Metadata of the chapter that will be visualized in SpringerLink

Book Title	Alliances and Power Politics in the Trump Era	
Series Title		
Chapter Title	America’s Surprisingly “Constrained” Presidency: Implications for Transatlantic Relations	
Copyright Year	2020	
Copyright HolderName	The Author(s)	
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Abstract

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

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

In this chapter, I am going to take a skeptical stance regarding the image of Trump unchained (some say, unhinged). In doing so I will invoke two sets of constraints—one derived from analytical categories derivative of the broad sweep of US foreign policy, the other dating from the decade of the 1980s. What I will *not* be addressing are two very recent, and *constitutional*, constraints upon the Trump presidency. Those two recent constraining developments reflect the reality that America's political system of checks and balances continues, despite many alarms to the contrary, to function.[4] The first was the Democrats' capture of the

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

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

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

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

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

paradigms, each represented eponymously. In no particular chronological order, these four eponyms are the Hamiltonians, Wilsonians, Jeffer-

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

Despite this not-so-subtle attempt to market his presidency as the second coming of Andrew Jackson's—and hence not at all the frightful policy salmagundi of his critics' imaginings—there are obviously certain Jacksonian vestiges that can only correspond poorly with the Trump brand of policymaking. So important are these vestiges that they should give us reason to dismiss outright the relevance of this Weberian ideal type when it comes to understanding current American policy. The president's base might be Jacksonian; he himself is not. In fact, shocking if not scandalous

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

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

Trump as "Wilsonian"? How do I dare, in this section, to suggest the relevance of a Wilsonian motif, and how might this be considered helpful in understanding the current crisis in transatl29.7Ec-368.4(w)-10.3(e)ltionas?-367.1(

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

Nor would anyone wish to defend the proposition that Donald Trump is a big fan of such alliances. This is not the same, however, as saying that the current president is an isolationist. He may take a dim view of multilateralism and institutionalism, but there are, to him, other ways for America to have a continued presence in the world. The principal such

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

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

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

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

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

[26] Some scholars hold diffuse reciprocity to be one of the three defining characteristics of a multilateral order, with the two other stipulatory elements being indivisibility and

300 termed the "democratic alliance."[27] Indeed, the saving grace of this kind

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

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

Then there is the Trumpian tenth commandment: contain the costs. Because of the unstated implication of this injunction to reduce one's own "skin in the game," it is not difficult to see how this vestige of 1980s' Trump philosophy can and does have a bearing upon relations with the transatlantic allies. The connection shows up in high relief under the policy rubric of "burden sharing." Now, Donald Trump did not invent the

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

But while the stage props might have been shifted around, the drama continued with a new cast reading from a familiar script. NATO's halting assumption of security obligations outside of its traditional "area," starting in the Balkans in the 1990s and continuing in the Middle East in the early twenty-first century, witnessed a revival of the traditional refrain,

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

This is what "transactionalism" has meant, to date, for the transatlantic alliance. How should the allies respond to the Trump phenomenon? First, they should realize that America under its current president almost certainly will not exercise article 13 and decamp; nevertheless, they should

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

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