it”, *The Guardian*, 5 May, 2017,

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/05/the-great-climate-silence-we-are-on-the-edge-of-the-abyss-but-we-ignore-it>.

²⁸ Chapagain, Ashok Kumar, “Dependencies of Europe’s economy on other parts of the world in terms of water resources”, *Water Footprint Network*, 5 May, 2017,

http://waterfootprint.org/media/downloads/Imprex-D12-1_final.pdf.

²⁹ “Climate Security: Building National Security”, *American Security Project*, <http://www.americansecurityproject.org/climate-security/>.

³⁰ “the dry facts: water is scarce because it is badly managed”, *The Economist*, 5 November, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21709541-water-scarce-because-it-badly-managed-dry-facts?zid=298&ah=0bc99f9da8f185b2964b6cef412227be>.

³¹ Hinrichsen, Don and Tacio, Henrylito D., “The Coming Freshwater Crisis is Already Here”, *Wilson Center*, 7 July, 2011, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/popawa2.pdf>.

center. Priorities, customs, norms, political relationships and values will shift and this state of flux is highly destabilizing for states and regions.

To be sure, a key threat to the new world order is President Trump's failure to sense a climate threat. Instead, he clings to an idea that is not only incorrect, but will ensure inordinate global insecurity. While President Trump has struggled to implement any of his policy ideas, he pronounces them and when he does the international community reacts. In this way, what he does is almost less important than what he says he will do. Although it will take years for the US to extract itself formally from the Paris Agreement, President Trump's anti-environmental rhetoric and policy plans are bringing a threatening new world order closer as it he creates a lack of clarity about authority in US domestic politics, but also US leadership on the international stage. The vacuum will be filled.

Although the extent of the climate change threat is not widely acknowledged by the US' general public, many US corporate leaders are very much alive to it – and want to do something about it. In November 2016, hundreds of US companies wrote to President Trump opining him to reconsider his climate position. Forbes reported: “More

³²High-profile organizations signing the letter include Dannon, DuPont, eBay, Gap, General Mills, Hewlett-Packard, Hilton, Intel, Kellogg, Levi Strauss, Mars, Monsanto, Nike, Patagonia, Staples, Starbucks, The Hartford, Tiffany and Vail Resorts — plus many others:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/victorlipman/2016/11/19/u-s-business-leaders-send-open-letter-to-trump-dont-abandon-climate-deal/#d723f4d7574e>.

³³Rubin, Jennifer, “Trump's climate-change denial rattles U.S. businesses”, *The Washington Post*, 9 May, 2017,

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2017/05/09/trumps-climate-change-denial-rattles-u-s-businesses/?utm_term=.09ed81b48ff5)

turn/wp/2017/05/09/trumps-climate-change-denial-rattles-u-s-businesses/?utm_term=.09ed81b48ff5. more than 300 U.S. companies, including 72 with annual revenues exceeding \$100 million, have sent an open letter to President-elect Donald Trump, urging him not to abandon the Paris climate agreement.”³² This is not just the sentiment of so-called Silicon Valley liberals, these CEOs have done the math.³³ Climate change is a significant concern for billion-dollar corporations, key stakeholders, and they indicated that

US allies and other states in the global community are increasingly willing to side-step the US, to look elsewhere for climate leadership and lead themselves.

they intend to continue to combat carbon pollution irrespective of what the Trump administration does, which is provocative. Those businesses include those in the food, retail, high-tech and even energy sectors. Duke Power said in the *Wall Street Journal* “continuing to drive carbon out makes sense for us.”³⁴

Echoing the same sentiment, Bloomberg Politics reported that “companies say their promises, coordinated by the Obama administration, reflect their push to cut energy costs, head off activist pressure and address a risk to their bottom line in the decades to come.”³⁵ The biggest investors in public companies (pension plans, cities, etc.)

[turn/wp/2017/05/09/trumps-climate-change-denial-rattles-u-s-businesses/?utm_term=.09ed81b48ff5](https://www.wsj.com/articles/bp-says-carbon-charge-needed-to-make-renewables-cost-competitive-1446471119).

³⁴Kent, Sarah, “BP Says Carbon Charge Needed to Make Renewables Cost Competitive”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 2 November, 2015,

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/bp-says-carbon-charge-needed-to-make-renewables-cost-competitive-1446471119>.

³⁵Flavelle, Christopher, “Apple, Wal-Mart Stick With Climate Pledges Despite Trump's Pivot”, *Bloomberg*, 30 March, 2017,

<https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-03-30/apple-wal-mart-stick-with-climate-pledges-despite-trump-s-pivot>.

also are adopting a far more proactive stance and becoming involved in climate politics. Reuters reported investors with more than \$15 trillion of assets under management called for the implementation of the Paris climate accord to fight climate change despite Trump's threats to pull out. "As long-term institutional investors, we believe that the mitigation of climate change is essential for the safeguarding of our investments," according to the letter signed by 214 institutional investors published on May 8, 2016.³⁶ Mindy Lubber, head of the non-profit organization Ceres, which helped coordinate the letter, said "Climate change action must be an urgent priority in the G20 countries, especially the United States, whose commitment is in question."³⁷ Stephanie Pfeifer, Europe's CEO of the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change, said countries should shift to a low-carbon economy "regardless of what the U.S. administration does."³⁸

There are two take-aways from all these statements and President Trump's stance on climate change. The first is regrading US corporate leadership, and city and state activism. These actors are making efforts to shift to a low-carbon economy, which marks a change in the way power is exercised and

this has bearing on a changing world order. Although their efforts are good judgment, Trump's plans to start drilling in the Arctic, Pacific and Atlantic oceans³⁹ and remove restrictive regulations on the US coal industry despite reports about investments in coal being non-competitive. These policies dilute security-promoting 'carbon-smart' activities among some cities, states and businesses, which increases the likelihood of those climate threats mentioned above coming to fruition.⁴⁰ Moreover, in the face of Trump's unwillingness to act, corporations, cities and states are also breaking with White House's official position and assuming leadership responsibility without the President/the federation on board. This pits key stakeholders in the US against the federal government in terms objectives, which undermines domestic stability in the US. The second take-away is that US allies and other states in the global community are increasingly willing to side-step the US, to look elsewhere for climate leadership and lead themselves.⁴¹ In the international world order context, this is tantamount to the US being displaced symbolically and practically from its leadership position. The US can no longer create global rules or dominate the institutions of global governance the way it

³⁶ "Big investors urge Trump to stick with Paris climate accord", *Reuters*, 7 May, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-climatechange-investors-idUSKBN18315V>.

³⁷ "280+ Global Investors Urge G7 to Stand by Paris Agreement and Drive its Swift Implementation", *Ceres Organization*, 7 May, 2017, <https://www.ceres.org/news-center/press-releases/over-200-global-investors-urge-g7-stand-paris-agreement-and-drive-its>.

³⁸ "Big investors urge Trump to stick with Paris climate accord", *Reuters*, 7 May, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-climatechange-investors-idUSKBN18315V>.

³⁹ Mindock, Clark, "Donald Trump to open up offshore drilling in Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific",

Independent, 27 April, 2017,

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-arctic-drilling-atlantic-pacific-obama-environmental-protections-rollback-climate-change-a7706421.html>.

⁴⁰ Gardner, Timothy, "Can Trump make coal great again? At least some companies think so", *Reuters*, 18 November, 2016,

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-coal-idUSKBN13D17J>.

⁴¹ King, Ed, "When the US last tried to kill the UN climate talks", *Climate Change News*, 18 January, 2017, <http://www.climatechangenews.com/2017/01/18/when-the-us-last-tried-to-kill-the-un-climate-talks/>.

did and climate is an emblematic issue in that way.⁴²

In closing, the Trump administration's position on climate change is accelerating the US' decline. This is in the form of lost reputation, symbolic power and moral righteousness. It is also losing economically as other nations around the world are heavily investing in renewables. President Trump is not expected to agree to favorable subsidies and regulatory environments at the federal level that promote the green economy. As stated, there are developments at the levels under it, like state and city, but these actors would need the federal government to heavily subsidize green industries the way other states are such as China, India and those within the EU, for instance to be competitive. In the future, the US will be less competitive in the lucrative low-carbon economy as a result of not having made investments now.⁴³

The withdrawal from the Paris Agreement is also hastening challenges to Washington's authority. Undeniably, international relations in general have already been transformed by quick communications, travel and globalization, but as Amitav Acharya stated in his book called *The End of an American World* the new world order is no longer unipolar or multipolar; it is more like a multiplex theatre than a chessboard.⁴⁴ He continues "A multiplex world comprises multiple key actors whose relationship is

defined by complex forms of interdependence and such interdependence comprises trade, finance and production networks as well as shared vulnerability to transnational challenges such as climate change."⁴⁵ In this emerging world order, the US will have to become far more accommodating of a spectrum of new actors including rising state powers, nascent institutions and corporations, which all advance fresh attitudes and new ways of coping with insecurity. President Trump had no part creating any of this – climate change or the evolutions in the world order that led non-state actors to challenge and compete with states for authority. But, he surely is worsening the effect of climate change and expediting the retreat of the US' state power, which is a clumsy and imprudent way to uphold US interests in the emerging world order.

⁴² Acharya, Amitav, "From the Unipolar Moment to a Multiplex World", *Yale Global Online*, 3 July, 2014, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/unipolar-moment-multiplex-world>.

⁴³ Rosenthal, Elizabeth, "U.S. Is Falling Behind in the Business of 'Green,'" 8 June 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/09/business/09subsides.html> ; Ditching the Paris Agreement Risks the Economy Even as it Harms the Planet, 1 June 2017, <https://www.wired.com/2017/05/trump-paris-economics/>

⁴⁴ Acharya, Amitav, "The End of American World Order", *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2015 Issue, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2014-12-15/end-american-world-order>.

⁴⁵ Acharya, Amitav, "From the Unipolar Moment to a Multiplex World", *Yale Global Online*, 3 July, 2014, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/unipolar-moment-multiplex-world>.

Trump's Foreign Aid Plans and the Future of Development

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In the first hundred days of President Trump's administration, he put forward a budget agenda to Congress that increased defense spending by 9% (\$54 billion), a sum larger than the entire proposed State Department budget (\$39 billion). It would seem as though the President's shift to a more militarized foreign policy will affect the distribution of project-tied foreign aid and bi-

...foreign aid and soft power diplomacy should not be undervalued in terms of capacity to promote peace and develop trustful relationships.

lateral aid, which has become a 'hot' topic for debate among US leadership and global leaders.¹ On May 23, 2017, the White House released a budget

proposal for the 2018 fiscal year to Congress. Yet it attracted criticism by both Republicans and Democrats, which calls into question the likelihood of it passing.² However, whilst Congress members attempt to revise, or reach a compromise on budget terms with the White House it is important to assess what

type of change will come about within the framework of the international order if the proposed budget agenda were to pass.

In previous years, the US has been supporting development programs through the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and both the Bush and Obama administrations' budgets called for an increase in funding for international programs. Trump's budget proposes to reduce funding by \$10 billion.³ Trump's budget cuts would eliminate the following State Department initiatives: the Development Assistance account within the State Department, the African Development Foundation, United States Institute for Peace (USIP), the P.L. 480 Title II Food Aid Program, and earmarked appropriations for NGOs such as the Asia Foundation that conduct international development programs.⁴ It is undeniable that the Trump administration is throwing out old "soft power" policies and investing in "hard power" by pushing for a more militarized foreign policy agenda.⁵ The militarization of foreign aid will surely impact the international order; create fear, distrust, and insecurity among leaders at a time where global leaders are especially security conscious.⁶ Indeed, an international affairs budget reflects a country's values to the rest

¹ "What Trump's Foreign-Aid Budget Means to the Rest of the World", *The Atlantic*, 4 April, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/04/what-trumps-foreign-aid-budget-means-to-the-rest-of-the-world/521553/>.

² Bryan, Bob, "Trump's budget is facing massive blowback in Congress – and Republicans are some of the loudest complainers", *Business Insider*, 23 May, 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/trump-2018-budget-white-house-republicans-2017-5>.

³ Fahey, Mark, and Wells, Nick, "Comparing Trump's budget changes to previous presidents", *CNBC*, 17 March, 2017, <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/17/comparing-trumps-budget-changes-to-previous-presidents.html>.

⁴ Krieg, Gregory and Mullery, Will, "Trump's budget by the numbers: What gets cut and why", *CNN*, 23 May, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/23/politics/trump-budget-cuts-programs/>.

⁵ Manson, Katrina, "State department funding to take a hit from Trump cuts", *Financial Times*, 24 May, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/20a4d298-3fd4-11e7-9d56-25f963e998b2>.

⁶ Chang, Mina, "What's the real value of US foreign aid?", *CNN*, 20 May, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/20/opinions/value-of-foreign-aid-to-the-us-chang/>.

of the world and can enable relationship-building among states, thus lowering security risks or the reverse.⁷ Forcing an agenda through military means and hard power methods will be less effective than the policies adopted over the past years which emphasized “soft power” with diplomatic ties involving: cultural exchange programs to strengthen state relations, citizen engagement, and for example, capacity building training programs in the Middle East and other regions. The rhetoric from the Trump administration is that this change is needed to combat terrorists, non-state actors and keep America safe. However, this contribution argues the contrary by suggesting that foreign aid and soft power diplomacy should not be undervalued in terms of capacity to promote peace and develop trustful relationships. Furthermore, a re-direction of US goals towards a more militarized strategy may change the international order by allowing other countries to step in and take on the leading role of foreign aid distribution and involvement.

It is important to reflect on America’s history of public diplomacy, one traditionally labelled as ‘soft power’ and compare this with the shift to ‘hard power’ or defense diplomacy. The US has attempted to be a global leader and typically justified its foreign involvement as a force of good and has tried to do so through aid, assistance and development. For example, the US provided South Korea with foreign aid after the ceasefire in 1953 on the Korean peninsula;

creating a critical ally in the region in which the return was higher than the initial financial investment. Importantly, foreign aid is not charity and its strategic approach has long been used to strengthen the US’ interests abroad.⁸ Yet, it is unequivocal that soft power and hard power are inextricably linked and that since the Cold War era the US has been practicing a medley of both. With talks about the international order and the potential competition for power States like Germany, France, Japan, and China, public diplomacy (soft power) should continue to be utilized as a catalyst for efficient and smooth relationship-building and image-building.

US foreign policy has traditionally taken the angle of being the driving force of building the perception and image of America as a

Trump has made claims that the softer methods used in the past have failed to serve the interests of the US, and have not put “America first.” How this has failed, remains unclear.

Great Power. With that image, a trust developed in its commitment to provide assistance through

diplomatic relationships to its allies and friends. Through its humanitarian aid and support for the U.N. it has been at the forefront of global efforts to prevent catastrophes such as famine and to relieve the effects of drought on some of the world’s poorest people. It also allowed the US to enjoy a status of being regarded as a dependable and generous leader.⁹ Additionally, since the launching of the *Pax*

⁷ Siddiqui, Sabrina and Quinn, Ben, “Trump’s funding cuts to diplomacy and aid would mark retreat from soft power”, *The guardian*, 16 March, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/mar/16/state-department-foreign-aid-funding-cuts-trump-budget>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Dixon, Robyn, “With 20 million people facing starvation, Trump’s foreign aid cuts strike fear”, *Los Angeles Times*, 19 March, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-us-africa-aid-2017-story.html>.

Americana, an idea about American supremacy that came about with the United States' implementation of the Marshall Plan to rebuild the European economy, it has been an economic and military superpower. The end of the Cold War brought about changes in the international order through the rise of civil wars and increased conflict (Africa, former Soviet Union, etc.). With these conflicts came new critical issues. The US recognized that assistance (financial and technical) was needed as a push to help these countries develop and become self-sustainable as opposed to military involvement that would most likely cause more distress in the country in need. Moreover, the international community developed a willingness to promote democratic and peaceful change in these regions. In the millennial years, this assistance has been used in an effort to fight the war on terror.

This new budget, however, and proposed agenda breaks away from the abovementioned traditions of funding the State Department development program initiatives. Additionally, the attitude towards development programs coming out of the White House today reflects differently from previous administrations. For example, during the Obama administration, Secretary of Defense Gates and Secretary of State Clinton acted in unison to request an increase in State funding by Congress. Jim Mattis, Defense Secretary under the Trump administration, reiterated the importance of maintaining soft diplomatic strategies and

stated that the State Department's work helps prevent conflict; claiming that more efforts through the State Department would mean less military might and aggression. These relate to the key instruments of diplomacy, specifically, softer methods such as foreign aid in order to protect and promote US global influence.¹⁰ Trump, however, does not seem to be convinced by these realities.

Today, the Trump administration, contrary to the Obama administration, intends to give preference to employing military resources in order to advance US interests abroad. President Trump has made claims that the softer methods used in the past have failed to serve the interests of the US, and have not put "America first." How this has failed, remains unclear. A letter drafted by 120 former US senior military officers offers a diverging opinion and underscores the belief that contributions to foreign aid development programs will promote more peace and stability than the use of weapons and force to address terrorist groups, such as ISIS/Daesh.¹¹ Foreign aid, they highlight, in the form of diplomacy and 'soft power' is more effective as it helps prevent crises through amicable relationship building.

¹⁰Lockie, Alex, "Mattis once said if State Department funding gets cut 'then I need to buy more ammunition'" *Business Insider*, 27 February, 2017. <http://www.businessinsider.com/mattis-state-department-funding-need-to-buy-more-ammunition-2017-2>

¹¹ A letter drafted by 120 former US senior military officers and presented to the Trump administration, 27 February, 2017, http://www.usglc.org/downloads/2017/02/FY18_International_Affairs_Budget_House_Senate.pdf.

Despite this, Trump's approach was made evident in his intended budget where the State Department and the USAID are to be cut by almost 28% or \$10.9 billion and a 37% cut to the Overseas Contingency Operations fund that addresses global disaster-response

“...cutting American foreign aid...will ultimately do nothing to address our current debt crisis and create a vacuum by the lack of American leadership”

and emergency needs.¹² These cuts will have a visible impact on US foreign assistance programs globally and in the Middle East and Africa specifically: “without a massive donor injection of \$4.4 billion, aid officials estimate,

more than 20 million people face starvation and famine in Nigeria's northeast, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen. The disaster is likely to leave countries fragile for years to come.”¹³ This seems unnecessary since the allocation of these funds only accounts for 1% of the overall US federal budget.¹⁴ Furthermore, with specific cuts in economic and development aid assistance to the Middle East, decreasing by almost half in Egypt, for example, President Trump is operating under short-sighted policies and is undermining his own stated goal of countering terrorist

activity. A slash in aid to Arab states will see an erosion of key allies in the region for the US.¹⁵

Moreover, diplomacy and development programs would be hit relatively hard with the U.N. being the most affected institution. The government would retract from its regular contribution towards the institution and would pay up to only 25% for peacekeeping operations conducted by the U.N. in developing countries. Cutting back funds from the U.N. will affect the US' role in the global order, as the U.N. has been a cost-effective way of improving US negotiating power.¹⁶ Cultural programs and development banks like the World Bank would also be affected by the budget proposal, reducing its programs by \$650 million over three years.¹⁷ The proposal remains unclear as to how the increased funds toward the defense department would be distributed, but it has been stated that some of those funds would help accelerate the fight against Daesh through payment of more ammunition and fighter jets.

Foreign aid programs and the work of the UN contribute to global stability and security. Aid is necessary to avoid future conflicts and help deter groups like Daesh, and should not be substituted with military activity.¹⁸ What

¹² Krieg, Gregory and Mullery, Will, “Trump's budget by the numbers: What gets cut and why”, *CNN*, 23 May, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/23/politics/trump-budget-cuts-programs/>.

¹³ Dixon, Robyn, “With 20 million people facing starvation, Trump's foreign aid cuts strike fear”, *Los Angeles Times*, 19 March, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-us-africa-aid-2017-story.html>.

¹⁴ Cowan, Richard and Rampton, Roberta, “Trump's budget cuts to domestic, aid programs draw Republican scorn”, *Reuters*, 17 March, 2017.

¹⁵ Pecquet, Julian, “Trump budget slashes Middle East aid”, *Al-Monitor*, 23 May, 2017, [http://www.al-](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/05/trump-budget-slash-aid-middle-east-military-economic.html)

[monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/05/trump-budget-slash-aid-middle-east-military-economic.html](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/05/trump-budget-slash-aid-middle-east-military-economic.html).

¹⁶ Whelan, Catherine, “What a cut to its UN funding does to US leverage in the world”, *Public Radio International*, 8 February, 2017, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-02-08/what-cut-its-un-funding-does-us-leverage-world>.

¹⁷ Parlapiano, Alicia and, Aisch, George, “Who Wins and Loses in Trump's Proposed Budget”, *The New York Times*, 16 March, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/15/us/politics/trump-budget-proposal.html?_r=0.

¹⁸ “Investing in education and young people to counter violent extremism”, *UNESCO*, 29 September, 2015,

is clear is that, “the US is stepping away from the table when it comes to the overarching priority of shared prosperity and a stable peaceful world.”¹⁹ The White House diction implies that spending time and finances on such programs and technical assistance do not serve the interest of the US, nor benefit the homeland first.

Congressman, Ted Yoho, stated in a hearing after the budget was proposed, “At a time when American leadership is needed more than ever, we must continue to invest in the International Affairs Budget...cutting American foreign aid...will ultimately do nothing to address our current debt crisis and create a vacuum by the lack of American leadership”.²⁰ President Trump’s budget proposal fails to assess the consequences cuts in key areas will have on global security. Scaling down on development programs and humanitarian assistance initiatives will create a void for individuals in recipient societies. Unemployment levels may increase as a result of ceased programs (initially implemented to help raise the economy of developing countries) and may cause young people to lose faith in their current governments and increase their levels of frustration. On the other hand, radical groups promise these youth new opportunities and a purpose for their life. This allows terrorists groups to recruit. Conversely, President Trump has suggested that his “peace through strength” approach will decrease terrorism.

<http://en.unesco.org/news/investing-education-and-young-people-counter-violent-extremism>.

¹⁹ Dixon, Robyn, “With 20 million people facing starvation, Trump’s foreign aid cuts strike fear”, *Los Angeles Times*, 19 March, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-us-africa-aid-2017-story.html>.

As one of the main security issues among global leaders is tackling terrorism, it has become clear that they cannot do so with bombs, but rather more effectively through development programs. These programs create ‘on the ground’ engagement and dialogue with individuals in foreign countries and this confers better knowledge of their culture and ideology. The benefit of soft power is its ability to successfully produce policy outcomes by attraction, trust and persuasion. What this requires however, is time, money and effort in order to change the ‘hearts and minds’ of the individuals. It seems as though President Trump is opting for an easier strategy by redirecting policy efforts to defense and military, which is often a shorter-term solution, but one that bears with it huge consequences (the Bush administration’s dealing with the invasion in Iraq in 2003 can be seen as one key example).²¹

More importantly however, is which country will seize the opportunity to step up and take on the leadership role in aid assistance and distribution? Which country will leverage these cuts to form its own key allies throughout the Middle East and other regions and with this gain those actors power? As the US moves away from these responsibilities, analysts see China, Germany and France as potential actors to change the international order by being global aid providers. Although China currently spends only a quarter of the US budget on assistance, it has been active in providing assistance. For

²⁰Saine, Cindy, “US Lawmakers Criticize Cuts to Diplomacy, Foreign Aid”, *VOA News*, 17 March, 2017. <http://www.voanews.com/a/us-lawmakers-criticize-cuts-to-diplomacy-foreign-aid/3770139.html>

²¹ Van Ham, Peter, “Power, Public Diplomacy, and the Pax Americana”, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 2005, Palgrave: Macmillan, Pg 58.

example, China funded 51 African countries with aid, focussing primarily, but not exclusively, on infrastructure and industrial development.²² Additionally, with the Trump administration eliminating the Assistance for Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia (AEECA), the US is lowering its regional footprint and from a strategic perspective, isolating themselves and allowing a country like China to flood these regions with even more aid and assistance programs. Essentially, the position of aid distributor is ‘up for grabs,’ and China will leverage this as much as possible for its own political gain.²³

Furthermore, Germany is now the third largest donor for development assistance. Under Merkel it has been pushing for an agenda of an “interconnected world,” and it is also leading the G20 presidency, an opportunity for Germany to shape global development trends. Between 2016 and 2019, the expectation is for German development aid to increase by more than \$8.9 billion. Germany is making clear that resolve to international crises cannot take place without contributions in the international development sector.²⁴ Moreover, the German government is seizing the opportunity to increase its influence in the international arena, at a time where the UK is focusing efforts on Brexit, and the Trump

administration is practicing isolationist policies.

Also challenging US isolationist policies is the recent election of France’s President, Emmanuel Macron. Macron’s agenda has vocalized interest in multilateral aid and addressing critical issues of the world’s poor; identifying African countries as the focus of his international development campaign. More so than his commitment to foreign aid, is his attitude and style when promoting these ideals. Macron’s leadership is detailed through soft power techniques as he promotes globalization and is determined to express France’s cooperation and integration in the international system. With a young leader sweeping the EU, and directing leadership through soft power tools that are inviting to countries worldwide, Macron is placing France as a potential front-runner.²⁵

What is true for any country wishing to take over the leading role of foreign aid assistance as a method of combating terrorism and eradicating Daesh is that its policy agenda needs to include continued engagement with broader Islamic societies in a way that changes their perception of the west. This strategy is best conducted through soft power diplomacy under development and assistance programs.²⁶ The tools necessary go beyond the work of diplomats. For instance, the US’

²² Zhang, Junyi, “Chinese foreign assistance, explained”, *Brookings Institution*, 19 July, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/07/19/chinese-foreign-assistance-explained/>.

²³ Cole, Juan, “Does Trump’s slashed Foreign Aid Budget give China the Advantage?”, *Informed Comment*, 20 March, 2017, <https://www.juancole.com/2017/03/slashed-foreign-advantage.html>.

²⁴ Cheney, Catherine, “German foreign aid is at a record high and rising. Here is how it works.”, *Devex*, 2 February, 2017,

<https://www.devex.com/news/german-foreign-aid-is-at-a-record-high-and-rising-here-is-how-it-works-89366>.

²⁵ Kappeli, Anita, “France at the Crossroads: What the Election Could Mean for International Development”, *Center for Global Development*, 26 April, 2017, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/france-crossroads-what-election-could-mean-international-development>.

²⁶ Riordan, Shaun, “Dialogue-based Public Diplomacy: a New Foreign Policy Paradigm?”, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 2005, Palgrave: Macmillan, pg. 184.

State Department and USAID's efforts to conduct programs through NGO's and universities (through exchange programs) build on existing relationships and shared interests between states. The underlying intent is to promote civil society through good-government practices, education, training and economic programs that provide opportunities for citizens. Through lessons learned, these programs seem to be far more successful than military power. For example, the US failed to create political and economic stability in Bosnia and Kosovo with its military intervention. More so is evident in Afghanistan and Iraq where the same military methods were implemented. Where military might differs from development programs is that it fails to consider the social, economic and cultural conditions of those countries and rather forces a top-down imposition.²⁷ Moving forward, countries need to invest in the cultural understanding between states and its citizens in order to strengthen relationships and form alliances based on mutual understanding and cooperation.

Tackling major security issues that exist today requires collaboration at the global level with international governments and NGOs to secure stable and effective programs by engaging with foreign societies. Deep cuts, as President Trump's proposed agenda includes, would be short-sighted and lack long-term strategy and greatly undermine the role that development plays in creating global stability. Contrary to the Trump administration's argument, foreign aid and international affairs help advance US

national security interests at home and abroad and actually stimulate US economy and job growth.

Foreign aid is integral to countries' strategy abroad. The UAE offers an example of this power being viewed as an essential tool, as the Vice President and Prime Minister, Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum launches a soft power council.²⁸ The UAE recognizes that influence and power come from building relationships and managing its own reputation in the region is to achieve more influence in the global order rather than through military means and is more effective. With Trump's proposed aid cuts affecting the Arab states most,²⁹ this could be instrumental for the UAE to having a more influential role in the international order and be at the forefront of foreign aid assistance; strengthening its global ties.

As a result of Trump's proclamation, the US is opening a space for other powerful leaders to step in. Although too early to determine, the results of cuts in foreign aid- in what has typically been associated with a US policy agenda- may see a shift in the international arena in the upcoming months and rise to new powers in the global order.

²⁷ Ibid, pg. 186.

²⁸ "Mohammad Bin Rashid launches UAE soft power council", *Gulf News*, 13 April, 2017, <http://gulfnews.com/news/uae/government/mohammad-bin-rashid-launches-uae-soft-power-council-1.2019003>.

²⁹Pecquet, Julian, "Trump budget slashes Middle East aid", *Al-Monitor*, 23 May, 2017, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/05/trump-budget-slash-aid-middle-east-military-economic.html>.

Parenthesis or pivotal Presidency? Will President Trump bring about major changes to the international order? A view from Brussels

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After Donald Trump returned to Washington following meetings with EU, NATO and G7 leaders there was much concern and confusion about how trans-Atlantic relations will evolve during his time in office. The atmosphere at the meetings was unusually uncomfortable. Chancellor Merkel wondered how much Europe will be able to rely on the US in the future. Some things change but others remain the same. The 2016 US Presidential election revealed a deeply divided country concerned about its economic future and its international standing. A candidate was elected who created palpable anxiety around the world about the possibility of conflict on both political and economic issues; taking US policy in a direction which he now recognizes could spill over into war.

At best President Trump could be seen like Reagan or either of the Bush Presidents who took over from Democrats with positive reputations, particularly in Europe. Donald Trump would also not be the first President to have abandoned rhetoric in the face of reality, if that is what he ends up doing. Donald Trump is also not, by any means, the first US Presidential election winner to campaign with a promise to clean up Washington or stand up to China. On the other hand, something has changed when a President seems, at first sight, to abandon the idea that American democracy is a model or a beacon for others. When a US President

seems to dismiss the structures for political and economic security and cooperation, which his predecessors initiated and sustained over decades that also, really is something new. In Europe, it is that dismissive approach to NATO and the EU which leaders and others have been hard at work, in private and in public, trying to change. Recent statements from the President would suggest that these efforts have started to pay off.

In the second decade of this century, structures, institutions and values taken for granted by the post-war baby boom generation have been called into question.

Many of the global changes which have contributed to the perception of a need “to make America great again” are also not new. The rise of China to become an economic superpower has been under way for 30 years and attacks on its trade and currency policies have been a staple of US election campaigns. Russian revisionism in its neighbourhood has been under way since the beginning of this century. The revival of authoritarianism as a political model has been gathering pace in Asia over a number of years. Immigration as a political issue coupled with fear and reality of terrorism has also increased in salience over decades. Populist politics have also been in the air in Europe for many years. A cultural counter revolution on issues like gay rights and abortion has built up over decades in the US and in some parts of Europe. In the second decade of this century, structures, institutions and values taken for granted by the post-war baby boom generation have been called into question. This challenge has only grown as the economic prospects for the emerging generations create a pessimistic

outlook quite at variance with the optimism which leaders in both Europe and the US projected and built upon during the post-war decades.

Donald Trump at 70 may be the oldest US President ever but his success may mark a moment of generational change, reflecting these increasing anxieties and with himself as the leader of a cultural and possibly political revolution. Indeed, there are those in his entourage who planned and now see his emergence as part of a world-wide trend.

President Obama was a popular and respected figure in Europe leading a profoundly divided country. He looked at the military adventures of his predecessor and was determined that his country should work

The likely withdrawal of the US from the UN Human Rights Council would be profoundly regretted by the EU.

with allies and within multilateral structures. This explained his caution over the use of military force in Syria. A degree of restraint which President Trump now deplors. Obama left the main

negotiating with Russia over Ukraine to France and Germany and resisted pressure to provide arms to Kiev even as it faced overt military incursion from Russia. When Trump and Putin spoke recently it seems Ukraine was not even discussed. When Putin and Merkel spoke a few days later it was one of the main issues. She also raised the human rights issues in which Trump seemed uninterested. As Edward Luce put it succinctly and perceptively:

“It may tempt fate to compare Mr. Trump with Barack Obama. It would

be hard to find two camps who revile each other more than Trump and Obama supporters. Yet they share an important trait. Neither likes exporting democracy. Both leaders opposed the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. Mr. Trump discovered his opposition long after the invasion took place. But that is detail. He helped forge a new Republican base by attacking the Bush family for sacrificing American lives in pursuit of Middle Eastern democracy. Mr. Obama thought much the same thing. Both made electoral hay out of the US public’s waning appetite for spreading democracy.”¹

It should, moreover, not be forgotten that Obama, himself, also became a controversial figure in Europe most dramatically when Edward Snowden revealed the extent of US surveillance of European citizens and even leaders. His plan to revive transatlantic economic integration via a Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) not only failed to get very far but was seen by many as merely an assertion of American corporate power out of step with ideas of environmental and social protection. He had assumed a quick successful TTIP negotiation as he had been put under the impression that Europeans were “*hungry for a deal.*”

Europe and the US did, however, successfully work together to achieve a global agreement to at least slow down climate change (COP 21). The allies also worked together to achieve a deal with Iran to ensure it did not become a nuclear armed country. The EU, Russia and China were part

¹Luce, Edward, “America’s flight from its democratic creed”, *Financial Times*, 3 May, 2017,

<https://www.ft.com/content/046058f2-2f5b-11e7-9555-23ef563ecf9a>.

of this, another huge achievement now being put in doubt.

The failure under the Obama Administration to advance with TTIP seemed to confirm a collective inability of the allies to work effectively to shore up their leading role in setting the rules for global trade. An emboldened Russian President explicitly challenged America to abandon its exceptionalist view of itself. This is something no American President will ever do but what is new with Trump and recently confirmed by his Secretary of State is the ditching of any idea that American values have universal appeal or are linked to US security interests. Europe's approach is quite different. It never had the power to impose its human rights but is not about to give up on promoting them. The likely withdrawal of the US from the UN Human Rights Council would be profoundly regretted by the EU.

The new President has chosen to abandon the language of multilateralism and to adopt a slogan and practice of putting "America first." Cool headed leaders like EU Commission President Juncker and German Chancellor Merkel have, so far, been prepared to adopt a restrained even didactic approach giving him time to learn. Theresa May abandoned restraint in the hope that BREXIT Britain would be the new President's best friend in Europe. Contrary to Obama, Trump said the UK would be at the head not the back of the queue for a trade agreement. This turned out to be just the first of many commitments firmly made which then turned out to be easily reversed or forgotten. In his early days in office he

seemed to be expecting or even favouring the departure of other countries from the EU. Brussels was so concerned about a rumoured possible nominee to take over as US Ambassador to the EU that Euro-parliamentarians began looking at procedures to refuse the credentials for such a nominee. A week before Trump took office, the outgoing US Ambassador to the EU said that Donald Trump "wants EU to break up in wake of Brexit vote."²

The crisis of the EU was something that Trump had rightly foreseen as a sign of the times

In fact, nobody has been nominated. Similarly, no name has been put forward for senior State Department positions to handle the overall relationship with Europe. As European nerves were fraying in advance of the French Presidential election, the President told the Italian PM that a strong Europe is "very, very important" to the United States. The President had last year talked of BREXIT as a "great thing" and given the impression that he expected other countries to do the same.

For many in Europe, distrust of the White House still runs deep. The UK Parliament even voted to tell the Queen and the Prime Minister not to invite him over for a state visit. Those who observed the 2016 campaign could not help but notice his anti-Obama, racist, revisionist, misogynist rhetoric. The attempt to impose a travel ban on Muslim visitors from certain countries caused consternation and disruption in Europe. Brussels felt particularly fragile in the early months of 2017 with BREXIT

²Dominiczak, Peter, "Donald Trump 'wants EU to break up in wake of Brexit vote', outgoing US ambassador in Brussels suggests", *The Telegraph*, 13 January, 2017,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/13/donald-trump-wants-eu-break-wake-brexit-vote-outgoing-us-ambassador/>.

negotiations about to start and a series of elections which had initially seemed likely to confirm the strength of anti-EU populist parties in Europe. These fears were not confirmed. In February, European leaders mocked Theresa May's pretension that even outside the EU, the UK would remain a bridge over troubled Atlantic waters.³

The EU will, of course, be seeking every opportunity to engage positively with Washington and the decisive defeat of Marine Le Pen by a young pro-EU radical centrist may well mean that the EU exit of France or any others is off the cards. Indeed, as the UK heads out of the Union its leaders are reflecting increasing confidence that disintegration is not such a threat as it seemed

Deep transatlantic bonds will outlive the term of office of a single man...

even 6 months earlier. Reflecting on the importance of immigration and terrorism in

France, Trump had tweeted sympathetically about Le Pen's chances. After her defeat, he tweeted a friendly message to President-elect Macron.

Some observers sense that maybe Trump's influence has been helpful in this as his style and much of his substance is so anathema to Europeans as to make his blessing for European populist's counter-productive. Le Pen herself was very critical of the recent US bombing of the Syrian Air Force. As one Brussels insider put it:

"US President Donald Trump's first 100 days in office have been a breath

taking rollercoaster ride for Americans, but also for many in Europe. He may be the least popular new president in the modern polling era, but the Trump presidency has been a wake-up call for Europeans, women, complacent liberal democrats, progressives, minorities of all kinds and for 'citizens of the world'. No more can we believe that racism and bigotry are evils of the past. We cannot be lazy about defending minorities, refugees, the vulnerable and the marginalised. More than ever before, it's made many of us appreciate the values, the *raison d'être* and the significance of the European Union."⁴

The crisis of the EU was something that Trump had rightly foreseen as a sign of the times, a sea-change which he as a candidate and President would help to shape and respond to. Within his entourage remains Steve Bannon whose anti-EU views led him to ongoing networking with Nigel Farage and other populist stars. As they fade, Trump will, no doubt, not pursue his initial ideological hostility to the EU.

Shortly after the US election last November Tim Oliver and I noted that:

"Mr. Trump is dismissive and ignorant of the EU and rude about Angela Merkel. There are huge opportunities for both Russia and

³Boffey, Daniel and Walker, Peter, "EU leaders round on Trump and reject May's bridge-building effort", *The guardian*, 3 February, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/03/eu-leaders-trump-may-attempt-act-bridge-malta-summit>.

⁴ Islam, Shada, "Forget the doomsayers: Trump's 100 days have been good for Europe", *Friends of Europe*, 2 May, 2017, <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/future-europe/forget-doomsayers-trump-good-europe/>.

China, especially in the early days of the new administration.”⁵

Even as it might seem that Trump is potentially a less destructive force than Europe initially feared this remains the case and to describe the President’s evolution as unpredictable is almost too generous. He has not only abandoned traditional US positions but he has gone one further, abandoning, sometimes at short notice his own key positions.

This has created confusion and palpable uncertainty in the corridors of the White House itself. The removal of Steve Bannon from the National Security Council (NSC) followed by the nomination of a noted mainstream Russia expert to serve on the NSC may be part of a new approach. Political appointees in the Defense Department have been greeted with irritation by the Secretary of Defense himself. In short, it remains difficult to understand how policy is being made. Indeed, the White House press secretary Sean Spicer even took the unusual step of acknowledging disagreements among top aides, and even argued they were a good thing:

“The reason the president’s brought this team together is to offer a diverse set of opinions He doesn’t want a monolithical (his word!) kind of thought process going through the White House.”⁶

Even after Russia denounced the bombing of Syria’s President, Putin and Trump did not, in fact, burn any bridges. There was talk of a new Cold War. In fact, it is this relationship which will be most keenly watched by Europeans. The two will meet at the G20 summit in Italy which follows the President’s first visit to Brussels in May, 2017 for the NATO summit. While Trump is, at best, unclear in his view of Russia’s role in influencing the US election, the EU is developing a pro-active approach to similar efforts reportedly under way in Germany, even as Macron sailed to victory despite fake news stories on his money and even sexuality were being spread on the internet.⁷

The earlier Trump/Putin expectation of a collapsing EU is unlikely to materialize but certainly in the months after Trump’s election victory EU leaders had good reason for irritation and concern. The switch by the White House to a more positive view of the EU can only be welcomed in Brussels but the rapidity of policy changes remains disconcerting with the hope that after the various meetings in Europe in the coming weeks a solid strategic approach to Russia emerges based on transatlantic understanding and effective cooperation.

Syria and Ukraine are not the only countries in the EU’s neighbourhood on which the EU and US need a common approach. When Turkey’s President Erdogan declared victory in his referendum on constitutional reform, the EU was critical of the procedure and the

⁵ Harris, Geoffrey and Oliver, Tim, “From Brexit to Trump: Transatlantic Allies in an era of unpredictability”, *Euractiv Network*, 24 November, 2016, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/opinion/from-brexite-to-trump-transatlantic-allies-in-an-era-of-unpredictability/>.

⁶ Date, S.V., and Stein, Sam, “Critics See Green Shoots Of Sanity Inside Trump’s White House”,

Huffington Post, 11 April, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/sanity-trump-white-house_us_58ec3375e4b0c89f9120ce63 .

⁷ Masters, James, “Fears of Russian meddling as France prepares to go to the polls”, *CNN*, 28 April, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/28/europe/french-election-russia/index.html>.

outcome which reflected an apparent slide away from democracy in a NATO ally and EU candidate country. The US State Department initially shared some of these concerns but was then undercut by the President's phone call congratulating Erdogan.⁸ Despite all these controversies the EU is well aware that the US remains its principal economic and security partner. Deep transatlantic bonds will outlive the term of office of a single man but this will require the President to reassure not just leaders, but also public opinion. That is not going to be easy.

This is indeed a pivotal moment, not a parenthesis in a stable unbreakable alliance. Europeans no longer automatically trust the US and the idea of President Trump as the leader of the West is unconvincing. Just as Japan, Australia, Taiwan, Canada, Mexico and South Korea have had to come to terms with the unpredictability of Washington, Europeans may come to see America as unreliable. For America's rivals Russia and China, the President is being tested. China has gone from being responsible for raping America, to suddenly being asked to be its partner in bringing sense to North Korea. Trump may be right in saying that being President is more complicated than he expected. How he comes out of a rather late learning process remains to be seen, in Europe and around the world.

⁸Quinn, Rob, "Trump Breaks With State Dept., Congratulates Turkey's Leader", *Newser*, 18 April

2017, <http://www.newser.com/story/241452/trump-congratulates-erdogan-on-disputed-win.html>.

A soufflé never rises twice: Donald Trumps hits international realities. Can the puncture be fixed?

Michiel den Hond, Non-Resident Fellow in Middle East Politics

Style

Candidate Trump dramatically presented the international order, and especially the United States of America's position in it - as a grim environment. A place abounds in security, economic and ethnic threats. And the United States as a clumsy benevolent giant, being taken advantage of left and right by friend and foe. All as a result of the weakness of his predecessors.

On the domestic front, Mr. Trump painted an equally gloomy picture, culminating in the notorious 'American carnage' phrase in his inauguration speech. And again blaming all present behind him on the podium, the rudeness of which gave extra weight to his assertion that here is a relentless leader with a mission to restore the greatness of his country and its people, at home and abroad. The domestic situation in the US is not the immediate subject of our attention. But the way president Trump handles it, in an interplay with other actors like the US Congress, the Judiciary, business and social leaders, has an impact on the effectiveness of American actions abroad. So I will refer to it as appropriate.

Mr. Trump, both as a candidate and after assuming the Presidency, has been quite graphic about the gravity of America's problems. He has also shown exceptional disregard for consistency in his statements. And an apparent belief in his ability to

change the reality with a stroke of a pen or a speech to a crowd. For him, this opens up the possibility to claim success even when realities have prevented him from changing very much for the better in any particular situation. Whenever he has painted too grim a picture, he can simply change his narrative to the positive, describing the situation accurately and claiming success for having made the difference. His hard-core followers will believe him anyway.

But the world does not consist solely of followers, especially outside the USA. There, the audience is quite sober and his extreme and often insulting statements on subjects like NATO, Russia, China, Germany, Mexico, trade, immigration, climate, energy, the United Nations, bi/multilateralism, the EU, Brexit, etc., that go down well with his hard-core supporters, cause surprise if not downright concern. Surprise about the style and concern about the substance, notably the uncertainty as to what substance he is trying to convey with his performances and to what extent they represent shifting emotions or serious policy.

Surprise about the style and concern about the substance, notably the uncertainty as to what substance he is trying to convey with his performances...

Immediately after taking office a discrepancy emerged between President Trump's foreign policy statements, on Twitter or otherwise, and those of his own closest officials. Vice-President Pence, Secretary of State Tillerson, Secretary of Defense Mattis and the new UN-ambassador Haley spoke the language everyone understood, even if the message was not always quite to everyone's liking. For example, on President Trump's commitment to NATO and the threats posed

by Russia, these officials immediately started making reassuring statements to America's allies, even as the President continued his alarming discourse. The disconcerting question remained, of course, to what extent were they speaking on the President's behalf? And, more importantly, to what extent they, in a normal interplay with the other institutional power centers like the US Congress, were the one's really setting the policy, with the President following their lead, regardless of his statements. If they would have real influence, the Trump Presidency would still differ from his predecessors, but in ways the outside world could handle more easily.

While everyone looked on, the President got his first reality check on the domestic front.

...a recognition of the gradual decrease of American authority since it achieved a stunning dominance following the Second World War.

The Federal Courts upturned the President's 'Travel Ban' and dissidents inside the Republican Party blocked the replacement of the Affordable Care

Act by a proposal strongly supported by the President. These are now well known spectacular cases of President Trump first discovering that his speeches, signatures under Presidential Orders, and threats to Congressmen and his attacks on critical independent media cannot replace reality. Domestic events, of course, but what did they mean for the international issues that Mr. Trump was so vocal about?

For the outside world (as for many Americans) the international issues at stake are too serious to simply enjoy the theatrics of it all. On the contrary, for serious leaders, politicians, analysts and ordinary citizens

abroad (and in the USA), the question is what to make of the spectacle in Washington. For a leader, spreading confusion, keeping everyone guessing, even acting like a madman, may be smart tactics if it is part of a serious strategy. If not, he just alienates even further those adversaries who he may still need in the future to advance American interests; he offends his allies and friends, leaving them suspicious of his true intentions and capabilities. And -most importantly- he forces all of them to prepare for alternative scenarios, in which there is a smaller role for the USA or none at all. That this process has started in reality is evident in the speech by German Chancellor Merkel on May 28, 2017, during a campaign speech in Munich.

Until recently, no serious strategy could be discerned. On the contrary: even without resorting to qualifications of Mr. Trump's character, style and general capability to fulfill the duties of his office, the twists and turns of events surrounding the President suggested a worrying level of chaos, which has already done some damage to the credibility and effectiveness of the US in the world. A telling example were comments in the media following the meeting in March, 2017 between the American President and German Chancellor Merkel: the Leader of the Free World meets President Trump. Although just the words of pundits, it reflects the damage to the status of the US, caused by the boisterousness and bluff of its President and the apparent inability of the other actors within the USA to put an end to it. This cannot simply be made undone if President

Trump might decide on a full-blown change of tune. A soufflé doesn't rise twice.¹

Substance

Hardly any leader believes it to be in the interest of the entity he or she represents, be it a country or a company, to embark on a war of words with President Trump. Rather, these leaders will keep their cool, look at concrete American actions and prepare their own policies, taking into account a degree of uncertainty as to what to expect from the US. And taking advantage of the situation in Washington whenever and wherever they can. Although this generally still holds, friendly governments as well as representatives from American states, cities and leading companies have started to speak up following the recent NATO and G-7 summits, and especially after President Trump's controversial decision to take the US out of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Mr. Trump's pledge to make America great again, implies a recognition of the gradual decrease of American authority since it achieved a stunning dominance following the Second World War. An authority based on military, economic and moral strength. Notions like American exceptionalism and the view of the US as the indispensable nation were challenged by its international competitors, but without much success. In fact, the turnaround in Chinese economic policies in the 1970's and the loss of the Cold War by the Soviet Union were grand testimonies to the success of the US in the

world. And to the failures of Chinese and Soviet policies of the past.

But this doesn't mean that the US, although much more powerful than the others, came out of the Cold War as the sole power in a unipolar world. While announcing his intention to strengthen the American military, Mr. Trump said that America should win wars again. This is pertinent to the extent that since the end of the Second World War, America's invasion of Kuwait in 1991, to liberate that country from occupation by Saddam's Iraq, stands out as the only American war that it clearly won, militarily and politically. In the former Yugoslavia, the US entered and finished the war decisively, militarily as well as politically, but only after the other players - both Yugoslav and foreign - had worn each other out.

Although the removal of the Taliban-regime in Kabul (2001) and of Saddam Hussein in Iraq (2003) have been clear military successes, the inability to subsequently put a stable political and economic situation in place, did more damage than good to American authority in the world. The best that can be said about them is that the US was capable of removing a deadly regime. But the other side of that coin is that this caused additional casualties and that even more innocent people died in the ensuing chaos. American efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq were a far cry from the Marshall plan which, in conjunction with NATO and Western-European economic integration, was a showcase of successful follow-up to a war, greatly benefitting Western-Europe as well

¹Paul Keating used this phrase in reference to Andrew Peacock's return to leadership and can be seen here: Bramston, Troy, "Andrew Peacock: Colt from Kooyong on what might have been", *The Australian*, 17 December, 2016,

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/troy-bramston/andrew-peacock-colt-from-kooyong-on-what-might-have-been/news-story/040135dab41497ed56ef703a9c99f22d>.

as the US itself. It was by no means easy, but at the end of the day the Europeans, being relatively close to the US in terms of political, economic and administrative culture, were easy customers. American involvement in Japan and with South Korea, following the Korean-war, was different but by and large as successful as in Europe.

President Obama understood that military success may damage American authority, rather than strengthen it, if the political and economic follow-up is unsuccessful. And that in the absence of the likelihood of a successful follow-up, military action may soon turn into adventurism that damages American standing even more. His pull-out from Iraq and the sharp reduction of the military's involvement in Afghanistan were supposed to contain such damage. Surprisingly, this did not stop him from starting an air-campaign against ISIS/Daesh without a comprehensive military and political strategy. However, even if the US has gradually been losing some authority, China and Russia have not automatically gained any.

China and North-Korea

It is China's rapid economic expansion that has made it a major player on the global economic and financial stage. But although this expansion has created problems of its own, at home and in its foreign relations, China has increasingly projected itself as the dominant regional power, not only economically but also politically and militarily. And with its Belt and Road Initiative, China has gone global.

It is especially in his relationship with China that Mr. Trump, as a candidate and as President, has taken a high profile with potential consequences for the strategic positions of the US itself, China, Japan and other countries in the region. Much depends on the real strength of the complex relationships that all of them have with each other and on the skill with which their leaders play their hands. Ridiculing China during the campaign may have helped him win the election, but the Chinese will make him pay for it sooner or later. As they will for his taking a telephone call from the President of Taiwan immediately after assuming office. And by taking the US out of the TPP, President Trump has weakened his position in the region, to the advantage of China. The signals coming from Philippines' President, Duterte and from some prominent Australians point in this direction. Moreover, with the number and level of national and multilateral participants in the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, held in Beijing on May 14-17, 2017, China has confirmed its global convening power.

The obvious flashpoint right now is the tension around North-Korea's nuclear program with China in one of the leading roles. But the contentious issue of China's activities in the South-China sea lurks in the background. In making a serious effort to unblock the deadlock over North-Korea's nuclear program, the Trump administration has shown the capacity to formulate a policy and go after its implementation in the complex manner required by the seriousness of the issue and by the clear interest that the US has in this far-away country. Not only did

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he dispatch the Secretaries of Defense and State to the region, but also Vice-President Pence, to reconfirm alliances with South-Korea and Japan and to speak with the Chinese leadership. Importantly, the President also engaged himself personally, receiving the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of China at Mar-a-Lago. And by deploying the THAAD missile defense system to South-Korea, much against the interests of China and Russia, he has shown that he is ready to bring all the different American assets to bear.

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But raising the stakes to this level, and by pressuring China to take more responsibility of its own, to make the North-Korean leader abandon his nuclear program, makes the US vulnerable too. The election of the social-liberal Moon Jae-in as South-Korea's new president and his political approach to the North seem to vary from President Trump's, adding to the political risks for the US. The longer the crisis lasts, the greater the risk of miscalculation or downright mistakes, especially with the escalatory steps nearing the top. And assuming that the US -at the end of the day- is not ready to pay the price of military conflict and its consequences, President Trump depends on China and, finally, Kim Jong Un to deliver a result that will allow him to declare victory and de-escalate.

This situation holds many risks for the US and its future in the region. The US has a strong hand, but so does China. And at the end of the day, China's interests in its own

neighborhood are larger than America's. A protracted crisis opens up the possibility for China to frustrate some of the other American priorities. It also gives it a chance to get even with some of President Trump's insulting statements during the campaign and with his more recent patronizing statements about the Chinese President. He condescendingly asked a cheering crowd whether this is the moment to call China a currency manipulator, implying that he will return to that subject when he needs China less.

If President Trump scores a success vis-a-vis North Korea (a real success that is) it will be one up for making America great again. But if this high-profile episode ends in less, it will be one down for American greatness and one up for China's. Much depends on all the players keeping their cool.

Russia, NATO and Europe

Russia is a dire case, since the causes for its loss of the Cold War have not really been addressed. And after the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has lost much of its territory, population and economic base. Mr. Putin's desire to restore his country's place in the world is helped by its status as a nuclear power and by his sheer ambition. He also counts on Russia's reserves of fossil fuels as an important instrument. He has invested in Russia's military and in energy-connections, especially with Western-Europe. But with oil prices low and the importance of fossil fuels gradually on the way down, he will not be able to pursue his ambitions much beyond his current activities in Ukraine and Syria. This might in the long run, be different if he embarks on a serious reform of the economic, social and political structures of his country. Things that he doesn't seem inclined to do. Foreign Minister

Lavrov has declared the days of Trans-Atlantic dominance over, but that doesn't say much about Russian prospects to fill the vacuum to any degree.

For reasons that are difficult to understand (but that may still be revealed), candidate Trump was very positive about Russia and its leader. NATO was obsolete and the Russians were not in Ukraine. He carried these views into the Oval Office, but was soon corrected by his top officials, as well as by international and domestic realities. Today, he says NATO is no longer obsolete (a case of a Trump success by changing his tune, not the reality) and Russia's occupation of Crimea and its role in Eastern Ukraine and Syria are now a problem. These are about-turns for which his constituents apparently don't ask an explanation. But America's European allies, while welcoming President Trump's return to the fold, will not have forgotten his initial positions. Over time, they may be expected to give more substance to their own European defense. This is something that Mr. Trump has propagated, but he may not have considered that less reliance on American protection will also make the Europeans more independent from American foreign policy and security concerns around the globe. Trans-Atlantic loyalty after the 9/11 attacks on the US, made its European allies support America's invasion of Afghanistan. But President Bush didn't succeed in convincing France and Germany of his case for invading Iraq and was left with the UK as the only ally going in together with the American forces.

For the UK, this was a function of the special relationship that it traditionally pursued with the US. And this has gained a new importance in the advent of Brexit, with Prime Minister Theresa May immediately

visiting President Trump, seeking some compensation in Washington for what the UK stands to lose in Brussels, economically, politically and security-wise. Apart from the moral support she got for Brexit, it remains to be seen what the UK will be able to eventually get from the US and how strong it will be on its own. It will definitely lose influence on the foreign policies of the EU and its member states. And without the British, the EU will be even more inclined to pursue its foreign policy and security interests gradually more separate from the US. With European economies generally on the up-swing, the EU and its member states may be expected to become more active in these fields, complementing the soft power that the bloc already wields on the strength of its status as one of the top three economies in the world (also without the UK). The recent visit of Chancellor Merkel to President Putin in Sochi and the recent reception of Putin in Versailles by the newly elected French President, Macron, are significant also in this respect. And Merkel's speech during a campaign rally in Munich on May 28, 2017, after NATO and G-7 meetings in which President Trump frustrated America's allies on substance as well as style, marked a real shift. While stressing the importance of relations with the US and Britain, she said that the times in which the Europeans could fully rely on traditional allies were more or less over, and that Europe should pay more attention to its own interest and take its fate in its own hands.

Obviously, a European place in any future global strategic picture is contingent on the EU and the Eurogroup overcoming the crises that have confronted them. They have muddled through successfully (as they always do), but the question is whether they have seen the worst or not. The election of

Emmanuel Macron as France's new president has certainly contributed to a sense that the EU is better poised as the framework to solve the many existing and future problems of the EU itself as well as of its individual member states. And here again, President Trump will have some impact, depending on how his views on the usefulness of the EU develop in relation to his pursuit of the goals that he promised his electorate to achieve.

The Middle-East

On the Middle-East, both candidate and President Trump have been quite forceful in tone but less than coherent on substance. He would destroy Daesh/ISIS militarily, do away with the nuclear deal with Iran and bring peace to Israel and the Palestinians. He appeared impervious to the nature of regimes in the Middle East and the humanitarian disaster caused by the civil war in Syria, until there was a chemical weapons attack on the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun. Unexpectedly, President Trump decided to react with 59 cruise missiles on the air base from where the planes set out that were to have carried out the attack. Although the US afterwards got political cover for its sudden unilateral use of force from most members of the UN Security Council and of the Foreign Ministers of the G-7, it still leaves everyone wondering what the policy behind it was. An emotional response to a very cruel and illegal act? Or was its purpose to show (together with the equally puzzling dropping of the MOAB on ISIS in Eastern Afghanistan) to the leaders in Pyongyang and Beijing that the US is capable and willing to employ great firepower when it sees fit? Whatever the reason, such spectacular display of force risks making the US look less effective. It appears to have played no role in the way the

North-Korean nuclear crisis has developed until now. And in the Middle East itself, the dispatch of the American cruise missiles has so far fallen flat politically, in the absence of concrete follow-up.

The situation in the Middle East may be complicated for all the players involved, but most of them have their own relatively coherent goals. The US, however, has maneuvered itself into a somewhat contradictory position. Most of it was brought about by President Obama. He recognized that the US should get out of Iraq and not into other similar conflicts. But he nevertheless started the bombing campaign to ultimately destroy Daesh, without - at that moment - a tangible American interest at stake, while spreading the political risks by shaping a coalition of friendly countries that included some Arab states. He recognized that the job could not be finished without boots on the ground, but he was not ready to provide them. Instead he relied mostly on Syrian Kurds, who will expect to be rewarded in terms of autonomy (or more), while this is rejected forcefully by Turkey.

As for the civil war raging mostly in Western-Syria, Secretary of State Kerry was involved in the Geneva Process, having an impact on the UN-led negotiations about Syria's political future. And although these didn't go very far, to some extent due to the internal conflicts between the Syrian opposition factions, fed by their many foreign sponsors, President Obama at least had a comprehensive, if flawed, Syria policy. But this evaporated once Russia started to throw its military weight behind the Syrian Government and the Syrian opposition factions were pushed back, with their eviction from Eastern Aleppo as its most visible loss. There was no political process to

speak of anymore, also not in Astana. Russia dominated the scene, along with Iran, in support of the Assad Government and the maintenance of Syria as a unity state. President Obama seems to have accepted this situation as a given that he could not alter, also in view of the impending end of his tenure. He was resigned to go on bombarding Daesh in Syria.

All in all, the situation in the Middle East was not too bad for Mr. Trump when he took office on January 20th, 2017. In Iraq, he was on the winning side against Daesh, without too high a profile that might cause new obligations for the US. And in Eastern Syria, the campaign against Daesh was also moving forward slowly but steadily, with the Turkish frustration over the new won prominence of the Syrian Kurds as the main liability. With regards to the civil war being fought mostly in Western Syria, the US was already out of the political game, so President Trump could simply wait for the Syrian Government to finish the job with the assistance from Russia and Iran. And then let the Syrian Government forces replace the Kurds as the necessary boots on the ground to finish off Daesh and restore Syrian sovereignty over the whole of the country. This would solve the immediate problems with Turkish President Erdogan, whose dislike of President Assad is smaller than that of the Syrian Kurds coming out of the conflict on the winning side and getting rewarded.

It would greatly worry many, that the detested Assad would still be there and that Iran would strengthen its position in both Iraq and Syria, and also in Moscow and possibly even in Ankara. And once the war is over, the US could either step in claiming a major role in Syria's reconstruction or, in the absence of an interest, leave the bill to the EU, that has been out of the game completely and that might be eager to play its usual role as bankroller of socio-economic and political reconstruction. Russia might be so worn out by its effort to help the Syrian Government win the war, that it would be unable to play much of a role in the next stage of the Syrian saga. Reconstruction is not Russia's forte anyway.

The net outcome of his visit to the Middle East seems to be that the risks to America's position in the region seem to have become even larger than the opportunities.

First indications were that President Trump might be thinking along those lines. Only UN Ambassador Nikki Haley lashed out at President Assad early on but she was politely muted by Secretary of State Tillerson and the White House. President Trump felt comfortable with Putin's Russia. But this changed quickly when the now well-known plethora of differences over Russia arose between the new President and the Washington establishment. With his 59 cruise missiles he has taken a very visible step to placate many of his critics. And as long as the Korea-crisis continues to escalate and the campaign against Daesh continues apace, he will probably not be asked to involve the US militarily in the Syrian civil war. In the Middle East itself, this one-off bombardment has done little to strengthen the American position. Only a follow-up that

changes the game may bring the US back as a real player.

At home, President Trump can always explain a minor political role in Syria to his followers. In fact, such a limited role, that President Obama initiated (and was criticized for) and that candidate Trump promised his voters during the campaign, may turn out to be in line with the reality that has existed for years. And by acting in accordance with America's true strengths -that are tremendous anyway- the US will probably be more effective in pursuing its own interests and be a force for the good for others at the same time.

President Trump's biggest challenge may turn out to be, a reconciliation to the broader American public and the foreign policy establishment with this reality. If he succeeds, the US may no longer create problems for itself as a result of its outdated self-image. All of this may take a completely different turn following the recent visit of President Trump to Saudi Arabia, Israel and Ramallah. Charmed by Saudi royalties and Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Trump has made a choice for America's traditional Saudi-led allies, upsetting the prospects for American relations with Iran and getting the US deeper entangled in the struggle for power in the Gulf. And the optimistic yet unsubstantial statements following his meetings with Israeli leaders in Jerusalem and with the Palestinian President in Bethlehem are bound to get the US even more bogged down in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making. The net outcome of his visit to the Middle East seems to be that (apart from American jobs, no small matter of course) the

risks to America's position in the region seem to have become even larger than the opportunities.

Conclusion

Donald J. Trump's style, especially as a candidate but also as President, has been so abusive towards such a large number of countries and people, so contradictory and untruthful that it has diminished America's standing in the eyes of many, inside and outside the USA. Such a style is incompatible with the moral leadership that the US claims.² What makes it worse is that he managed to win the elections exactly because of this style. The way American crowds cheered him on during his rallies was an embarrassment to many inside the USA and to many people among America's allies. To many others, it merely confirmed the dim views they already had of the moral quality of America's role in the world and of its status as leader of the free world. The damaging effect of this is only partly mitigated by the fact that his top officials have a better understanding of international relations and, after a hundred days, seem to get some grip on his style.

On foreign policy substance, the Trump administration is moving in a direction of more normalcy. But the uncertainty that the President creates, not only among his adversaries but also among his allies, will make them consider different scenarios to take care of their interests; scenarios in which there is a smaller role for the US or none at all. His inflated presentations of what he would achieve have been punctured.

² Rubin, Alissa. "Allies fear Trump is eroding America's moral authority", *New York Times*, March 10, 2017,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/10/world/europe/in-trumps-america-a-toned-down-voice-for-human-rights.html> .

In expressing his desire to make America great again, President Trump implicitly acknowledges that the American position in the world is not what it used to be. This has been a fact for longer than many in the US and its allies would like to consider. But if President Trump decides to be more selective in picking his fights, even more than President Obama, he may bring the American role more in line with its true capabilities, which are enormous anyway. And in doing so, the US will probably be more effective in pursuing its own interests and be a force for the good of others at the same time.

However, this is not at all the direction in which President Trump is going. His renewed promises of successful leadership and his concrete policy steps are not likely to fix the puncture.

